

Intervention checks

The guidance also requires that regular checks are made during the life of any claim to ensure that the information you have given on your application form remains the same.

The checks can be by means of either a postal check or a visit. Failure to return your postal check or be available for us to visit after we have written to you to arrange a time, will result in your benefit being suspended, and eventually terminated. If it is decided that your benefit has been overpaid we will ask you to repay this amount.

Data matching

The verification guidance also means that we will check the information you have given us about the benefits etc. that you receive with the information held by the Inland Revenue and the Department for Work and Pensions.

If we find that the information we have, differs from that held by other bodies, we will suspend your benefit while we investigate. If we find that your benefit has been overpaid we will expect you to repay this amount.

What happens if my circumstances change?

If anything that is liable to alter the amount of benefit you get changes, for example, your wages or savings increase, or someone comes to live with you, you must let us know about it straightaway. If you don't tell us and as a consequence we overpay your benefit we will ask you to repay the overpayment and we may also take further action against you.

For more information about changes in circumstance please read leaflet 8 (Changes in circumstance)

Useful numbers

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|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Age Concern (Swindon) | 01793 692166 |
| Citizens Advice Bureau | 0845 0505155 |
| Community Legal Service Direct | 08453 454345 |
| The Harbour Project | 01793 490876 |
| Jobcentre Plus | 0845 6060234 |
| Millen Advice Point | 01793 480606 |
| Parks Advice Point | 01793 487934 |
| The Pension Service | 0845 6060265 |
| Stratton Advice Point | 01793 823472 |
| Swindon Racial Equality Council | 01793 528545 |
| West Swindon Advice Point | 01793 871303 |
| Wiltshire Law Centre | 01793 486926 |

Fraud Hotline

“Do you know someone who is falsely claiming benefit”
Don't let them get away with it.
Ring the Fraud Hotline on
01793 464690

Other information leaflets available

- 1 *Who can claim and how (People over 60)*
- 2 *Who can claim and how (People under 60)*
- 3 *Under 25's/Young People*
- 4 *Lone parents*
- 5 *Students*
- 6 *People from abroad*
- 7 *Working and claiming*
- 8 *Changes in circumstance*
- 9 *Overpayments*
- 10 *Rents and charges*
- 11 *Pre Tenancy Determinations*
- 12 *Non-dependants*
- 13 *Absence from home*
- 14 *Claiming benefit on two homes*
- 15 *Backdating*
- 16 *Discretionary Housing Payments*
- 17 *Second Adult Rebate*
- 18 *Customer service and home visits*
- 19 *Child Care Costs*
- 20 *Self-Employed*
- 21 *Information for landlords*
- 22 *Disputes and appeals*
- 23 *Savings and investments*
- 25 *Verification of documents*
- 26 *Dealing with Bereavements*

If you would like to receive this information in another language or in another format such as large print, Braille or on audio tape, please contact Customer Services on 01793 463725 for further information.

Counter fraud

Version 2 February 2007



Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit are both paid for by public funds, in other words, your taxes. The Council is keen to make prompt payments of benefit to genuine claimants but it is also committed to stamp out benefit fraud to safeguard those funds and to ensure that only the people who are eligible to get benefit actually receive it.

To ensure that fraud is stamped out, the Council has an active Counter Fraud Investigation team that is responsible for detecting and investigating fraudulent claims.

How you can report a suspected fraud

If you suspect that someone is claiming benefit and committing fraud against Swindon Borough Council you should report it straight away. You can do this by completing a fraud referral form. You can find a form on line at our website www.swindon.gov.uk or if you prefer you can ring the fraud hotline on 01793 464690.

Please remember that the more information you are able to give us, the more likely we are to successfully prosecute someone committing a fraud.

Types of benefit fraud and helpful information

There are many ways in which a claimant can commit fraud and claim benefit to which they have no entitlement. The following list gives examples of some of the most common types of fraud and the type of information that will help us with our investigation.

Undeclared income or capital

This could be where someone has failed to declare a works pension or a state benefit such as Incapacity Benefit. In these cases it would be helpful if the name of the suspected employer or the length of time the suspected pension or benefit has been received, were provided.

Claiming & working

In these cases it would be helpful if the name of the suspected employer and the approximate time of leaving and returning home, were provided.

Living together

In these cases it would be helpful if a description of the person suspected of living with the claimant, index number of a vehicle, if appropriate, and the amount of time they are suspected of being resident, were provided.

Non-residency

In these cases it would be helpful if the date the property became empty and a forwarding address, were provided.

Investigators powers

Our investigators have been given additional powers to help them to detect and investigate suspected fraudsters. They can for example access the DVLA register to establish ownership of a vehicle or they could enter the premises of an employer to establish who works for them.

What happens if we decide your claim is incorrect or fraudulent?

We will investigate thoroughly any irregularities we find on your claim and decide whether, on the "balance of probabilities" you have knowingly given us incorrect information about your circumstances. If we decide that you have there a various things we can do:-

We can ask you to repay any overpayment. In cases where the overpayment is as the result of a fraud we will always seek to recover the overpayment in the shortest possible time. **For more information on overpayments please read leaflet 9 (Overpayments).**

We can also apply a sanction. This could be in the form of a caution, an administrative penalty or we could prosecute you.

Local Authority caution

If we decide to caution you, your details will be held on the Department for Works & Pensions Computer Database. You can only be cautioned once so any repeat offence may result in a prosecution. We will also prosecute if you refuse to accept the caution.

Administrative Penalty

We may decide to offer you an administrative penalty. This means that we can ask you to pay a further 30% of the value of the overpayment. For example if an overpayment of £1,000 has resulted from a fraud being committed we would ask you to pay back £1,300. We will always prosecute if you refuse to accept the administrative penalty

Prosecution

We can also prosecute you, this means you would have to appear in court. If you are found guilty you could be sent to prison for up to seven years or face an unlimited fine.

Documentary Evidence

We use guidance issued by the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) which outlines the minimum standard of documentary evidence that a customer must provide in support of their claim for benefit. **For more information about the evidence you need to supply please read leaflet 25 (Verification of documents)**