

CLIENT ALERT

The Crown Prosecution Service launches first ever Economic Crime Strategy

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On 30 March 2021, the Crown Prosecution Service (the “**CPS**”) issued its first ever [Economic Crime Strategy](#) (the “**Strategy**”), which sets out its “*high level vision*” for tackling “*economic crime*” offences by 2025.

The Strategy aims “*to provide a holistic response*” to combat all forms of economic criminality, including fraud, bribery and corruption, money laundering, terrorist financing, sanctions and market abuse.

The Strategy is structured around five aims, namely:

1. “*Our People*”: ensuring CPS staff are sufficiently trained, equipped and supported to prosecute increasingly complex economic crime.
2. “*Digital Capabilities*”: focusing on the use of technology in the CPS’s operations in respect of case management, preparation and presentation – for example, the use of virtual hearings and artificial intelligence in disclosure.
3. “*Strategic Partnerships*”: considering the CPS’s collaboration with its partners to tackle economic crime in the UK, including increasing criminality arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic and the significant increase in people working remotely.
4. “*Casework Quality*”: improving the standard of the CPS’s casework to provide early investigative advice, pursuit of asset recovery and the use of international deployment where required to tackle domestic crime.

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5. “*Public Confidence*”: increasing public confidence in the work of the CPS through developing economic crime policies based on victim feedback, communicating a clear economic crime communication strategy by promoting its successful cases, and recovering the proceeds of crime and compensating victims.

The CPS has also committed to support the creation of the first ever economic crime court in London, and the use of more Nightingale courts (such courts being additional venues to provide increased court capacity in response to the Covid-19 outbreak) for fraud cases to ensure more timely prosecutions of such cases.

In publishing the Strategy, the CPS notes that over the past financial year, it has prosecuted 10,000 economic crime cases, although it fails to identify the number of convictions that have resulted from those prosecutions, and recovered over £100 million from criminals’ “*ill-gotten gains*”. The CPS also estimates that £479 million was lost to fraudulent scams in 2020 and that 86% of reported fraud is based on cyber-fraud using new technologies.

The Strategy is high-level and short on detail but signals the CPS’s intent to align itself with ongoing government initiatives to combat economic crime and corruption (such as the UK government’s [Economic Crime Plan 2019-2022](#)) against a backdrop of ever-increasing serious criminal activity in this area. The focus on the use of digital technology in the CPS’s operations similarly mirrors other law enforcement trends to prevent and prosecute cyber-fraud. Overall, the Strategy contains no surprising proposals or any change in the CPS’s aim to combat economic crime and fails to address how the CPS intends to turn a seemingly impressive number of prosecutions into convictions and/or compensation payable to victims.

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