

Annual Business Plan 2008/09

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the main elements of fraud work that the investigation team intends to undertake during 2008/2009. It sets the annual targets for the team to work towards, and details the performance reporting mechanisms.

2. Investigation Team Duties and Responsibilities

- 2.1 The investigation team consists of two dedicated investigation officers. These officers are responsible for the investigation of all cases where an allegation of benefit fraud has been made. This team is supported by one intelligence gathering assistant and one clerical support assistant who gather evidence required to assist in the investigation of any allegation made. This team also maintains a database of all referrals of suspected benefit fraud. The database also details the results of investigations, any resulting fraudulent benefit overpayments, the types of fraud committed and decisions on progression of sanctions taken against the individual(s).
- 2.2 The Team Leader (Fraud) supports the Section Head (Revenues) in ensuring that recommendations made by the BFI on counter fraud activity are continuing to be adhered to and reporting performance to DWP on a quarterly basis. The Team Leader (Fraud) leads the investigation team ensuring that sufficient evidence is gathered to invoke sanctions in all appropriate cases and that cases are investigated to prosecution standards. The officer prepares reports for submission to the Procurator Fiscal, and ensures that procedures are updated and adhered to and has introduced a management checking regime and reporting of counter fraud performance.
- 2.3 The Team Leader (Fraud) is also responsible for 2 visiting officers. These officers carry out a number of duties including; residency checks, high risk review visits and first cheque deliveries, all of which contribute to WDC's anti fraud work. The role of these visiting officers will be expanded in 2007/08 to assist the council tax section in evidence gathering for empty property relief.

3. Training

- 3.1 The e-learning fraud awareness-training programme that started in August 2007 will continue to be available to all benefit staff, front line counter staff and Registered Social Landlords.

This package aims to educate users on types of benefit fraud, the role of the council and partners, in prevention and detection and how to make a referral to the investigation team. The programme also includes a personal on line assessment to test understanding. The test results are automatically uploaded to a database for management to view.

- 3.2 Since November 2007 all new employees have had fraud awareness as part of their corporate induction training.

- 3.3 The investigation team provide regular feedback to staff who refer suspected fraud cases. This is carried out by the return of an outcome sheet for each case.

4. Reactive Investigations

- 4.1 The start to any successful investigation is the quality of the referrals received. The investigation team sifts all referrals and will use a risk scoring matrix to “score” each referral to ensure investigations are only undertaken on the most suitable risk cases.

- 4.2 The investigation team will investigate appropriate cases and the aim of the investigations will be:-

- (a) To identify where frauds have occurred and correct the award of benefit.
- (b) To impose, where appropriate, sanctions in line with Council policy.
- (c) To identify weaknesses in the process for claiming and processing benefit claims and report these.

5. Proactive Investigations

5.1 During 2008/2009 the investigation team will undertake the following proactive fraud activity:-

(a) Data Matching

The investigation team will investigate all fraudulent cases resulting from data matching. This team undertakes to play a full roll in developing data matching from two sources:-

(i) Housing Benefit Matching Service

(ii) Audit-Scotland (National Fraud Initiative)

(b) Joint Working

The investigation team will participate in joint working with other organisations and will jointly investigate all suitable cases with our Fraud Investigation Service (FIS) colleagues.

(c) Other Fraud Drives

Depending on resources the inspection team will carry out proactive fraud drives into different aspects of benefit fraud and will include the following:-

(i) Landlord drives

(ii) First Cheque deliveries

(iii) Selected identified employer drives

(iv) Publicising the National Benefit Fraud hotline number using a number of mediums such as:

- Local Press
- Staff wage slips
- Carrier bags supplied by local libraries

(v) Developing the investigation team's web page on the internet, giving information about fraud and how to report it using the online referral form.

(vi) We will our case management and management information.

(vii) Participation in the 2008/09 DWP national fraud campaign. We will display the serious of national posters detailing the national fraud hotline number and our contact details in various council offices purchase and install a new fraud management system which will enhance and public buildings.

6. Performance Targets

6.1 The main targets set for the investigation team are as follows:-

(a) Sanctions

(i) Total number of cases submitted to Procurator Fiscal and successful prosecutions: 10

(ii) Total number of Administrative penalties offered and Accepted: 5

(ii) Total number of Administrative cautions offered and Accepted: 3

7. Monitoring and Reporting

7.1 The Team Leader (Fraud) will report to the Section Head (Revenues) at the end of each month on the activity for that month and the year to date totals for the following:-

(a) The number of referrals received, accepted and rejected

(b) The number of referrals sifted within 10 working days

(c) The number of investigations commenced in the month

(d) The number of cases closed in the month

(e) The number of data matches received and resolved within 2 months

(f) The number of interviews under caution carried out

(g) The number of cases passed for sanction consideration

(h) The number of administrative cautions offered and accepted

(i) The number of administrative penalties offered and accepted

(j) The number of successful prosecutions.

7.2 Fraud activity will be reported to the relevant Committee at first available meeting after the end of year.

7.3 In addition to this the team will undertake to hold monthly meetings to discuss achieving targets and all other related fraud issues.

8. Publicity

- 8.1 The Department will publicise any successful prosecution

9. Reviews

- 9.1 This document is a working document and regular reviews will be carried out by the Team Leader (Fraud) to ensure that the content is maintained and up to date. The reviews will be carried out annually and a fresh business plan drawn up for each financial year. The aim of the review is to ensure that the investigation team undertakes a process of setting challenging but achievable targets and seeks continuous improvement.