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## Restricting ticket resale empowers fraudsters

We can pretend that price caps will solve the problem. Or we can build on a secure, regulated resale ecosystem.

By Dr Nicola Harding

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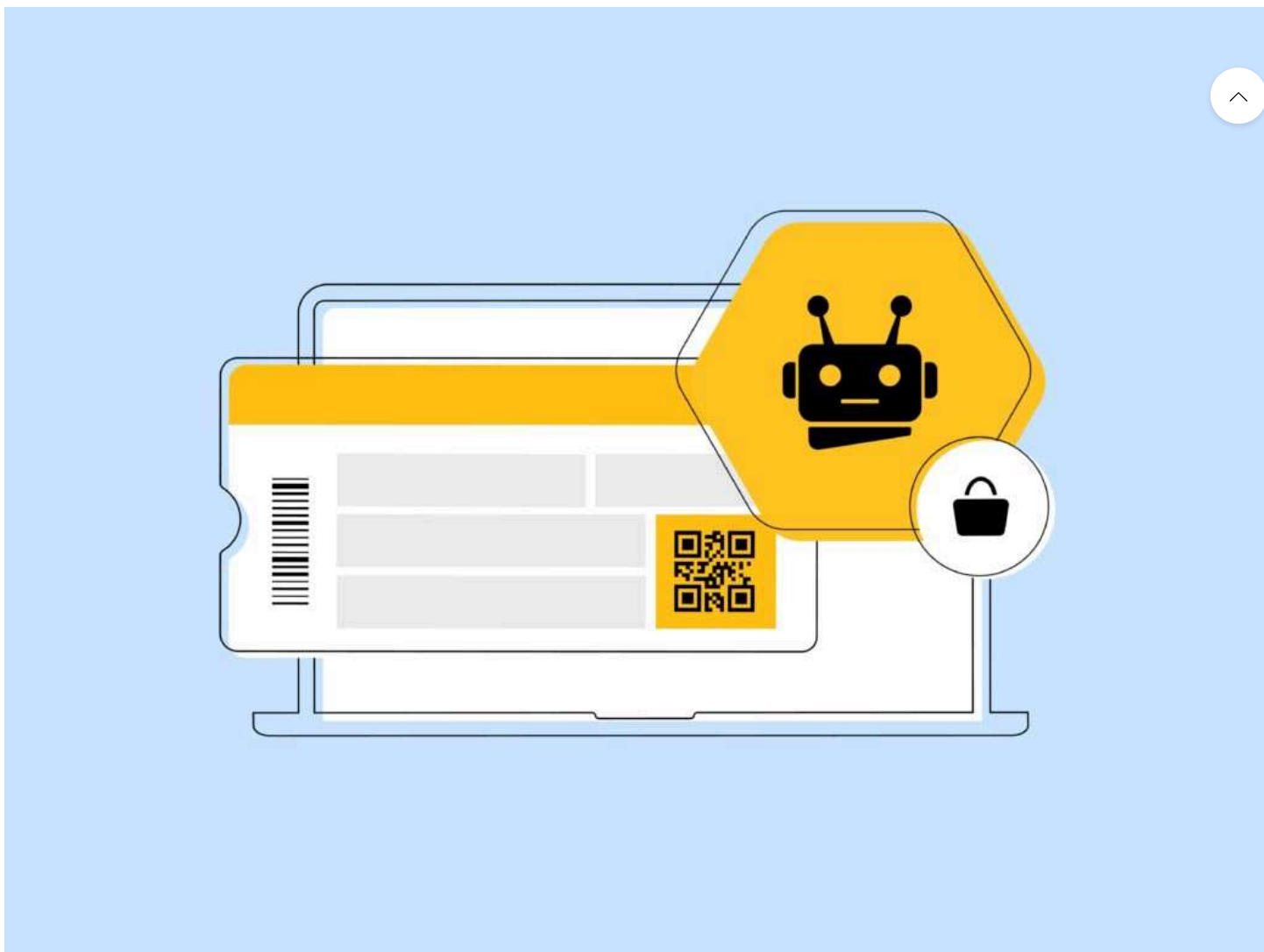


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I posed as a desperate fan trying to buy tickets to a Premier League match. Within minutes, I was chatting in a Facebook group where a “seller” offered me a ticket for £150. I was told to pay a £50 “name change fee” and to transfer it to a bank account under someone else’s name. As soon as I sent the money, I was blocked. No ticket. No seller. No trace.

