



News Release:

Essex IT manager pleads guilty to £800,000 NHS fraud

Guilty plea follows procurement fraud investigation led by the NHS Counter Fraud Authority

Date: 27/05/2021

A former senior IT manager for what was Mid Essex Hospital Trust (MEHT) has pleaded guilty to defrauding his employer of over £800,000.

Barry David Stannard, (53 of Chelmsford, Essex, previously of Hadleigh, Ipswich) has pleaded guilty to four offences (26 May 2021) at Chelmsford Crown Court: two charges of fraud by false representation and two charges of cheating the public revenue.

The offences took place when he was Head of Unified Communications at MEHT, which has since been merged into Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust. The court determined that the total amount defrauded was £806,229.80.

As a band 8B Senior Manager, he was in a position of trust. The court case comes at a time when the NHSCFA has renewed its focus on procurement fraud, and is encouraging more people to report any suspicion of it through the established reporting lines.

In this case, concerns first arose after the trust ran a data matching exercise on its payroll and accounts payable records, alongside Companies House records.

Initial enquiries were conducted by the Local Counter Fraud Specialist provider (RSM) and the investigation was escalated to the national level investigation by the NHSCFA as the likely scale of the losses involved emerged.

While Stannard had submitted a 'nil return' declaration of interests form to the trust, the investigation confirmed he was actually the director of two companies that had received a large amount of money from the trust over at least seven years (2012-2019).

No products or services invoiced for by these companies were ever provided to the NHS.

The hundreds of invoices submitted by his own companies to MEHT were all individually for relatively modest amounts – meaning Stannard was authorised to sign them off without further checks.

On the invoices he submitted, he also charged for VAT which was never forwarded to HMRC. The VAT registration number quoted on some of the invoices was false and

related to another legitimate company. The VAT he charged the NHS totalled an excess of £132,000. This is included in the total of £806,229.80 that Stannard defrauded the NHS.

The payments came from MEHT's IT budget.

The NHSCFA works closely with other enforcement agencies, in this case alerting HMRC that Stannard had appropriated a legitimate company's VAT number.

Stannard is due to appear at Chelmsford Crown Court for sentencing on 30 June 2021.

(ends)

If you suspect that anyone is committing fraud or another economic crime against the NHS, tell NHSCFA about it – you can visit our main website to report online:

www.cfa.nhs.uk or telephone our 24-hour reporting line 0800 028 40 60.

“NHS fraud. Spot it, report it, together we stop it”

**For more information contact the NHSCFA press office on 07747 461860/
media@nhscfa.gov.uk.**

Notes to Editors

1. The NHS Counter Fraud Authority is a Special Health Authority established under the NHS Act 2006 as amended. It is sponsored by the Department for Health and Social Care, accountable to the department's Anti-Fraud Unit (AFU).
2. The NHSCFA assess that the NHS vulnerability to fraud, bribery and corruption leads to an estimated loss of £1.21 billion (2018-19).
3. When NHSCFA uses the term 'fraud', we refer to a range of economic crimes, such as fraud, bribery, corruption or any other illegal acts committed by an individual or group of individuals to obtain a financial or professional gain.
4. NHSCFA also supports the work of the NHS Counter Fraud Service (Wales).
5. NHSCFA works closely with NHS Local Counter Fraud Specialists across the NHS in England to ensure that healthcare crime is tackled, and a culture of fraud prevention and deterrence is in place.
6. NHSCFA works collaboratively with NHS Scotland Counter Fraud Services on fraud issues.
7. There are some 300 professionally trained and accredited Local Counter Fraud Specialists in place within health bodies across England and Wales.