



# The Sentinel

An MIAA Anti-Fraud Newsletter

Summer/Autumn 2019

## Former surgery manager jailed for over three years for fraud

Practice Manager Karen Evans diverted hundreds of thousands of pounds of practice income, derived from legitimate GP activities intended to fund medication, staff wages and medical supplies over a 15-month period.

Evans had, by abusing access to practice banking systems that she had been afforded to undertake her role as Practice Manager, arranged for payments totalling £582,265.66 to be made from practice accounts into her own account. This was in addition to the legitimate payments that she received such as her salary. Many of the payments were based on legitimate invoices from locum GPs that had been paid; however a duplicate payment was also made into Evans' own account.



Judge Maurice Greene told Ms Evans her actions were 'calculated and cruel'. He said: 'You stole the money because of your gambling addiction but the abuse of position of trust you were in caused a serious detrimental effect on the victims of this case'.

Following Evans dismissal from the practice they began to receive claims for unpaid bills. This revealed debt that up until this time, the practice were unaware of.

Police also discovered that some patient records had been amended by Evans to increase funding into the practice. 12,500 patient records were checked and 323 found to have been changed. Nine of these were in marked as end of life when they were not in end of life situations.

Police discovered Ms Evans had also defrauded £77,867 from another GP practice in Hattersley by falsifying paperwork and inflating her salary whilst working there between 2012 and 2016.

At Minshull Street Crown Court, Manchester, Ms Evans admitted two charges of fraud by abuse of position and was jailed for three years and four months.

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### Important News

Don't use the same password for your ESR account as your other accounts. This will help prevent fraudsters from gaining access to your personal email which may be used to verify changes to other account details, such as online shopping sites or assist a fraudster in opening a new financial or retail account in your name!



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## DETECTING THE FRAUD AT THE GP SURGERY



MIAA's Anti-Fraud Specialist, David Alford, highlights the background to GP Fraud.

He explained: "The practice, like most general practices in the UK, is run as a small business, managed by doctors who are partners in the business."

"The fraud was identified when Karen Evans was asked to provide a report into the surgery's finances; she went off sick so her deputy provided the report. Evans subsequently emailed a report containing different figures. This discrepancy alerted the surgery management that fraud had taken place. The surgery was in a worse financial position than indicated by Evans and their local CCG had to arrange an interim payment to stabilise the practice bank account and allow them to pay salaries."

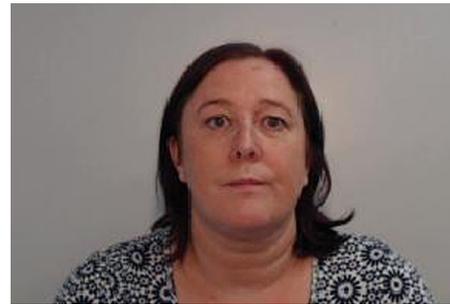
The CCG brought David in to investigate, he said: "This type of case would not normally be within my remit being a GP surgery, a separate business, but in this case the CCG were keen to provide support to the practice. I was able to help the practice staff establish that a fraud had taken place, gather and present evidence."

The counter fraud specialist liaised with Greater Manchester Police and arranged that the evidence identified was handed over for their further investigation. This support ensured that the case was fully investigated by the Police and the subsequent prosecution secured. David's work including looking at the Assistant Practice Manager's initial analysis and advising where else to investigate. His assistance uncovered additional frauds totalling £300K.

He also made the Police aware of concerns regarding Evans' potential conduct at her previous employer, a GP surgery that had also run into financial difficulties.

Evans, at the time of her arrest, had started working in a further GP Practice on a temporary basis. David was able to establish where that was and inform Greater Manchester Police so that it could be brought within the scope of their investigation.

He explained: "The lessons learned from this case are; where members of staff are in a position of trust and have a high level of autonomy, there needs to be oversight in the financial affairs of the business. This means, regular meetings where evidence of the financial position is reviewed, bank accounts periodically checked by partners to ensure that they contain the amounts of money that they believed to be in them."



Karen Evans

In this instance, the banks statements should have been a flag that there was something wrong." The impact of Evans' actions on the partners within the surgery was significant, several of the GPs have had to retire early and others have stepped down from being practice partners.

