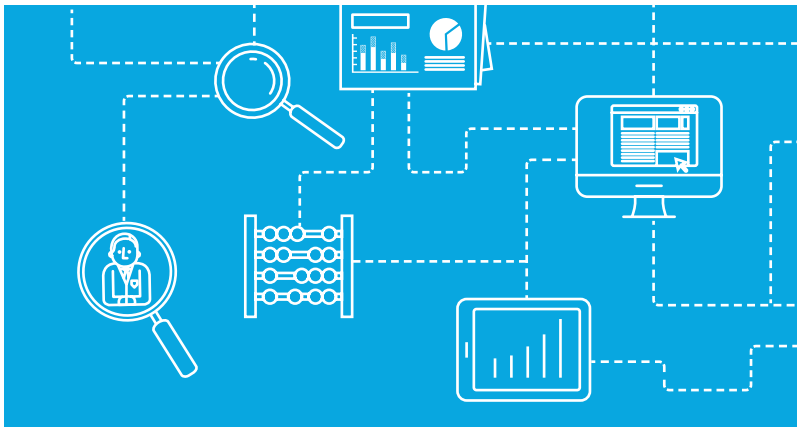
Notice fraud

September 2018



Fraud is the crime that most people are likely to experience. Being aware of the risks, and remaining vigilant, are critical steps in minimising the risk of becoming a victim. In this newsletter we have highlighted recent cases, emerging risks and scams to help you recognise the signs of fraud in the NHS.

Sickness absence fraud

This is where a staff member calls in sick when they are undertaking employment elsewhere. As a general rule, there is nothing to stop employees from working for more than one employer (provided they are not working in competition against their main employer). Most NHS employers require secondary employment declarations upon appointment and throughout employment. If an employee falsely declares that they are unfit to work or fail to declare the other employment, this may constitute fraud.

This type of fraud is not confined to a particular staff group. It can be committed by any staff member in any band or department, regardless of seniority. Often, this type of fraud is committed by those who have failed to disclose a secondary employer to the organisation.

What can you do?

- See it, report it. As employees you are the first line of defence against fraud.
- Know and understand your organisation's position on employees holding second jobs and reporting sickness.
- Declare any secondary employment in line with the organisation's policy.

Nurse sentenced to 16 months in prison after defrauding her employer of £32,000

A nurse was found to be working for two nursing agencies while signed off sick from her substantive post. The investigation found that the subject had been signed off sick in the period August 2014 to May 2016 but had been working for the nursing agencies, defrauding the Trust of £32,745.

The nurse was dismissed by the trust for gross misconduct. The case was referred to the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

In July 2018 the subject was found guilty of two counts of fraud by false misrepresentation and jailed for 16 months.

Running a private clinic whilst off sick

A psychologist, who was signed off work with a bad back, ran a private clinic in Cardiff at £80 per session. The subject was employed by a Welsh health board and was unhappy with the amount of traveling to see patients.

The investigation revealed the subject had rented a private consulting office and had earned £1,760 whilst in receipt of sick pay from the health board.

The subject was ordered to repay the sickness payments and was given a 12 month community order. The subject was initially suspended from Health and Care Professions Council Register for a year. This was then increased to an indefinite ban.

Agency timesheet and invoice fraud

Recently, we have seen an increase in the number of referrals in relation to timesheets and invoices submitted by temporary staffing agencies. Some of these relate to incorrect charges / rates / fees being applied, false timesheets and invoices for services not supplied.

Checking invoices and timesheets

Booking confirmations should be matched to invoices and timesheets before any payment is released. The rates detailed on the invoices should also be matched to the contracted rates to determine whether the latest rates are being applied. Review the invoice to determine any 'hidden charges' such as administration fees, handling fees or employer's charge.

Timesheets must always be authorised, but are checks carried out to ensure the authorising signature is genuine and the person has authority to sign the timesheet? A list of authorised signatories should be maintained and regularly updated. Timesheets should be cross- referenced to the list to verify the authorisation.

Fake invoices

A recruitment officer at a recruitment agency enlisted five agency nurses to submit large numbers of false timesheets for shifts not worked at three NHS trusts. Once the agency nurses had received payment, the recruitment worker would request a payment using his wife's bank account.

The fraud was discovered when an unsolicited invoice was questioned by one of the trusts. The investigation revealed that, in some cases, timesheets where authorised by an individual who did not exist. The total amount of the fraud was valued at £73,000.

The recruitment officer was sentenced to three years in prison. Two of the agency nurses denied the charges and received prison sentences. The remaining three agency nurses admitted the offences and received suspended sentences.

Invoice fraud

Invoice fraud is more common than you think. Fraudsters take the chance that the invoice will be authorised without sufficient checks. Before authorising any invoice for payment, checks should be undertaken to ensure the goods or services have actually been received. A recent case illustrates the importance of this. An associate director of capital and development at an NHS trust used his position to create false invoices. He enlisted three of his friends in the fraud who were in the building trade. The subject told his friends what to put in the various documents for them to be paid. Between 2012 and 2015, a total of 204 invoices were submitted for work that was not completed, totalling £870,490.

The subject was jailed for four years and eight months. Assets of £189,115 were confiscated and must be paid to the trust. The subject's NHS pension will also be recovered.

Two of the subjects were jailed for three years and four months, the remaining subject was jailed for 15 months. All three were ordered to pay £5,000 in costs.

The money they all made from the crime – £469,432 – has been confiscated and must be paid to the Trust as compensation.

Current email scams

Email scams, many of which are phishing scams, are becoming increasingly common as fraudsters come up with new ways to try and trick you into clicking on a link or stealing personal information. Below are the current scams you should be aware of.

Usual activity

Several NHS.net users have reported receiving an email alerting them about usual activity on their account. The email advises that they have been 'upgraded to the new office 2018 for more security'. Recipients are asked to click on a link to 'verify their account'.

If you receive a similar email – do not click on the link and delete the email.

Shipping documents

Unsolicited emails are being sent to organisations asking the recipient to click on a PDF attachment. The attachment includes shipping information.

Do not open any attachments or click on any links within the email, as it may contain malicious software or direct you to a bogus website.

Fraud awareness campaign

In November, we will be running a fraud awareness campaign. This coincides with international fraud week taking place between 11–17 November. You will see various fraud materials during the month, which should encourage you all to have a conversation about fraud and how it can be prevented.

Reporting concerns

It is easy to report fraud, bribery or corruption affecting the NHS. Contact your Local Counter Fraud Specialist (LCFS) directly or call the national anonymous, 24-hour reporting line on 0800 028 4060 (powered by Crimestoppers). You can also report online, completely confidentially via **https://cfa.nhs.uk/reportfraud.**

It is the LCFS' role to take every allegation of fraud or bribery seriously and to provide anonymity and confidentiality for anyone who reports a concern. It is recommended that you refer to your organisation's policy on fraud when reporting allegations for further information on how you are protected.

When making a referral please provide as much information as possible, for example:

- the name of the person who you believe has committed a fraud;
- when and where the fraud has taken place;
- how long the fraud has been going on; and
- any details to substantiate your suspicion.

Spot it. Report it. Together we stop it.

rsmuk.com