

Questions for Councillors to support 2013 individual fraud briefings

<p>TENANCY FRAUD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has my organisation attempted to quantify the scale of tenancy fraud that our housing stock is subject to (at least 4% in London, 2% outside London) • Does my organisation have a strategic plan to tackle tenancy fraud? • Does my organisation have any dedicated investigative resources specifically allocated to tackling tenancy fraud? • Are the resources dedicated to tackling tenancy fraud proportionate to the scale of the problem? • Did my organisation receive any non-ring fenced government funding for 2013 and 2014 to tackle tenancy fraud? • If yes, has all that funding been allocated to tackle tenancy fraud? • If yes, has my organisation engaged with local housing associations to maximise the benefit of such funding for the community? • Is my organisation a member of the Tenancy Fraud Forum including any regional forum group? • Does my organisation maximise the benefits of participating in data matching, such as national Fraud Initiative, to identify tenancy frauds? • What assurances are there that any tenancy audits undertaken are robust, specifically intended to identify tenancy frauds and follow recognised best practice? • Has my organisation considered the Prevention of Social Housing Act, including the scope for greater partnership with housing associations? 	<p>Tenancy fraud refers to a situation where a registered tenant has breached certain terms of their tenancy agreement, generally defined using three headings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not using the property as the 'sole or principal home'. <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abandoning the property • succeeding or assigning the property, without the landlord's permission, after the registered occupier has moved out or died • unlawfully subletting the entire property <p><i>This type of fraud will not affect this authority as the Housing stock was transferred to Greenfields Community Housing in November 2007, leaving BDC with direct 4 units used for homelessness purposes only.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Attempting to obtain a property using false statements, e.g. falsely claiming to be homeless <p><i>Homelessness and Choice Based lettings included in the Audit Plan.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Attempting to obtain a property by using false documents, for example using a forged passport or claiming to be someone else in order to assess social housing. <p><i>Housing staff have received training in the verification of relevant documents. Homelessness and Choice Based lettings included in the Audit Plan. We are actively seeking to arrange refresher training on falsification of documents. It is envisaged that this training will be for Housing, Housing Benefit staff and Reception staff.</i></p>
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COUNCIL TAX

- How effectively does my organisation use data matching activities to tackle council tax discount fraud, including the National Fraud Initiative?
- How well does my organisation use all forms of sanction and punishment, including penalties, criminal action and targeting previous years fraudulently obtained discounts?
- Is my organisations policy on applying sanctions to deter council tax discount fraud effective?

RIGHT TO BUY

- Does my organisation review all applications for Right to Buy discounts?

HOUSING BENEFIT FRAUD

- Has my organisation considered the impact of Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) implementation from April 2014 on capacity to investigate non-benefit fraud?
- Has my organisation considered how best to work with SFIS to ensure local priorities and risks continue to be reflected in local activities to tackle benefit fraud?

COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION

- Does my council have a strategy to tackle Council tax reduction fraud?
- How well does this strategy combine proactive and reactive approaches to tackling fraud?

SOCIAL CARE

We participate in every NFI data matching exercise and investigate all matches whether high, medium or low risk.

Annual canvass on all exemptions and discounts and covered by the Revenues Inspector.

There is an ability to impose a 'fine' of £70 if changes are not notified to the Authority within 21 days but this is currently not invoked. To be considered in conjunction with the Portfolio holder.

See above.

Not applicable.

When current staff transfer to the DWP there will be an impact on LCTS fraud investigation. No definite date for the transfer is currently known but a review of resources will be carried out before transfer.

The Fraud Manager and a Fraud Officer will be attending the DWP Regional Road Show between March and May 2014 to ascertain future arrangements.

Counter Fraud Policy in place. LCTS fraud is currently incorporated into the work of the Benefit Fraud section however, upon transfer to DWP under SFIS this will cease. No definite date for the transfer is currently known but a review of resources will be carried out before transfer.

Considered sufficient but kept

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective is my council's fraud awareness training for all staff working in social care to identified suspected social care fraud? • How good are my council's whistle-blowing arrangements for all staff working in social care? <p>BUSINESS RATE FRAUD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective is my council in maximising its income by tackling business rates fraud? <p>BLUE BADGE FRAUD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effectively does my council take action to tackle abuse of blue badge and other parking concessions? <p>PREVENTING OTHER FRAUDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How confident am I that staff in my council are aware of the risks of other high value, low frequency frauds and routinely apply all necessary controls to ensure that they do not occur? <p>DETERRENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effectively does my council detect fraud? • How appropriate are the punishments we apply for fraud? • How well does my council publicise its success in detecting fraud? 	<p><i>continuously under review.</i></p> <p><i>Not applicable</i></p> <p><i>Revenue Inspector in place. Further consideration to be given as part of resources review</i></p> <p><i>Blue badges not applicable. Other parking concessions are dealt with by the North Essex parking Partnership so Colchester BC's responsibility to tackle any abuse</i></p> <p><i>Systems of internal control and reviews as per the Audit Plan</i></p> <p><i>Policies and procedures in place</i></p> <p><i>Prosecution Policy in place. In respect of Housing Benefit & Council Tax fraud sanctions legally levied. Where cases are successfully prosecuted, the Courts decided on punishment</i></p> <p><i>For Housing Benefit & Council Tax successful fraud prosecutions - PR releases, 'named and shamed' together with annual statistics on website, response to media enquiries</i></p>
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