

Benefit Fraud

Tackling Benefit Fraud under Welfare Reform and Economic Changes

Tuesday 12th May 2009

Local Government House, Smith Square, Westminster SW1P 3HZ

This timely one-day conference looks at the key factors that will dominate the policies and resources of local authority benefit fraud teams in the next couple of years: the changes to welfare benefits, as outlined in the Welfare Reform White Paper, together with deepening economic recession.

It is likely that these will lead to fundamental changes to the counter-fraud activities of local authorities. Welfare reform will see the increased use of sanctions for fraud, together with expectations that all sections of the authority will be more coherent in approaches to worklessness and anti-social behaviour. This will create the need for increased links between benefit fraud, anti-social behaviour and community safety.

Welfare reform comes during a period of economic downturn which will put further pressure on local authorities to reduce costs at a time of increasing claimant numbers and the likely rise in fraud that comes with higher unemployment. In addition, research has shown that the state of the economy has an impact on the level and types of fraud that are likely to be committed.

Benefit fraud teams will need to plan for significant changes especially in the light of a further emphasis on efficiency targets and the new national indicators.

This conference will provide benefit fraud managers and officers with an understanding of the significant changes under welfare reform and the likely impact of the recession. It will assist fraud management in preparing for these changes and in ensuring that a high standard of fraud investigation can be maintained during a time of welfare reform and economic uncertainty.

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WHO SHOULD ATTEND

- Fraud Managers and Officers
- Benefit Fraud Managers
- Benefit Managers responsible for fraud
- Revenues Managers responsible for fraud
- Treasurers
- Auditors
- Local Authority Corporate Fraud Managers

REGISTRATION

Online

You can register for this conference online at www.psstrategies.co.uk

Fax / Post

Please complete the enclosed booking form and fax, email or post it to the address shown on the form.

Further booking forms are available from the conference administration team on 01483 203536 or by emailing info@benedictbr.co.uk

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SPEAKERS INCLUDE

- Stuart Douglass, Safer Communities Team Manager, Sunderland City Council
- Dave Foley, Business Integrity and Investigation Services, RSM Bentley Jennison
- Malcolm Gardner, Meritec and Counter Fraud Group
- Jack Goodwin, Economy and Labour Market Policy Division, Department for Work and Pensions
- Sally Griffiths, Training and Marketing Manager VFM (Volume Fraud Management) Services Ltd
- Sally Gubbins, NFI Co-ordinator, The Audit Commission
- Paul Lantham, Auditware
- Sam Micklethwaite, Customer Services Manager Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
- Bill Parnham, WWEG Housing Costs, Department for Work and Pensions
- Neil Rickman, Professor of Economics, University of Surrey
- Christian van Stolk, Research Leader, Evaluation and Audit Team, RAND Europe
- Nick Sugden, Managing Director VFM (Volume Fraud Management) Services Ltd

MORNING PROGRAMME

09.45 **Registration and Refreshments**

10.30 **Chair's Introduction and Welcome**

Sam Micklethwaite, Customer Services Manager
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council

Session 1

Welfare Reform

10.35 **Welfare Reform – An Overview**

Jack Goodwin, Economy and Labour Market Policy Division, and
Bill Parnham, WWEG Housing Costs, Department for Work and Pensions

The introductory session will provide an overview for benefit fraud officers on the key points of the Welfare Reform White Paper 'Raising expectations and increasing support: reforming welfare for the future'. The session will also outline the Government's thinking on future changes in Housing Benefits that has been announced as part of the sweeping reforms of the welfare system. This is essential information for those investigating benefit fraud and for fraud managers planning workloads and future policy.

11.00 **Questions**

11.10 **Welfare Reform – The Impact on Benefit Fraud**

Malcolm Gardner, Meritec and Counter-Fraud Group

Current welfare reform, as outlined in the White Paper, is aimed at creating incentives for people returning to work and sanctions against those on benefits who do not follow the procedures to return to work. In addition, to end the culture of worklessness, the reforms will place expectations of work on some categories of claimants for the first time. These major changes to the welfare benefits system are likely to have an impact on the types of fraud seen by local authorities. This session explores the changes and looks at the potential impact on different types of fraud and the consequences to fraud investigation.

MORNING PROGRAMME

11.35 **Refreshments**

11.50 **The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) – Relevant Data Matching with Increasing Fraud**

Sally Gubbins, NFI Co-ordinator, The Audit Commission

The NFI work programme for 2009 was planned prior to the recession. This session will provide an update on the NFI programme together with a view of the impact of the economic situation and the expectations of the Audit Commission.

