

COUNTER FRAUD ACTIVITY 2010/11

The table below shows the total numbers of investigations completed, sanctions applied, and overpayments identified by the counter fraud team to date. The table also shows performance against agreed targets (as at 31 March):

	2010/11 (Actual)	2010/11 (Target)	2009/10 (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>	456	400 referrals to be received	391
% 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>	52%	60% of referrals investigated	51%
% 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>	62%	25% of those cases which are investigated to result in a positive outcome	35%
Value of fraudulent overpayments identified. <i>The target is designed to measure the effectiveness of counter fraud activity</i>	£390k	£350k of overpayments to be identified	£340k
Number of investigations completed ¹	676	N/A	327
Number of sanctions / prosecutions	53	N/A	44

¹ The increase in investigations completed is largely a result of increased referral of, and processing of, HBMS cases. These are generally high volume, low activity cases although there is some consequent impact on the numbers of cases that require more detailed investigation.

The relevant caseload figures for the period are:

	As at 1/4/10	As at 31/3/11
Awaiting allocation	174	91
Under investigation	237	259

Summary of counter fraud activity:

Activity	Work Completed or in Progress
Data Matching	<p>Data was submitted for the National Fraud Initiative at the beginning of October. The results of the data match have recently been received. They include 4,091 matches of which 1,300 have been flagged as a priority for review by the Audit Commission. The matches will be reviewed by Veritau in 2011/12 and further investigations will be undertaken where necessary.</p> <p>Housing Benefit Matching Service (HBMS) referrals continue to be investigated - the council received 881 HBMS referrals in 2010/11. The total value of benefit overpayments identified through HBMS in 2010/11 is £242k.</p>
Fraud Detection and Investigation	<p>As in previous years, the majority of investigations undertaken relate to benefit fraud.</p> <p>Veritau also undertook the investigation of housing tenancy related fraud through the Operation Red Card initiative. In 2010/11, 93 housing related referrals were received from the public and from council staff – a quarter of these are currently under investigation. Five properties have been recovered from tenants since April 2010. Veritau is currently working with housing officers to develop a longer term framework for investigating housing related fraud.</p>

Activity	Work Completed or in Progress
	<p>Joint working with other teams continues to be a priority. In 2010/11, 34% of sanctions and prosecutions were the result of joint working with the DWP. Other initiatives include a joint exercise with the police and taxi licensing officers involving random checks on Hackney Carriage and private hire drivers.</p> <p>The counter fraud team has continued to undertake other special investigations (including internal fraud) and provide advice to council departments on fraud matters. 18 referrals were received in 2010/11, and a number of investigations are still underway.</p>
Fraud Awareness	<p>Ongoing activity includes publication of successful prosecutions through the local press, other internal and external publicity, and feedback on the results of fraud investigations to council officers to improve the quality of referrals and to put in place appropriate controls to prevent and detect fraud. The team delivered 7 targeted fraud awareness training session in a number of areas including housing benefits, the York Customer Centre, council tax, and financial assessments.</p>