

Date Provided: 20 August 2018

Fraud

Ref: EFOI / 7397

Information Request and Response by Eastbourne Borough Council

1. *Does the Council have a Counter Fraud Team or persons in the Council responsible for investigating public sector fraud cases?*

Yes.

2. *If so, how many fraud investigators do you have?*

There are six staff in Eastbourne and Lewes, including a Counter Fraud Manager in Eastbourne, engaged solely in Counter Fraud work. In addition, a proportion of the time of an Audit Manager in Lewes involves the oversight of Counter Fraud work. Across both authorities, Counter Fraud staffing is 5.3 FTE.

3. *If not, are you part of a shared counter fraud service with another council or other organisation? Please detail who.*

Since July 2017, the Counter Fraud teams at Eastbourne Borough Council and Lewes District Council have been part of the shared service – Audit and Counter Fraud – that covers both authorities.

4. *Did the Council's benefits/counter fraud team transfer to SFIS when SFIS was established?*

The Counter Fraud teams at both Eastbourne and Lewes were retained by their respective authorities – there were no transfers to DWP SFIS.

5. *Has the Council increased/decreased the number of fraud investigation officers within the last 24 months? If so, by how many?*

There have been no increases/decreases in the number of Counter Fraud staff in the last 24 months.

6. *How many fraud referrals or reports of fraud did the council receive in financial year 2017/18?*

Counter Fraud received 788 referrals during 2017/18 – these came from internal and external sources, and from the results of data analysis exercises that highlighted them as potential cases for investigation.

7. *Please supply a notional value for fraud successfully stopped and/or prosecuted in 2017/18?*

The Counter Fraud teams were involved in successful interventions, investigations and corrections of errors with a value of £4,968,000 across a range of services including Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Housing, Right to Buy (RTB) and Payroll.

8. *Do you record fraud statistics? If so, are they published? Where? Online?*

Fraud statistics are recorded, and are used as part of the performance management and monitoring processes at both authorities. As appropriate, the statistics are included in reports to those Councillors charged with governance at both authorities. The statistics are not published.

9. *How do you record and manage your fraud cases? Spreadsheet or software package?*

Both authorities use a fraud case management system – Datatank - to record and manage fraud cases.

10. *Do you use a fraud case management system? If so, which one?*
As above.

11. *How many referrals/cases did you receive from the NFI (National Fraud Initiative) in 2017/18? How many led to a successful prosecution/outcome?*

The two authorities received a combined total of 4,668 referrals from the last NFI exercise. Of these, 2,528 have been examined, focussing on the recommended matches that indicated a higher likelihood of fraud.. No frauds were found, but 30 errors were noted and corrected, with a total value of approximately £17,500.

12. *Do you use reports from NAFN? If so, how much did you spend on these in 2017/18?*

The total cost of using NAFN services in 2017/18 was £2,270.

13. *Do you use credit bureau reports/data/services? If so, how much did you spend on these in 2017/18?*

The total cost of using credit reference services was £1,300.

14. *Do you have plans to increase your counter fraud capability/budget in 2018/19?*

There are no plans to increase the budget for Counter Fraud in 2018/19.