

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 31/03/10):

	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>	391	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>	51%	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>	35%	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>	£340k	£300k of overpayments to be identified	£304k
Number of investigations completed	327	N/A	317
Number of sanctions / prosecutions	44	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 31/03/10
Awaiting allocation	52	75
Under investigation	201	157

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

Activity	Work Completed or in Progress
Fraud Awareness	<p>Work includes ongoing provision of fraud awareness training to housing and council tax benefit staff, the publication of successful prosecutions through the local press, and internal publicity eg articles in news and jobs.</p> <p>The counter fraud team has recently undertaken an exercise to assess levels of fraud awareness across the council. This was a joint exercise with North Yorkshire County Council, using a web based questionnaire. The survey was issued to 300 managers and supervisors across the council. The results have shown a number of areas requiring improvement and an action plan to address these issues is therefore currently being prepared.</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 ongoing to investigate cases identified in the last NFI exercise. The results of the next set of data matches is expected to be received in</p>

Activity	Work Completed or in Progress
	<p>the near future.</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 678 HBMS referrals to date this year of which 41 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 20 joint council and DWP cases have resulted in a prosecution or sanction to date. A further 64 cases are currently the subject of a joint investigation. Work to develop relationships with other agencies is ongoing. The team is currently in discussions with housing services, and with housing associations about referrals for tenancy related fraud as part of the current government sponsored housing fraud project.</p>
Other	<p>The counter fraud team is participating in the government's national initiative to target housing related fraud as noted above. Systems have been put in place to monitor referrals and investigate suspected fraud, where appropriate. A major campaign to publicise the initiative is currently underway. This includes posters and leaflets and radio advertisements.</p>