

COUNTER FRAUD ACTIVITY 2009/10

(A) The table below shows the total numbers of investigations completed, sanctions applied, fraudulent overpayments identified by the counter fraud team to date. The table also shows performance against agreed targets (as at 30/11/09):

| | 2009/10 Actual to date | 2009/10 Target | 2008/09 Actual |
|--|------------------------|---|----------------|
| Number of Benefit Fraud referrals received (excluding HBMS). <i>The target is designed to promote fraud awareness and encourage people to report suspected fraud.</i> | 268 | 450 referrals to be received | 433 |
| % of referrals which are investigated (excluding HBMS). <i>The target is designed to measure the quality of referrals received and the capacity of the counter fraud team to investigate cases.</i> | 53% | 60% of referrals investigated | 50.5% |
| % of investigations completed which result in a positive outcome (benefit stopped or amended, sanction or prosecution). <i>The target is designed to measure the effectiveness of counter fraud activity</i> | 38% | 25% of those cases which are investigated to result in a positive outcome | Note 1 |
| Value of fraudulent overpayments identified. <i>The target is designed to measure the effectiveness of counter fraud activity</i> | £250k | £300k of overpayments to be identified | £304k |
| Number of investigations completed | 203 | N/A | 317 |
| Number of sanctions / prosecutions | 29 | N/A | 55 |

Note 1 - these are new performance targets for 2009/10. The corresponding data for 2008/09 is not available for this indicator.

(B) The relevant caseload figures for the period are:

| | As at 1/4/09 | As at 30/11/09 |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Awaiting allocation | 52 | 50 |
| Under investigation | 201 | 147 |

(C) Other counter fraud activity completed during 2009/10 to date:

| Activity | Work Completed or in Progress |
|---------------------|---|
| Fraud Awareness | <p>Work has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the continuing provision of fraud awareness training to housing and council tax benefit staff • ongoing publication of successful prosecutions through the local press <p>As in previous years a targeted benefit fraud publicity campaign will be undertaken in February and March.</p> |
| Advice and Guidance | <p>Ongoing advice and guidance is provided on the design and implementation of measures to prevent and detect fraud and other financial irregularities. 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.</p> |
| Data Matching | <p><i>Audit Commission National Fraud Initiative (NFI):</i> Work is continuing to investigate cases identified in the last NFI exercise. We have recently provided the Audit Commission with council tax and housing data to assist in further specific NFI exercises to identify people suspected of falsely claiming single person discounts or who may have either abandoned or sublet their</p> |

| Activity | Work Completed or in Progress |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| | <p>properties.</p> <p><i>Housing Benefit Matching Service (HBMS):</i> The counter fraud team has continued to investigate potential benefit fraud cases identified by the DWP through the HBMS data match process. The council has received 463 HBMS referrals to date this year off which 35 have been passed for investigation.</p> |
| Joint Working with Other Agencies | <p>The service has continued to work closely with the DWP in the investigation of benefit fraud – a total of 17 joint council and DWP cases have resulted in a prosecution or sanction to date. A further 56 cases are currently the subject of a joint investigation. The team has also continued to develop its relationships with other council departments and external agencies. This includes information sharing and support on joint cases with Housing and Trading Standards, and involvement with police led search and arrest operations.</p> |
| Financial Investigations | <p>All investigations are monitored to assess their suitability for financial investigation and asset recovery. Two financial investigations are currently ongoing.</p> |
| Proactive Work | <p>The counter fraud team has scheduled a proactive data matching exercise in the new year targeting claimants who have not declared seasonal work.</p> |
| Other | <p>The counter fraud team will be participating in the government's national initiative to target housing related fraud. The initiative will also involve joint working with other social landlords in the area.</p> |