

Benefit Fraud Investigation Team (BFIT)**Summary of Work 1st April 2014 – 20th August 2014****1. Caseload and Results**

- 1.1. The following table shows the number of investigations undertaken by BFIT and analyses the results.

Result Outcome	Period April14– Aug14 (incl)	As % of cases investigated
Cases Closed	216	100
Results		
Fraud Proven	38	18
Not Resident	22	10
Incorrect Benefit	<u>15</u>	<u>7</u>
Total Positive Results	75	35
No fraud	<u>106</u>	<u>65</u>
	181	100
Not Investigated/passed to DWP	35	
Total Cases	216	

1. It can be seen that the Team has returned an investigation success rate between April – 20 August 2014 of 75 cases out of 181, a success rate of 41%. 106 cases have been closed no fraud during the period, 44 (42%) were as a result of data match referrals. The quality of the data in respect of recent HBMS referrals appears to have deteriorated during the last couple of matches. For example, some of the information provided on capital matches (suggesting undeclared bank/building society accounts) have actually been established as loan/mortgage accounts and some of the possible undeclared employment referrals, when investigated further, have shown the data to be incorrect – e.g., pension providers. These referrals have not, therefore, had any effect of the customer's claim for Housing Benefit (HB) /Council Tax Reduction (as applicable) – although they have been investigated by BFIT as usual.

2. Sanctions and Prosecutions

- 2.1. Sanctions in the period 1st April 2014 to 20th August 2014 are as follows:

Type	Apr 14 – 20 Aug 14
Convictions	11
Cautions	11
Ad Pens	<u>1</u>
Total	23

The BFIT sanction target remains at a minimum of 85 for the year 2014/2015.

Other aspects of BFIT work highlighted for Members is noted below.

3. Housing Benefit Matching Service (HBMS)

- 3.1. HBMS is a branch of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) dealing with data-matching. Each month the Council submits HB data to the HBMS who then match this against a range of other data from the DWP, Revenue and Customs, Pensions etc. Matches, which are normally of high quality, are then returned to the Council for further investigation. Between April 2014 – 20 August 2014 the BFIT received 133 referrals from the HBMS; 129 of the referrals have been and/or currently being investigated. In the same period, 44 cases derived from HBMS were closed after investigation. Positive results have so far been recorded on 17 cases (13%). This represents a decrease in the number of positive results recorded by the BFIT, as has already been mentioned in paragraph 1.2.

4. Joint Working

Of the 11 convictions obtained by BFIT during the period April – 20 August 2014, 6 were as a result of joint working with the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP). Sefton MBC continues to enjoy a good working relationship with DWP Investigators. During this period, Housing Benefit overpayments totalling £165,909 were raised as a result of all fraud investigations, with £109,988 (67%) specifically as a result of joint working with the DWP;

5. Single Fraud Investigation Service

The DWP has announced that local authority investigators dealing with Housing Benefit fraud will transfer to the newly-formed Single Fraud Investigation Service. Sefton's staff are due to transfer in October 2015. arvato and the Sefton MBC Client are currently considering options for investigating local Council Tax Reduction fraud. A proposal relating to the creation of a small dedicated team to focus on investigations for Council Tax Reduction fraud will be considered by the Finance & Information Services Operational Board on 26th August 2014.