12.15 **Questions**

12.20 **Welfare Reform – Linking Benefit Fraud to Crime and Disorder**

Stuart Douglass, Safer Communities Team Manager,
Sunderland City Council

The current economic climate and the move to making local authority benefits critical to the reduction of worklessness, as opposed to supporting benefit dependency, will change the way in which benefits departments think about their customers. The Welfare Reform White Paper makes the links between benefit dependency and anti-social behaviour including proposals for housing benefit sanctions in response to anti-social behaviour. Those involved in welfare benefits and benefit fraud investigation will need to widen arrangements for links with agencies dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime and disorder to create a more joined-up approach to worklessness, fraud and anti-social behaviour.

12.45 **Questions**

12.50 **Lunch**

AFTERNOON PROGRAMME

Session 2

Focusing on Benefit Fraud Investigation during the current Economic Crisis

1.50 **The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Local Authority Benefit Fraud Investigation**

Neil Rickman, Professor of Economics, University of Surrey
Christian van Stolk, Research Leader, Evaluation and Audit Team,
RAND Europe

Research carried out in the previous recession showed a link between rising crime levels, including fraud, and the economic situation. This presentation looks at the expectations of fraud patterns under the current recession and the changes in types and volume of fraud that can be expected. It will provide an insight into the future direction of local authority fraud investigation during the recession and the new risks created by increased workload at a time of tightened public spending. The objective of the session is to provide benefits fraud teams with a view of the direction of local authority fraud investigation to enable more informed resource planning.

2.15 **Questions**

2.25 **Workshops**

The workshops will focus on practical solutions to reduced public spending during recession.

Workshop A – Using Existing Resources to Identify Potential Fraud

Paul Lantham, Auditware

During periods of reduced public spending, increased workload and with emphasis on efficiency there will be increased use of information systems to assist in identifying fraud. The IDEA Data Analysis Software system is used by 75% of authorities but few use it beyond the audit remit. This workshop provides an explanation on the use of IDEA in matching and mining for potential fraud.

AFTERNOON PROGRAMME

Workshop B – Harnessing Existing Resources: the Use of Technology as a Tool for the Investigator

Malcolm Gardner, Meritec and Counter Fraud Group

Increasing pressure on local authority fraud teams through greater workloads and restricted public sector funding will mean that local authority fraud teams will need to find the most efficient ways of investigating. The private sector is making increased use of social networking sites as a tool for the investigator and this has proven to be a cost-efficient method of investigation. This session gives an introduction to using the internet and social networking as a tool for the investigation of fraudsters and organised fraud networks.

Workshop C – Lessons from the Insurance Industry - Using Conversational Analysis as a tool to identify fraud

Nick Sugden, Managing Director and
Sally Griffiths, Training and Marketing Manager
VFM (Volume Fraud Management) Services Ltd

VFM manage desk top Investigations on insurance claims and are accepted as experts in the use of Conversation Management techniques. In this workshop they share their experiences and skills around the use of these techniques in the detection of fraud in the private sector. This practical workshop will be of direct use to benefit fraud investigators as both insurance claims and benefit claims both rely on the honesty and accuracy of the information being provided by the claimant.

3.25 **Feedback from workshops**

3.30 **Creating a Counter-Fraud Culture**

Dave Foley, Business Integrity and Investigation Services,
RSM Bentley Jennison

Internal Auditors and the Audit Commission are keen to see internal fraud and corruption reduced especially as risks increase through increased benefit claims, changes to procedure and drives for efficiencies during the current economic downturn. This presentation examines practical ways of creating a culture that counters fraud and corruption.

3.55 **Chair's closing remarks**

Sam Micklethwaite, Customer Services Manager
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council

4.00 **Conference end**

PSS

Public Sector Strategies has been facilitating and producing conferences for the public sector since 1994, often in partnership with local government and central government agencies and departments. For a list of forthcoming events please visit www.PSSstrategies.co.uk

Conference Objectives

- To provide benefit fraud managers and officers with an understanding of the significant changes under welfare reform.
- To examine the likely impact of the recession on benefit fraud including an examination of the types and volume of fraud linked to economic downturn.
- To provide a view of the future role of benefit fraud under welfare reform, focusing on the increased use of sanctions and links with anti social behaviour.
- To look at how a high standard of fraud investigation can be maintained during a time of welfare reform and economic uncertainty.
- To examine how existing resources can be used more efficiently in the light of increased volumes and decreased funding.

Further Information

For further information on this, or other Public Sector Strategy (PSS) conferences, please telephone PSS on **0118 933 2636** or email info@PSSstrategies.co.uk. For booking queries please contact Benedict Business Resources on 01483 203536.