

COUNTER FRAUD ACTIVITY 2011/12

The table below shows the total numbers of fraud referrals received and summarises the outcomes of investigations completed. While benefit fraud is still a major role for the team, there is a continuing increase in the work the team undertakes in other areas. The indicators have been updated from previous years to reflect this and now include the full range of counter fraud work undertaken.

	2011/12 (as at 29/2/12)	2011/12 (Target: Full Yr)	2010/11 (Actual: Full Yr)
Number of Fraud referrals received. <i>The target is designed to promote fraud awareness and encourage people to report suspected fraud.</i>	544	400	456
% of investigations completed which result in a successful outcome (for example benefit stopped or amended, sanctions, prosecutions, properties recovered, housing allocations blocked, management action taken). <i>The target is designed to measure the effectiveness of counter fraud activity</i>	39%	30%	62%
Value of fraudulent benefit overpayments identified. <i>The target is designed to measure the effectiveness of counter fraud activity</i>	£554k	£350k	£390k
Number of investigations completed	320	N/A	266 ¹
Number of successful outcomes ²	124	N/A	53

There has been a significant increase in the value of fraudulent benefit overpayments identified in the year to date (£554k) compared to last year. Looking at cases resulting in an overpayment shows the average value is £1.9k per case in 2011/12 - an increase of 67% since 2010/11. Further analysis indicates that a large proportion of the increase can be attributed to a relatively small number of high value cases in 2011/12.

¹ The comparative figure for 2010/11 has been restated from that previously reported, to exclude Housing Benefit Matching Service (HBMS) cases. This enables fraud referrals and outcomes to be considered on a like for like basis.

² 2011/12 figures will be higher than previous years as it includes all successful outcomes rather than just benefit related sanctions and prosecutions.

Caseload figures for the period are:

	As at 1/4/11	As at 29/2/12
Awaiting allocation	91	70
Under investigation	259	188

Summary of counter fraud activity:

Activity	Work Completed or in Progress
Data Matching	<p>Investigation of 2010/11 National Fraud Initiative cases is nearly complete. The council has now received the latest council tax single person discount matches from the NFI, which will be reviewed in conjunction with council tax officers.</p> <p>Housing Benefit Matching Service (HBMS) referrals continue to be investigated - the counter fraud team has received 935 HBMS referrals to date in 2011/12.</p>
Fraud Detection and Investigation	<p>In addition to benefit fraud investigation, the service continues to promote the use of criminal investigation techniques and standards in other areas to encourage a robust response to any fraud perpetrated against the council. Activity to date includes the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit Fraud - 20 people have been prosecuted for benefit fraud offences and a further 32 have received formal sanctions (cautions and administrative penalties). Benefits have been corrected in a further 46 cases. • Housing Fraud – working in conjunction with housing officers, 11 houses have been recovered in 2011/12. In addition, seven properties were prevented from being let where the prospective tenants had provided fraudulent information in their housing application and one fraudulent homelessness application was refused.

Activity	Work Completed or in Progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="472 360 1653 395">• Internal Fraud - the team has investigated eleven internal frauds during the year.<li data-bbox="472 437 2049 507">• Blue Badge Fraud – one case has been completed, and resulted in a caution being issued. A second case is in progress.