This wasn’t a one-off. It’s the reality of the ticketing black market – a fastgrowing, digital criminal underworld that thrives when regulation drives consumers away from legitimate resale platforms and into the shadows.

Amid the UK government’s current consultation on secondary ticketing, calls are growing for price caps. It may seem like a sensible solution to preventing inflated prices. From where I’m sitting, it’s a fraudster’s dream. Bans and caps won’t stop the scammers. They’ll supercharge them.

As CEO of We Fight Fraud, a unit consisting of former police, intelligence officers, academic researchers, cyber specialists, and financial crime experts, we set out to answer a simple question: What happens when you try to buy tickets in a market where price caps have been introduced? Do price caps work?

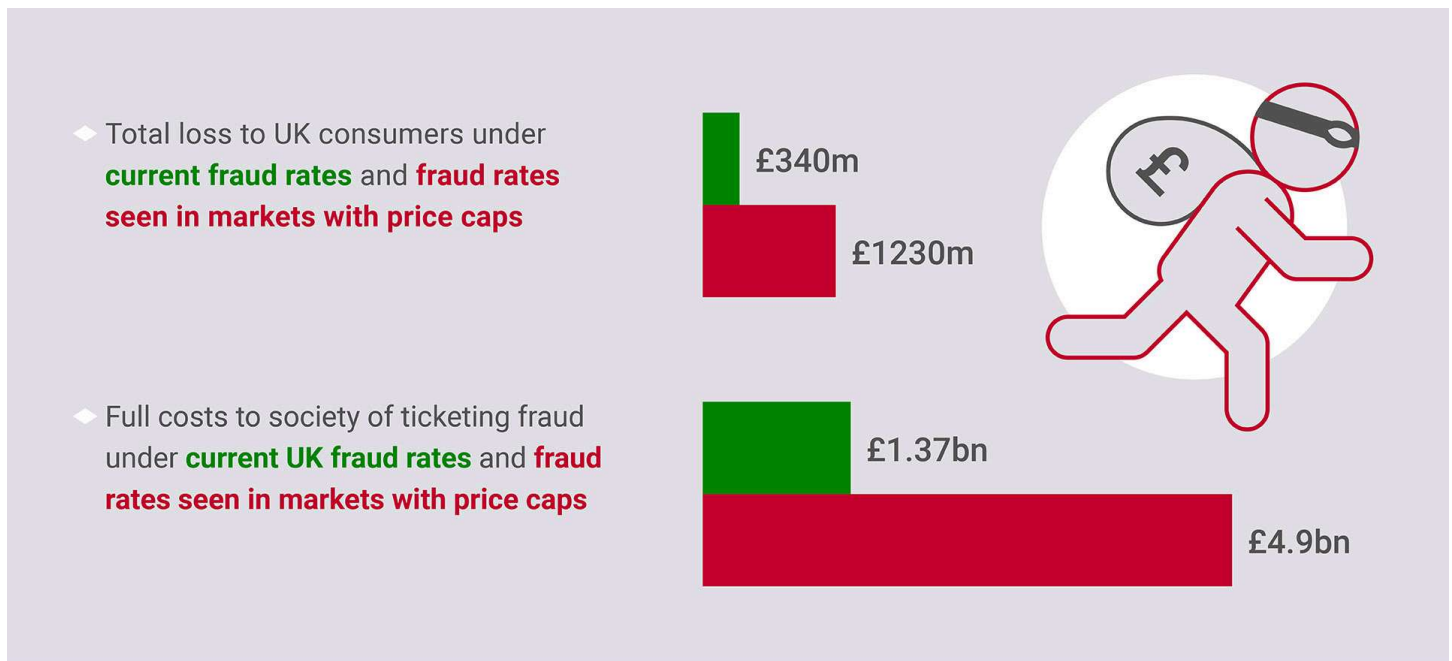
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The results of our research were alarming. In over half of our test purchases, buyers were scammed. When tickets did arrive, they had typically been resold illegally. The purchasing process was often drawn out and opaque, with communications coming from international phone numbers and payments requested via suspected money mule accounts.

