

Subject: Review of the effectiveness of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy
Status: For Publication

Report to: Standards Committee
Date: 12th March 2008

Report of: Anita Hall on behalf of Rossendale's Benefit Investigation Unit

Portfolio

Holder: Quality Services to Customers

Key Decision: No

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform members of the work being proposed for the Benefits Investigation Unit for 2008/09.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objective.

- Delivering Quality Services to Customers (Customers, Improvement)
- Well Managed Council (Improvement, Community Network)

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

4.1 Rossendale Borough Council has always promoted fraud awareness for both staff and customers. This report details the proposed work to be undertaken during 2008/09 to ensure that wherever possible fraud is prevented from entering the system and that any fraud within the system is detected as soon as possible.

Improving Fraud Awareness (Benefit Customers & Staff)

The BIU aims to

4.2 Improve awareness of benefit customers

A Poster and leaflet making benefit customers aware of what changes in circumstances need to be reported to the Benefit section – this will be distributed to all partner agencies in the borough including C.A.B, LCC Welfare Rights, Credit Unions, doctors' surgeries etc.

Inclusion in the DWP's 'Targeting Benefit Fraud' national campaign by way of locally adapted national posters which will be on display in the Council's One Stop Shop facility

4.3 Preventing & Detecting Fraud within Rossendale

New market trader licence applicants will be forwarded to the BIU for benefit checks upon their application as per a new service level agreement with Rossendale's NEAT team.

It is the BIU's intention to undertake a pro active employer survey within the Rossendale area during Q3 of 08/09 (the employer has not been selected at this point but will a request will be made at this time to include any seasonal work)

Will continue to undergo joint working with Blackburn with Darwen BIU during their agency employers survey in the Blackburn area.

Will continue to encourage and receive referrals from the Rent Officer Service Continue to maintain the high quality and standard of joint working with the DWP's Fraud Investigation Service (including the Living Together, DLA Fraud Team, etc)

Submitting data and participating in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI 08/09)

Continue to submit and participate when the Housing Benefit Matching Service (HBMS) resumes 08/09

4.4 Raising Benefit Fraud Awareness within Staff

The BIU intend to encourage staff to participate in the DWP's Online Benefit Fraud awareness package and use the results to help identify any further awareness or training issues that arise.

Continue to offer job shadowing to staff in order to promote the unit; it's work and fraud awareness

Look to improve the feedback it provides to staff in order to ensure the maximum amount of referrals are made.

Provide fraud awareness information for all new Council Employees.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

5.1 The cost implication of the BIU work are included within current budget resources.

5.2 Clearly the successful outcome of the of the BIUs' work ensures that public funds are used efficiently, effectively and legitimately.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

6.1 Anti-fraud procedures are an important part of local governance arrangements.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

7.1 There are no Human Resource implications.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Rossendale Borough Council's Benefit Investigation Unit will continue to promote fraud awareness to ensure the prevention and detection of fraudulent claims for Housing / Council Tax Benefit.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

9.1 That the report be noted.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

10.1 Nil

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required No

Is an Equality Impact Assessment attached No

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment attached No

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