

## Huntingdonshire District Council

### Housing & Council Tax Benefits Fraud Strategy

#### Introduction

Huntingdonshire District Council (the Council) is committed to the professional delivery of housing and council tax benefit services to its customers and the contribution that this service can make to the corporate objectives of achieving a low level of homelessness, maintaining sound finances and paying housing and council tax benefits. The Council also has a duty to protect the public funds it administers from fraud, error or other irregularity.

#### Priorities for the prevention and detection of fraud

The benefits service will

- Conduct thorough checks of new applications made and review claims to prevent fraud entering or remaining in the system.
- identify possible fraudulent claims as soon as possible
- investigate allegations of fraud relating to claims for benefit to establish the correct entitlement
- administer appropriate sanctions in accordance with legislation and the Prosecution Policy to deter and punish fraudsters
- consider whether to prosecute or sanction offenders where offences are identified
- publicise successful prosecution cases to act as a deterrent to potential fraudsters
- participate in data matching exercises with the Audit Commission and the Department for Work and Pensions to identify possible fraud/ error/ irregularities.

The benefits service will use the Prosecution Policy as an operational guide for investigating officers.

#### Our commitment

We will

- avoid any discrimination due to age, gender, race, disability or religion when dealing with any enquiries
- seek to ensure that information about benefit fraud is published as widely as possible and in such formats as will encourage awareness in all customers
- ensure appeals and complaints are administered fairly and effectively
- provide a fraud hotline for members of the public to report benefit fraud
- work with other agencies for example the police, DWP and HMRC
- investigate all allegations in accordance with the relevant legislation
- ensure all staff involved in investigation are fully trained