Appendix D - Anti-fraud

Haringey
LONDON

2025/26

Anti-Fraud 2025/26

Introduction

Haringey Council is committed to ensuring the highest possible standards are maintained by its employees, contractors and residents. Fraud and corruption can impact on the public's confidence in the Council and its reputation in the long term as well as placing unnecessary additional burden on the public purse. Anti-fraud policies and strategies are in place to detect and prevent fraud and a corporate team of investigators within the Audit and Risk service is managed by the Deputy Head of Audit and Risk Management.

We reviewed our Fraud Strategy in September 2024, along with all the linked policies, against latest good practice. Our work plan is driven by a Fraud Risk assessment which is reviewed annually. For 2025/26 our planned work focused on Housing Fraud with proactive checks to prevent fraud and dedicated resources responding to reactive fraud referrals. Work continued to strengthen the council's response to Blue Badge Fraud and a project to automate the process continued. We also participated in all National Fraud Initiative activities including the launch of periodic dual worker data matching and the reintroduction after a number of years of social care date matching. Employee cases and Whistleblower reports were high which meant planned proactive projects where not completed. An additional resource has been added to the team at the end of the year to help clear a backlog of cases.

The purpose of this document is to outline the activities of the team that have been considered when forming the Head of Internal Audit Opinion, it also seeks to ensure that in accordance with Part 2 of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, the council has published information on the cost of its anti-fraud work and the outcomes achieved. The team's performance is reported quarterly to the Council's Audit Committee during the year.

Transparency Code 2015 requirements

Requirement	2023/34	2024/25	2025/26
Allocated budget for anti-fraud work	**£506k**	**£521k**	**£551k**
Number of staff (absolute and FTE) undertaking anti-fraud work	**8 staff: 6 FTE**	**8 staff: 6.5 FTE**	**9 staff: 7 FTE**
Number of staff of professionally accredited anti-fraud specialists	**6 Staff**	**6 Staff**	**7 Staff**
Total amount of time spent on the investigation and prosecution of fraud	**1,047 days**	**1,235 days**	**1,3330 days**
Total number of fraud cases investigated	***801*** ***(387 reactive cases)***	***870*** ***(411 reactive cases)***	***896*** ***(471 reactive cases)***
Number of occasions powers under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Regulations have been used	**65**	**78**	**60**

Transparency Code 2015 requirements

Type of Activity	2023/24	2024/5	2025/26
Tenancy Fraud Cases	332	282	183
Employee Fraud / Whistleblowing Cases	17	31	27
Non Employee Fraud/ Whistleblowing Cases	1	3	8
Right to Buy applications	171	308	353
Blue Badge	38	95	253
Gas Safety & Proactive Tenancy Visits	105 85	35 55	2 0
No Recourse to Public Funds financial checks	42	61	55
Grant pre-payment checks	20	0	15
TOTALS	**801**	**870**	**896**

Anti-Fraud Outcomes 2025/26

Tenancy Fraud

The tables on the next slide contains information regarding caseload.

In 2025/26, **87** council stock properties had been recovered through the (reactive) investigations of the Fraud Team; this compares to **42 in 2024/25.** **C**irca **£7m** can be attributed to the recovery, or cessation, of fraudulent council and temporary accommodation tenancies.

In **2025/26** the referrals process has been reviewed with an aim of streamlining the process. The team received in excess of 250 referrals and 183 were accepted. The sources of referrals include: general public, members, council officers, other councils or government agencies, National Fraud Initiative and our own proactive activities/campaigns to identify fraud. A new fraud referral form will be implemented in 2026/27 that should reduce the number of referrals received by the team and/or the time needed to consider the allegation.

In addition to this the team undertake proactive fraud checks to prevent fraud occurring in the succession and grant of tenancy processes. These are high inherent fraud risk areas for the council.

The team work closely with officers in Housing via an officer seconded to work alongside the fraud team part time each week. There is acknowledgement regarding the improvement in Housing processes as part of the Housing Improvement Programme which has helped to generate this year's outcomes and we hope to build on further in 2026/27.

The workplan for 2026/27 will include a continued focus on Housing Fraud and will include proactive tenancy fraud activity this will be supplemented by the use of data matching and intelligence from the National Fraud Initiative.

Tenancy Fraud 2025/26

	Open	Closed
Brought Forward at year start	452	
New referrals in year	183	
TOTAL OPEN	**635**	
Cases closed – no fraud		153
Cases closed – property recovered		87
TOTAL at year end		**395**

Anti-Fraud Activity & Outcomes 2025/26

Employee and Non-Employee Fraud and Whistleblowing cases

The Head of Audit and Risk Management maintains a record of referrals made using the Council's whistleblowing policy. In total, 19 whistleblowing referrals were accepted under the policy during 2025/26, compared to two and six in the two prior financial years.

All referrals made using the whistleblowing policy are reviewed and subsequent investigations are managed according to all relevant statutory requirements, including Data Protection, Regulation of Investigatory Powers and Police and Criminal Evidence Acts. In some cases, the limited amount of information provided means a full investigation cannot be undertaken. The management of the Audit and Risk service undertakes an initial review of the information before agreeing an approach with HR and service management. Any allegations relating to issues of financial irregularity are investigated by an investigator in the Audit & Risk team.

