

# Petty cash

NHS fraud prevention quick guide

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**Petty cash is held and maintained locally for the purchase of small value sundry items or for incidental expenses. Fraud relating to petty cash can occur if, for example, a dishonest claim is made for a non-authorized item or expenditure.**

## Who is this quick guide for?

This guidance is intended for staff with delegated responsibility for handling petty cash, their managers and NHS finance teams.

## How to spot fraud

It is important for staff to remain vigilant to fraudulent activity and loss relating to petty cash. Here are some vulnerabilities to be aware of:

- No receipt for expenditure or monies spent.
- Misrepresented expense claims and receipts.
- Using petty cash to fund unauthorised activities which are not in line with the NHS organisation's policy.
- Using petty cash to purchase unauthorised items.
- Failing to validate a patient's entitlement prior to approving a reimbursement.
- Failing to verify the identity of the patient claiming a reimbursement.
- 'Borrowing cash' from the petty cash fund.
- 'I owe you' messages in place of cash or valid receipts.
- Unrestricted access to the petty cash fund.

NHS organisations should be mindful that although petty cash amounts handled at any



given time may be small, the real indicator of fraud is the amounts of funds that are cumulatively disbursed through the account over the year.

## How to stop fraud

The following controls should be in place for managing petty cash:

### Finance teams

- NHS organisations should have a policy and standard operating procedures (SOPs) with clear instructions for staff on the management and use of petty cash. The policy should include what the cash may be used for; the maximum limits for individual payments and the agreed maximum float amounts to be held at any time.
- The number of petty cash funds within the NHS organisation should be kept to a minimum.
- A record of all petty cash funds available within the NHS organisation should be kept.
- Regular audits should be carried out in order to review the management and use of the funds.
- Access to petty cash funds should be restricted to authorised staff only.
- Finance teams should undertake regular reviews of staff authorised to handle petty cash and ensure their authorised lists are up to date.

### Managers/Staff

- Staff should have access to an annually reviewed petty cash policy stating that all cash disbursed must be used solely towards the objectives of the NHS organisation.
- All purchases made using petty cash should be in accordance with the NHS organisation's policy, i.e. for items authorised and to the value set by the NHS organisation's policy.
- Staff should not reimburse any monies without a relevant receipt being provided in line with the NHS organisation's policy.
- A record of all expenditure and receipts for items purchased using petty cash funds should be kept.
- Staff should ensure that their accounts are balanced at the end of each day.

### Security

- Where feasible, petty cash funds should always be kept in a safe with access restricted to authorised staff only. If this is not available, petty cash should be kept in a cash box within a lockable drawer.

## If you suspect fraud

- Items purchased without a valid receipt should be rejected and staff held to account.
- Any short falls from the petty cash fund should always be questioned and investigated by a member of the finance team.
- If fraud is suspected the organisation's escalation process should be followed immediately and the Local Counter Fraud Specialist contacted for advice (see also how to report fraud below).

## How to report fraud

Report any suspicions of fraud to NHS Counter Fraud Authority online at <https://cfa.nhs.uk/reportfraud> or through the NHS Fraud and Corruption Reporting Line **0800 028 4060** (powered by Crimestoppers). All reports are treated in confidence and you have the option to report anonymously.

You can also report fraud to your nominated Local Counter Fraud Specialist.

## Why take action?

Having a policy and SOP in place for the management of petty cash ensures there is oversight, holds staff to account and assists in the prevention and detection of fraud. By implementing these recommendations NHS organisations will reduce their risk of falling victim to fraudulent activity and suffering financial losses.

## Further information

- <https://cfa.nhs.uk/fraud-prevention/fraud-guidance>
- For further information visit the NHSCFA website [www.cfa.nhs.uk](http://www.cfa.nhs.uk)
- Details of your Local Counter Fraud Specialist:

**Space for business card / contact information**