David concluded: "Two of the former GP Partners were at the court to hear the outcome of this case. They were extremely satisfied with the result and were grateful to MIAA and the Police for the work done on their behalf in bringing this case to court."

### Tackling public sector fraud requires a culture change

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) annual conference addressed the issue of tackling public sector fraud.

Laura Hough, CIPFA's head of research and development for counter fraud, told delegates that government departments must work together to tackle the issue.

"Culture is really the key to tackling fraud," she said. Hough called for more data sharing between government departments to tackle the issue.

[Read the full article here.](#)

# NHS Counter Fraud Authority priority action areas

## Fraud Authority will investigate 'ghost patients'



Following the appointment of its new Chief Executive, Sue Frith, NHS Counter Fraud Authority (NHSCFA) has published 2019-20 priority action areas.

Targets are based on its latest evaluation of intelligence on the fraud risks facing the NHS.

The headline targets for 2019-20 to achieve:

£22 million in detected fraud

£100 million in prevented fraud

£5 million in recoveries from fraud

This forms the basis for its four priority action areas for 2019-20, which are:

**Pharmaceutical contractor fraud** - working in collaboration with NHS Business Services Authority to identify key areas of loss.

**Procurement and commissioning fraud** - working with NHS organisations to measure fraud risks in procurement and develop updated prevention guidance.

**Fraud in relation to general practice contractors** - This priority area will focus on GP capitation fees.

**Improving fraud outcomes in the NHS** - Collaboration with those who manage

delivery and support counter fraud provision to be focused on the financial impact of enforcement activity.

Susan Frith, CEO of the NHSCFA, explained: "By setting clear goals based on the national intelligence of fraud risks and working with colleagues across the NHS to deliver them, we can make sure counter fraud work at both national and local level is focused on achieving measurable outcomes."

### Did you know?

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Financial Crime and Scamming (APPGFCS) was established in October 2017. Its purpose is to give MPs and Peers the information they need to represent and advise their constituents effectively, and to understand the challenges that all sectors face in trying to stem the tide of this growing crime. One of the group's first recommendations was a call for fraud education to become a mandatory part of the safeguarding curriculum in schools.

The NHS has identified "ghost patient" fraud as a priority in order to cut out £127m worth of fraud in the health service.

The NHSCFA will investigate whether GP capitation fees - through which GPs receive an average of £150 per patient on their lists - are being charged for non-existent patients. The move has sparked outrage from GP leaders who have suggested inconsistencies are due to high turnover in patient lists and record management issues.

Susan Frith, Chief Executive of the authority, said: "We hope measuring local and national counter fraud work against these targets will highlight the positive impact that tackling fraud has on NHS resources.

"By preventing fraud, by identifying it and tackling it effectively where it occurs, and by seeking to recover moneys lost we can ensure that precious NHS funds are used for their intended purpose of patient care."

However, chair of the Royal College of GPs Helen Stokes-Lampard, said the suggestion that GPs were defrauding the NHS is "shocking and will be incredibly hurtful".

"It is important to make sure that patient lists are kept as up-to-date as possible, so that resources are used where they are most needed - and our administrative staff already spend a lot of time processing patients' notes when we are informed that they have died, left the surgery or moved."

It remains to be seen how the NHSCFA will choose to navigate this contentious issue during the year ahead.

# National Procurement Exercise

Fraud within NHS procurement is a strategic priority area for the NHS Counter Fraud Authority (NHSCFA) for 2019-20; this is an area of concern across the whole of the NHS. Procurement accounts for a significant amount of NHS spend and activity, with indications that compliance with procurement rules is uneven across all sectors. With no central information on tenders and contract awards, it is difficult to accurately quantify the level of fraud; however it is estimated that the annual value of fraud in procurement is £351 million.

As a result, the NHSCFA is launching a national proactive exercise, working in collaboration with NHS providers, to obtain information on fraud risk vulnerability indicators. This will also contribute to improving the overall intelligence picture of procurement fraud in the NHS. Using information gathered in the NHSCFA's research so far, as well as in the national exercise, they will provide updated guidance on procurement fraud to help organisations address identified vulnerabilities and prevent fraud.

Quick guides on procurement fraud and more information about the [national procurement exercise here](#).

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