



**SAFS**

Shared Anti-Fraud Service  
Fighting Fraud in Partnership

# Annual Report 2022/2023



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**Luton**



**Stevenage**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# Introduction

2022/2023 was an interesting year for the Shared Anti-Fraud Service, with the pandemic still hanging over us, changed ways of working, a pay review by our host authority and the culmination of a number of cases and projects that had been delayed due to Covid.

In June 2022, our largest ever prosecution was concluded with guilty pleas from all three subjects, who had conspired together to defraud a SAFS Partner of more than £700k over a period of 12 years. In fact, the true value of this fraud likely exceeded £1m. The case had commenced in 2018 and was delayed by the defendants varied attempts to frustrate the investigation and court proceedings. This case included:

- Specialist reports, police searches, seizure and forensic analysis of electronic devices and mobile phones, arrest warrants.
- Actions to bring the accused back to the UK to stand trial, POCA and restraint orders.
- More than 50 witnesses and tens of thousands of pages of evidence and material.

After four long years, guilty pleas were entered on the eve of trial by all three defendants. According to HHJ Foster, this is one of the biggest cases of its kind seen in the UK and this was reflected in lengthy prison sentences for those involved, and national press interest for several months after.

This was only one case of many investigated in 2022/23 and, although one of the largest, certainly not the most serious, nor the most complex matter dealt with by SAFS officers. The continued success of the SAFS team is reliant on the support of our numerous partners, who are too numerous to name here, and the professionalism and dedication of all involved.

With SAFS being a partnership, it's no surprise that collaboration is at the centre of everything we do. In 2022/23, we enhanced our work with the Cabinet Office to develop the Herts-FraudHub. We continued to manage the county-wide Council Tax Review Framework, not just for SAFS Partners but for all district councils across Hertfordshire. We worked in partnership with:

- DWP to investigate fraud linked to national benefits.
- Housing providers to investigate tenancy fraud.
- Third party providers of specialist investigation tools or analytics to help identify fraud or improve the quality of our investigations.
- Front line staff working in our partners who provide their time and invaluable knowledge.

We continued our work to introduce and embed Fraud Risk Assessments into our Partners and 2022/23 this included fraud surveys across schools and a fraud risk assessment for the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

Throughout all of this our staff continued to deliver excellence at all levels:

- Whether part of our award winning 'Schools and Mules' campaign in September 2022 delivering money laundering awareness to thousands of students across the County.
- The work of our Accredited Financial Investigator in recovering hundreds of thousands of pounds lost to fraud.
- High quality fraud awareness training to more than 7,000 staff across all Partners through our E-learning programme.

The quality of our work and our staff was recognised in early 2022 when SAFS was a finalist at the **Public Finance Awards**, and then again in February 2023 when SAFS won the award for '**Local Excellence**' at the **Public Sector Counter Fraud Awards** hosted by the Cabinet Office.

Nick Jennings - Head of Shared Anti Fraud Service 2023



# Level of Delivery



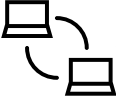



Despite facing resourcing challenges during the year, the Service achieved or exceeded the majority of its KPIs in 2022/2023.

## Objectives

## Achievements

<p>Agree and ensure the delivery of each Partner Anti-Fraud Action Plan for 2022/2023</p>	1	<p>All Partners had plans approved by Audit Committees Partners all received regular reports via Board Members</p>
<p>£5M Saving (Including all Loss/ Saving &amp; new revenue identified)</p>	2	<p>£1.2m in Fraud losses £1.3m in savings/prevention £1.9m new revenue <i>(£2.6m Estimated loss on live cases)</i></p>
<p>Ensure that SAFS reporting options are available to all partners 95% of the time (Hotline/Online Reporting &amp; SAFS Webpage links)</p>	3	<p>All reporting routes into SAFS were available 24/7 throughout the year</p>
<p>2 Days response time for all referrals</p>	4	<p>Average response time was 0.6 days</p>
<p>A. 60% positive outcomes B. 36 properties recovered C. 60 sanction outcomes</p>	5	<p>A. 63% achieved B. 31 Properties recovered C. 63 cases resulted in a sanction being applied</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop NFI/Fraudhub for all Partners</li> <li>• Maintain the new Council Tax Review Framework Contract</li> </ul>	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fraudhub Contracts agreed</li> <li>• NFI 2021/2022 data uploaded and working on matches</li> <li>• Contracts in place for the Council Tax Review Framework</li> </ul>

## Special Projects 2022/23

Anti Money Laundering Training		SAFS designed a training plan for all Partners and have rolled out the training for appropriate officers
NFI National Exercise		SAFS ensured that all data was uploaded for the exercise meeting the specifications required. A programme of work is in place to clear all matches received
Fraudhub		All Partners are signed up to Fraudhub and a schedule has been created for uploading and clearing output
CMS Retender		A new provider has been chosen and contracts agreed. Training has been provided and an exit plan provided to migrate the data
Internal Training Plan		SAFS has a rolling training plan for the team to ensure knowledge and skills are reviewed. SAFS staff can access the Government Counter Fraud Profession.
Partner Training Plan		Training plan agreed with local HR teams delivered via eLearning updates, classroom-based training, as well as workshops, webinars and awareness factsheets.

## Watford Observer

**Watford woman taken to court over using mum's disabled badge**

# Outcomes & Added Benefits



1643 Allegations of Fraud received



185 Right to Buy Applications Reviewed to comply with Anti-Money Laundering



£2.3M caseload for our Financial Investigator



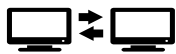
**Fraudster convicted for illegally sub-letting housing association property**

**Luton Today** | *The Luton News Herald & Post*

Luton fraudster caught out sub letting his council flat and fined almost £8,000



48,000 National Fraud Initiative matches received



129 Referrals shared with other agencies



£1.9m Raised in council tax through our county wide framework

**Royston Crow**

A Royston man has been convicted of fraud by false representation after submitting a fake claim for damages to Herts County Council

75% of HCC staff completed Anti-Fraud and Corruption E-Learning



105 council tax reviews carried out



**MailOnline**

Fraudster family who once appeared on This Morning faked illness to scam council out of £734,000 over 12 years - in what is believed to be one of the largest frauds ever committed against a local authority

# SAFS Board Members (2022/2023)

The SAFS Board provides strategic direction and oversight for the partnership, bringing a wealth of local government and wider experience and insight to our operations.

<b>Steven Pilsworth</b> <b>Chris Wood</b>	Hertfordshire County Council Hertfordshire County Council	Director of Finance Head of Assurance Services
<b>Matthew Bunyon</b>	Hertsmere Borough Council	Head of Finance and Business Services
<b>Ian Couper</b>	North Hertfordshire District Council	Service Director: Resources
<b>Sarah Marsh</b>	Borough of Broxbourne Council	Head of Internal Audit
<b>Steven Linnett</b>	East Hertfordshire Council	Head of Strategic Finance and Property
<b>Clare Fletcher</b> <b>Brian Moldon</b> (Deputy)	Stevenage Borough Council Stevenage Borough Council	Strategic Director Assistant Director of Finance
<b>Dev Gopal</b> <b>Kanchan Vasisht</b> (Deputy)	Luton Borough Council Luton Borough Council	Service Director, Finance & Audit Audit Manager
<b>Georgie Barnard</b>	Non Executive Board Member	

**Luton**

