

May 2014 Benefit Investigations Briefing

Under Welfare Reform the DWP are creating a Single Fraud Investigation Section. This will investigate all social security and tax credit fraud and will be fully operational by March 2016. We have been advised that our team will transfer to this new organisation on 1 March 2015. At present we do not know how this transfer will take place. Internal discussions are currently underway as to how this change might affect the authority.

Fraud is unacceptable and the team work hard to protect the public purse by identifying claims which have been made incorrectly or fraudulently. In these times of pressures on Local Authority budgets it is essential that the team ensures that we “pay the right people the right benefit at the right time”.

There is a fraud hot line and report it function on the web. These generate a large number of potential leads for the team to investigate. Allegations are also provided by Housing Benefit Team members and from other colleagues within the Council. Data matching exercises also provide the team with cases to investigate.

2013/2014 Fraud Performance

- We investigated 332 allegations of fraud;
- We prosecuted 14 cases of fraud in court;
- We applied Administration Penalties (a fine equivalent to 50% of the amount overpaid) to 6 cases; and
- We cautioned 47 cases of fraud.
- We identified fraudulent overpayments totalling £153,450

We identified 1 case where the amount of benefit overpaid exceeded £10,000. This overpayment was caused by the customer’s failure to declare the true level of their savings. The resulting overpayment of £19,000 has been repaid.

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