

INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE

'Striving for excellence in governance'

Counter Fraud Publicity Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 It is important to the success of any anti fraud policy and strategy that they are accompanied by a publicity policy. A publicity policy acts to raise awareness of fraud both internally and externally and can support the development of an anti fraud culture. A publicity policy is part of a package of measures to create an anti fraud culture within the organisation and the area as a whole. Publicity needs to cover fraud prevention, fraud detection and fraud deterrence

2. Internal Publicity

2.1 A number of delivery mechanisms will be used as appropriate to inform staff about

- a) what they can do to assist with creating an anti fraud culture and an environment where controls are in place and operating effectively;
- b) how they can assist with fraud detection;
- c) what the outcomes of committing fraud against the Council are likely to be.

The mechanisms are:

- The Intranet which gives staff access to various fraud related documents including a fraud referral form, the fraud response plan and the whistleblowing policy;
- E-mails to staff;
- On line fraud awareness training
- Messages on payslips.
- Poster campaigns – these will be coordinated through the Communications service and will be subject to Member review.
- Articles in work place magazines

2.2 The publicity will include:

- The results of successful prosecutions;
- The effectiveness of the preventative measures that are in place;
- The sophistication of the arrangements in place to detect fraud and corruption including reference to datamatching techniques;
- The professionalism of those investigating fraud and corruption and their ability to uncover evidence;
- The likelihood of sanctions being applied and the range of the sanctions, including the fact that an employee may lose his/her job if there is evidence that he/she has committed an offence against the Council;
- The likelihood of losses being recovered

3. External Publicity

3.1 Preventative measures for counter fraud aimed at services users will focus on informing service users at the earliest opportunity of the need to provide the Council with correct information. The various applications for service will, when relevant, contain statements reminding applicants of the requirement to provide accurate information; and advise the Council of all relevant changes. They will also inform applicants of the possible outcomes, including prosecution, if false information is given.

3.2 The public will be informed of the arrangements for reporting suspected fraud to the Council. This will be achieved through a variety of methods:

- The Internet. The Council's website will contain online fraud referral forms and an explanation about how a fraud may be referred;
- Information on leaflets. Relevant leaflets, in particular those relating to housing and council tax benefits will publicise the fraud hotline telephone number, the fraud e-mail address and refer to the forms on the Council's website.
- Poster campaigns – these will be coordinated through the Communications service and will be subject to Member review.
- Articles in newspapers and magazines.

3.3 The reporting of successful prosecutions in the press can act as a major deterrent and will put some people off committing fraud. The Council will generally seek to report successful prosecutions in the press and this will always be the case when the offender has held a position of trust. In these cases, the Communications service will advise on whether the news media should be advised in advance of a prosecution being concluded.

It also needs to be recognised that some publicity may occur in cases where we may not seek it, since obviously the media are free to report the outcome of cases. As far as possible this is an area where careful news management needs to be applied.

3.4 Whenever appropriate, this form of publicity will be used to inform the public of the numbers and skills of investigators; the methods used to investigate and the Council's stance on prosecutions. This may assist in deterring people from committing fraud.