

Further information about reporting Housing Benefit Fraud

Did you know that knowingly failing to declare your true circumstances on a Housing and Council Tax Support claim form can be a criminal offence? Or that failing to promptly report a change in circumstances could lead to up to six months in prison? Or that cashing benefit cheques that you know you are not entitled to, or knowing that you are not entitled to Housing Benefit payments that are being paid into your bank account or to your landlord could result in a custodial sentence of up to 12 months?

When making a claim for Council Benefits, or completing a claim review, make sure you read the form thoroughly, and answer every question. If you're not sure whether you should mention something on the form, put it down anyway. The staff at the Benefits Section will work out if it affects your benefit entitlement. You can contact the Benefits section using the contact number 01629 761188 or benefits@derbyshiredales.gov.uk or face to face in Matlock Town Hall (see elsewhere for opening times). We are happy to go through the form with you, and offer advice.

If you deliberately fail to disclose any of the above information, you may be paid too much benefit. If the Council finds out about it further down the line, you will have to repay the money. And you will probably be interviewed as part of a taped interview and under caution to explain why you didn't tell us about it. And you might even have to pay an extra 50% on top of that subject to a minimum of £350.00 and a maximum of £5000.00 (this is called an Administrative Penalty). You might be issued with a formal caution. You could end up in front of a magistrate explaining why you didn't tell the benefits section everything they needed to know.

If you are already claiming, and your circumstances change, let the Benefits section know as soon as possible. Again, if you're not sure that the change will affect your benefit, tell us anyway. After all, it's better to be safe than sorry!

The Council is committed to detecting and preventing abuse of the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support System. We conduct reviews of benefit claims to ensure the right amount of benefit is being paid, and investigate allegations of benefit fraud. All our investigations are carried out fairly, with integrity and in a professional manner, by fully trained and accredited staff. They make full use of all the current legislation designed to help detect benefits fraud as well as working closely with their

counterparts in the Department for Work and Pensions on cases involving other Benefits.

From the 3rd September 2015 Housing Benefit fraud is investigated by the Department for Work and Pensions.

If you would like to report anyone you believe is committing benefit fraud, you can:

You can report suspected Housing Benefit fraud in three ways:

- By telephone: Contact the National Benefit Fraud Hotline on **0800 854 440**. Your call is free and confidential you do not have to give your name or address. Lines are open Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm. If you have speech or hearing problems you can use a text phone service on **0800 328 0512** or Welsh speakers can call on 0800 678 3722.
 - Online at: www.gov.uk/report-benefit-fraud
 - By Post: NBFH, PO Box 224, Preston PR1 1GP
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