In 2025/26, the team closed 14 cases the outcomes are reported in quarterly reports, one of these cases was carried over from 2024/25 so 6 live cases have carried forward into 2026/27.

Anti-Fraud Activity & Outcomes 2025/26

Employee and Non-Employee Fraud and Whistleblowing cases

Where the allegation relates to a breach of a council policy and the investigation falls under the disciplinary policy, the severity of the breach is considered and where appropriate the team is deployed to work with the relevant stakeholders, usually the service management and human resources, to ensure the relevant policy is followed; all available evidence is gathered effectively and secured, and the appropriate action is taken. Part of this work is to reflect on the control environment and ensure controls are in place to prevent similar occurrences in future.

The team accepted 7 referrals relating to employees in 2025/26. This is a reduction from the prior year where 31 cases were received, as a result of a spike in identification of dual working. The majority of these employee cases relate to dual working allegations so like any other type of referral where officers may be implicated, the case will be considered under both the fraud and disciplinary policy once the initial intelligence and evidence is available.

At the end of the year investigations and disciplinary processes were all on-going but final outcomes will be shared in quarterly reporting. Statutory Officers Group have had periodic update on this work in year due to the much higher case load.

Haringey is leading on one dual working employee prosecution case supported by the other employing Boroughs. We will file charges and support other Boroughs in prosecuting these offences where they have the strongest case and are the lead authority. In some instances, a referral to the police will be made as our powers are limited and this often hinders gathering evidence to a criminal standard.

We have one procurement fraud case that has been referred to legal.

Anti-Fraud Activity & Outcomes 2025/26

Right to Buy Applications

In 2025/26, 60 applications were withdrawn or refused either following investigations and/or failing to complete money laundering processes. This compares to 49 in 2024/25 and 111 in 2023/24. The equivalent of 0.6 full time investigator undertakes this work to ensure that money laundering and fraud are not present in the sales of properties. Overall, the **60** RTB applications withdrawal or refusal represents **circa £6m** in potential RTB discounts; and means the properties are retained for social housing use.

There was a spike in applications following the announcement to reduce the discounts in 2024/25 cases still filtering through the process. At year end circa 453 applications were in the process with 73 at the anti money laundering stage. This activity also can identify Housing Tenancy Fraud for us or affecting other local authorities and Housing Benefit overpayments.

No Recourse to Public Funds

As at 31 March 2025, 55 referrals have been received and responded to by the Fraud Team through the financial year. Referrals are received where the NRPF team has suspicion of fraud and needs to obtain assurance. The average cost of NRPF support per family (accommodation and subsistence for a 2 child household) is around £20,000 pa so fraud prevention, whist ensuring the service supports those genuinely in need is essential. Referrals from the NRPF decreased by 10 from the prior year but request remains higher than the pre covid years. The fraud team provide the intelligence to the NRPFs team to enable them to make their decision with regards entitlement in line with legislation, we have no other role in these cases.

Anti-Fraud Activity & Outcomes 2025/26

Fraud Reporting

The team monitor reports of fraud received by the council from residents of the borough, many of the reports relate to services and Housing Benefit fraud so these are assessed and signposted on as appropriate.   This mechanism although currently resource intensive to administer does generate some good referrals for the team.

Hundreds of communications are received each year from members of the public via our fraud hotline or email address. All are reviewed and intelligence checks undertaken as part of the referral acceptance process. The majority do not result in council fraud cases, but all are sign posted on the relevant public sector body or council service for investigation and action. In year we have been working with digital services to create an eform which will improve efficiency in the process this work continues into the new year.

DPA requests/Information requests

The team have again responded to over 100 Data Protection Requests with regards the prevention and detection of fraud from a range of organisations, including other local authorities.

Blue Badge

An investigator was allocated in 2023/24 to focus on Blue Badge Fraud, in total 389 cases have been accepted, 253 in year as the focus of work was enforcement sanctions.   Over the course of the project six cases have been prosecuted and others are in at interview stage or with legal.   Work to automate and streamline the process is in progress which will help optimise outcomes from the work.

Anti-Fraud Activity & Outcomes 2024/25

Proactive Data Matching

The team review results of data matching exercises generated by campaigns such as the National Fraud Initiative as well as local exercises interrogating council held data sets. Activity and outcomes are included in quarterly reports.

These proactive exercises are either undertaken to compliment audit activities that are in the audit plan or identify control failings so that audit resources can be directed to this area and control improvement designed. Temporary Accommodation has been an area of focus in 2025/26.

In prior years council properties were recovered from a proactive to identify unknown voids using other council data sets, this work was replicated in 2025/26 and this demonstrated much better control and process in housing over data and death list. . There are a further 82 still being investigated or recovery actioned. Recent social services data matching, via NFI, was also positive in that there were only circa 30 cases flagged and the majority had already been identified by management.

Squatting

This has been a risk area that has increased significantly in the last couple of years, and the team have worked with management to provide audit and risk advice but also reviewed cases for criminal activity and liaised with the police or evidence of internal corruption. This work continues into 2026/27 but much of the criminality involved falls outside of the team's jurisdiction. Housing have increased work with legal and the police to tackle the issue. All cases are reviewed from an employee fraud perspective.