

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Colin Smyth
Convener
Economy and Fair Work Committee

By email
economyandfairwork.committee@parliament.scot

7 April 2025

Dear Colin,

In March 2021, the Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills wrote to the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee about the publication of [Scotland's Scams Prevention Strategy 12021-2024](#) as committed to in the 2019 Programme for Government.

The Strategy aimed to facilitate a more co-ordinated approach to tackling scams in Scotland. It introduced a new framework with an emphasis on prevention and disruption, awareness and education, and enforcement. The Strategy identified ten actions based on recommendations from a [report](#) commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2018. This report reviewed existing research and evidence on the financial costs of scams to the Scottish economy and sought to identify and measure preventative strategies designed to reduce their impact.

Since the Strategy was published, there has been a tremendous amount of activity on scams prevention and awareness. However, subsequent to the pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine, the people of Scotland, and indeed households across the UK and the world, have faced enormous cost of living pressures. At that time, the Scottish Government rightly prioritised its resources, and this meant that staff originally focused on scams prevention policy were no longer available.

This letter confirms that work on the Strategy has now concluded, with all ten action points completed by the Partnership. Key successes include:

- a roll out by Trading Standards Scotland (TSS) of nearly 1,000 free call blocking devices to vulnerable individuals who were most at risk from scammers and rogue traders, with support of Scottish Government funding;
- a heatmap highlighting scams activity across Scotland, developed by Advice Direct Scotland (ADS), with funding received from the Scottish Government;

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

- a project, funded by Scottish Government, to enhance the referral pathways available for connecting victims of scams to appropriate sources of support was carried out by ADS;
- the Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS) project, funded by the Scottish Government, delivered a number of measures including a National Financial Harm Toolkit;
- introduction of the www.approvedtrader.scot Trusted Trader scheme by SCOTSS which ensures that irrespective as to where a consumer lives within Scotland they can access traders who have been vetted and audited by Trading Standards; and
- cross-government and cross-sector working with the Scottish Government, UK Government, Home Office, and National Trading Standards on the Home Office Fraud Action Plan.

However, we know that scams continue to have an enormous cost, both to individuals and our wider economy, and that it remains imperative that this issue is considered strategically. Work to establish Consumer Scotland as the first Scotland-specific statutory and independent consumer advocacy body took place in parallel to the publication of the Strategy. The organisation formally vested in April 2022 following the passage and royal assent of the Consumer Scotland Act 2020.

Consumer organisations and the public sector – including enforcement organisations such as Trading Standards and Police Scotland – continue to progress work to firmly establish Scotland as an inhospitable environment for scammers, where people feel safe against the risk posed by scams and can readily access effective support to meet their needs. Examples include:

- the weekly [Scams Share bulletin](#) from TSS which provides information on the latest phone, email and online scams affecting Scottish consumers;
- the monthly [Cyberscotland bulletin](#) designed to provide consumers with information on cyber security and cyber resilience;
- the [Shut Out Scammers](#) yearly nationwide campaign – jointly organised by TSS and Police Scotland – empowers consumers to avoid doorstep scams;
- The Annual Big Scottish Scams Survey carried out by TSS which aims to find out more about the most commonly experienced scams in Scotland and assist in informing the content of future scams awareness campaigns.
- Seasonal campaigns by TSS such as the A-Z of Scams and the 12 Scams of Christmas; and
- the Scottish Government's Cyber Resilience team continues to have ongoing engagement with key demographic organisations such as Young Scot. This has included supporting and funding material to be inserted into the [YoungScot](#) magazine.

I hope that this update makes clear the importance we have placed on a coordinated and strategic approach to scams. The establishment of Consumer Scotland means that Scotland now benefits from an independent public body which can provide leadership, take strategic oversight, and coordinate a fragmented consumer landscape. Consumer Scotland oversees the consumer advice and advocacy work of third sector organisations Citizens Advice Scotland and Advice Direct Scotland – both of which carry out scams prevention and awareness work. Consumer Scotland has also provided funding to COSLA for scams prevention and awareness campaign work.

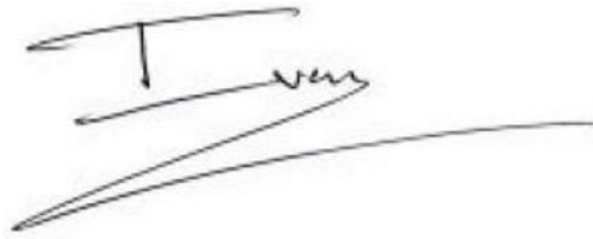
Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Consumer Scotland is therefore well placed to work across the public sector on scams prevention and awareness. I can therefore confirm to the Committee that Consumer Scotland will now lead on such activity from the start of the forthcoming financial year (2025-2026). This will not only support Consumer Scotland to develop as an organisation within a challenged fiscal environment, but is a key component of the organisation's work to assess wider consumer detriment priorities.

While the Scottish Government will continue to set government policy, it is for Consumer Scotland as an independent non-ministerial office to decide how to take forward this important strand of work in line with its work programme. Meanwhile, Scottish Ministers may commission formal advice from Consumer Scotland in relation to our approach to scams, in line with the Consumer Scotland Act 2020.

I remain fully committed to doing all we can as a government, working in partnership with the wider advice and regulatory landscape, to make life harder for scammers and improve outcomes for those targeted by scams.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ivan McKee', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

IVAN MCKEE

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
We invest in people Silver