Rather than protecting consumers, price caps or a ban on ticket resale will push legitimate demand for tickets underground, into social media platforms, where fraudsters thrive. This risk is well-evidenced in other markets. In Ireland, resale above face value has been banned for designated events since 2021. We put this to the test to see if it works. We very quickly found two pairs of tickets to a Teddy Swims event, one from a social media site and the other from a ticketing website, which is in clear violation of the law, but lists the tickets regardless. Both sets were priced at over four times the face value, with a string of additional charges. Clearly, these price cap regulations are being circumnavigated.



\*Source: Bradshaw Advisory, conducted 2025

### The price of good intentions

When looking at the overall live events industry, new research from Bradshaw Advisory, verified in our own testing, found that since price cap restrictions were brought into both Ireland and Victoria, Australia, 13.6 per cent of consumers have reported being scammed, compared to just 3.8 per cent in the UK. That’s more than triple the fraud rate.

Data from the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau, Action Fraud and the National Crime Agency shows that the cost of reported ticket fraud for England and Wales was £70m last year. Introducing caps could increase this to a £280m loss.

The reality is that the introduction of price caps pushes people out of safer environments and into riskier ones. When you remove legal resale routes, desperate fans turn to social media channels.

Data by Get Safe Online revealed that one in eight buyers have reported being scammed when looking for tickets on social media, and history suggests price caps will increase these numbers.

Our team found that three out of four tickets purchased via social media in test cases were either fake or never arrived. Those are not odds fans should be gambling with.

## Football tickets: crime by design

Nowhere is ticketing fraud more prevalent than in football. In the UK, football ticket resale is a criminal offence under the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. The intention was to protect fans, but it inadvertently created the perfect conditions for scammers.

We attempted to buy five tickets to Liverpool vs Southampton from a mix of platforms, including unregulated resale sites and social media groups. Two were outright scams, and two were legitimate tickets, but obtained illegally by proxy, using another person's membership details. In one case, a fraudster demanded extra payment for "name change" after the initial payment was sent, before vanishing. Another provided bank details that didn't match the seller's name, which is a classic money-muling tactic designed to hide the true recipient and launder proceeds of fraud. What became apparent was that these weren't amateur scammers. They were organised networks.

## The looming financial fallout: APP Fraud

The scam doesn't end with the fan who gets ripped off. Since October 2024, banks have been legally obligated to reimburse victims of Authorised Push Payment (APP) fraud (scams where consumers willingly transfer money to fraudsters). In our ticketing fraud investigations, every social media scam was an APP fraud. Money was sent directly to accounts controlled by criminals or their mules.

This shows when policy displaces fans into high-risk environments, the cost of fraud doesn't just fall on the victim, it falls on every bank, every business, and eventually, every consumer. If resale caps increase fraud, which the data strongly suggests it does and will, the banking sector and the wider economy will shoulder the consequences. Fans will find a way. Advertorial In partnership with There is one unavoidable truth that policymakers must reckon with: there is persistent, legitimate demand for secondary tickets. If fans can't buy them safely, they'll buy them anyway.

We have a choice. We can pretend price caps will solve the problem and let fraud flourish in the shadows. Or we build on a secure, transparent, regulated resale ecosystem that protects fans, cracks down on crime and brings accountability to the market. Because resale isn't the enemy. Fraud is. And right now, by driving fans underground, we're not just ignoring the threat – we're handing fraudsters the keys to the kingdom.

*Nicola Harding is the CEO of We Fight Fraud.*

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