

Introduction

This guide is one of a number produced with the aim of helping customers understand Housing and Council Tax Benefit.

It is intended as a general guide. People have different circumstances so for more detailed individual advice please contact your local Council's Benefits Service.

What is Benefit Fraud?

Benefit Fraud is attempting to obtain or to knowingly obtain benefits to which you are not entitled under law. Benefit Fraud is a crime. Local Authorities are committed to:

- Prevent Fraud
- Detect Fraud and
- Investigate Fraud

Local Authorities have the power to impose sanctions or prosecute where fraud is found.

How much does Benefit Fraud cost?

Benefit Fraud cost £720 million nationwide in 2007/08. It costs each household approximately £80.00 per year.

Those who commit fraud are stealing from the public purse and taking money directly out of your pocket.

What are the different types of Benefit Fraud?

- Pretending to live on your own when there are also other people living in your household
- Not declaring capital/savings or other property that you hold or own
- Not declaring that you or a member of your household is working
- Not declaring other income e.g. Tax Credits or occupational pensions
- Rent and Tenancy irregularities
- Forgery and counterfeit documents
- Identity Fraud

These are only some examples of the types of Benefit Fraud. If you are unsure whether to report suspected fraud, contact your local Council's Fraud Hotline.

What happens if a Local Authority proves fraud?

If you are overpaid benefit due to the result of a Fraud Investigation, you will have to repay the overpaid benefit.

You may also be subject to sanctions or prosecution. Sanctions are:

- A formal caution
- An administrative penalty (a fine of 30% of the total overpaid benefit)
- Court prosecution

Reporting suspected Fraud

You can report suspected fraud in different ways:

- Contacting your local Council using their Fraud Hotline number (see below)
 - In writing
 - By electronic referral if your local Council provides a referral form on their website
 - By visiting your local Council's Benefits Service
- Or
- Contacting the National Fraud Hotline on 0800 854440.

Referrals can be made anonymously and are treated in the strictest of confidence.

Your referral may be forwarded to the Department for Work and Pensions or HM Revenue & Customs for further investigation.

Hotline numbers:

Craven District Council: **01756 706297/706388**

Hambleton District Council: **01609 767065**

Harrogate Borough Council: **01423 556466**

Richmondshire District Council: **0800 243001**

Ryedale District Council: **0800 174553**

Scarborough Borough Council: **0800 0568154**

Selby District Council: **01757 292230**

City of York Council: **01904 552935**