

**Annex 3
Counter Fraud Activity 2007/08**

Activity	Work Completed or in Progress
Training	Fraud awareness training has been provided for new benefits and housing staff during the course of the year. In addition, work has been done to prepare fraud awareness training sessions for all other Housing and Council Tax Benefit staff.
Public and Internal Fraud Awareness	A targeted fraud awareness publicity campaign was undertaken in March 2008. This included material directed at both staff and the public and included, for example, press advertisements, articles in staff newsletters and publications, and posters in Council office. On an ongoing basis throughout the year the service has received publicity in relation to successful prosecutions through the local press.
Advice and Guidance	Ongoing advice and guidance is provided on the design and implementation of measures to prevent and detect fraud and other financial irregularities. For example changes to the design of benefit claim forms and the implementation of security measures in Council establishments and offices. Feedback is given to relevant staff on all cases investigated. This feedback is intended to encourage more referrals and also includes recommendations to change or improve systems and procedures so as to prevent or detect fraud in the future, where necessary.
Data Matching	<p>Throughout 2007/08 the Fraud Team has carried out ongoing work on 2006/07 Audit Commission National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data matches - a total of 20 NFI investigations were concluded during the year. The Commission has commended the work carried out to investigate these matches.</p> <p>The team has also coordinated the collection of data for an additional NFI data match in 2007/08 using council tax and electoral registration records. This exercise has resulted in approximately</p>

	<p>3000 matches that now have to be investigated by the Council. This work is ongoing.</p> <p>The Fraud Team has continued to investigate potential benefit fraud cases identified by the DWP through the HBMS data match process. The Council received 457 HBMS referrals during the year of which 110 required detailed investigation. Benefit overpayments identified as a result of this work totalled £143k of which £78k was fraudulent. In seven cases the claimant was prosecuted or received a sanction (an administrative penalty or caution). Total HBMS referrals were lower than normal in 2007/08 due to the suspension of data flows between the Council and DWP, as a result of security fears following the loss of data by HM Revenue and Customs in 2007. The DWP has now completed a review of procedures for transferring data and the HBMS service resumed in April 2008.</p>
Joint Working with Other Agencies	<p>The Fraud Partnership Agreement (FPA) with the DWP which encourages and facilitates joint working on relevant cases is now fully operational and is proving to be very successful. Both agencies are cooperating on individual investigations and sharing information to identify further possible fraud. In 2007/08 the Fraud team has been involved in 78 joint working cases with the DWP.</p> <p>The Fraud Team has continued to take part in specific joint exercises with other agencies and other Council departments. For example, the team has worked on a number of cases with Housing and Trading Standards (some of which have now been successfully concluded) and has worked closely with the police on an ongoing basis.</p>
Financial Investigations	<p>All investigations are monitored to assess their suitability for financial investigation and asset recovery. The team commenced one major financial investigation during the year (which is ongoing), and a number of other cases are currently being considered for further action.</p>
Proactive Work	<p>Proactive work during the year has focussed on the development of procedures for investigating disabled blue badge fraud as the number of cases referred has continued to rise. The team has</p>

	<p>worked with officers from Parking Services and Corporate Support within HASS (who administer blue badges) to look at how these cases should be investigated and what action can be taken. As a result of investigations completed, 10 cases were referred to the police for further action. Work is ongoing to develop a policy on blue badge fraud and enforcement.</p>
Other	<p>A review of overall Council policies for countering fraud and corruption has been undertaken. A new Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy and an updated Fraud and Corruption Prosecution Policy were approved by Members on 18 March 2008.</p> <p>The Audit and Fraud Team has undertaken five internal investigations in 2007/08, and has carried out additional work in relation to eight minor thefts or frauds.</p>