



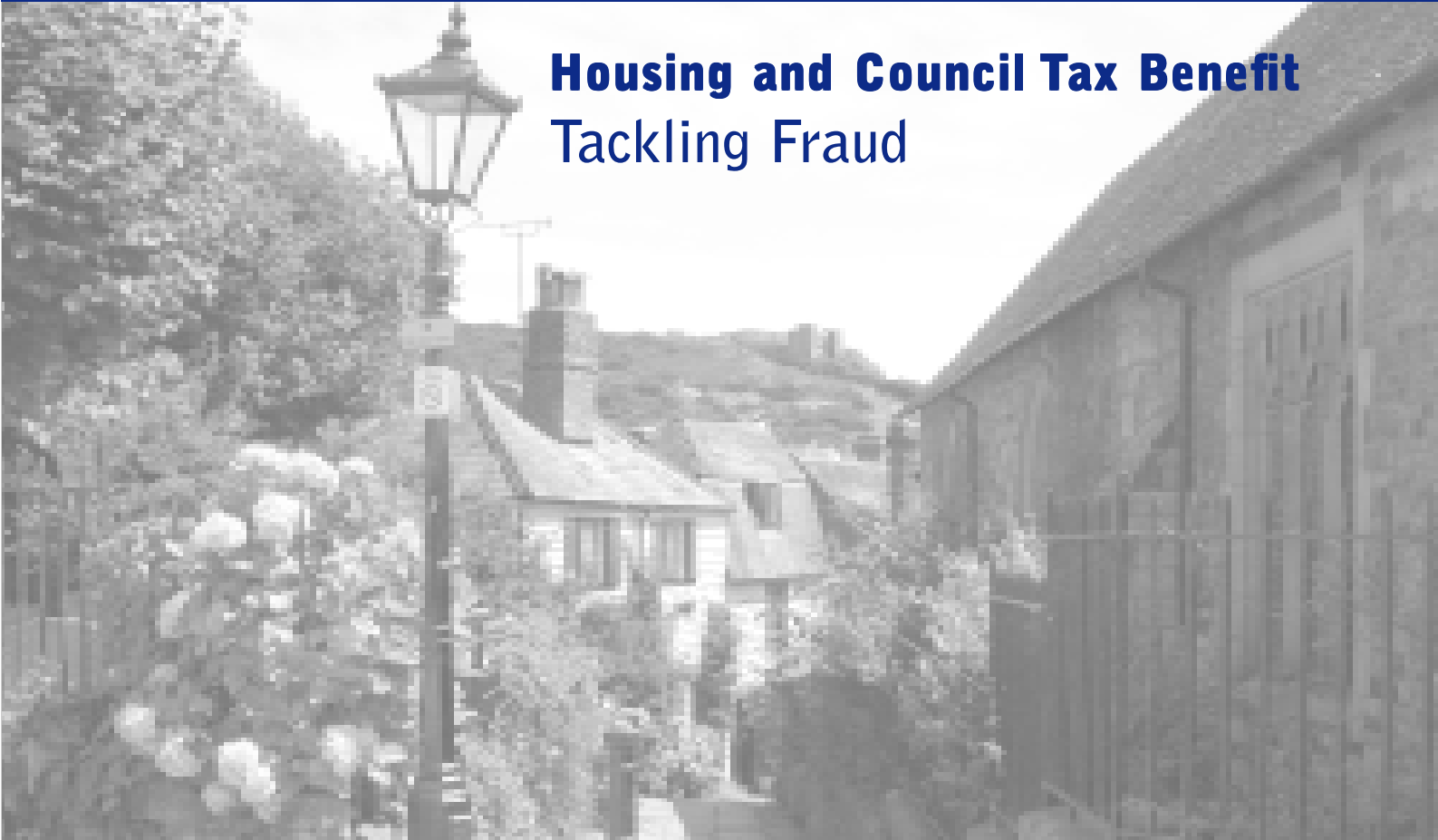
**Wealden**  
District Council

  
Lewes District Council  
[www.lewes.gov.uk](http://www.lewes.gov.uk)

  
**Eastbourne**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

*Hastings*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL  
...Making the Difference...

# **Housing and Council Tax Benefit Tackling Fraud**



## The Council's duty

We aim to make sure that those people entitled to benefit receive their correct entitlement, but we also have an obligation to prevent abuse of the system by those who claim benefit falsely. The Government estimates that around £2 billion per year goes to benefit cheats. This is equivalent to £80 a year from each family in Great Britain.

We are committed to tackling benefit fraud. We know that most claimants are honest but we have a responsibility to tackle those who are not.

We are taking positive action to:

- make it harder to commit benefit fraud
- detect more benefit fraud
- stop those who might be thinking of committing benefit fraud, and
- encourage people to report those who are committing benefit fraud.

## How are we tackling fraud?

Stricter controls when claims are made help in the prevention of fraud. For example, customers must produce evidence about their identity, income and savings before benefit is paid. Where benefit is in payment, reviews are carried out to check entitlement during the course of a claim. We have improved our methods for gathering and using intelligence to catch more fraudsters. A range of actions are available as a punishment for committing benefit fraud. They are:

- Local Authority Caution – This is an official warning provided as an alternative to prosecution. If another benefit offence is committed and a prosecution takes place, the fact that a Caution has been given will be taken into account by the Courts.
- Administrative Penalty – This is similar to a fine and is calculated as 30% of any benefit overpaid. It is paid in addition to repaying the overpayment.
- Prosecution – These can be heard at magistrates

or Crown Court with sentences up to 10 years imprisonment and an unlimited fine.

## **Types of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit fraud**

There are many types of fraud, with the most common being:

- people who are working but do not declare this
- people who claim as a single person but live with a partner
- people who claim from an address but don't live there
- people who do not tell us their true amount of income, capital or savings
- people getting benefit who fail to tell us when there is a change in their circumstances
- landlords who continue to receive benefit for people who are no longer tenants

## **How can I tell you if I suspect someone of fraud?**

You can report a suspicion of fraud, in confidence in the following ways:

- by visiting, phoning or emailing the Benefit office
- in writing to the address on the back of this leaflet

Alternatively you can report a fraud on the National Benefit Fraud Hotline on 0800 854 440 between 7am and 11pm, 7 days a week, or at [www.targetingfraud.gov.uk](http://www.targetingfraud.gov.uk)

## **Will someone who reports a benefit cheat be told what is happening?**

Unfortunately we can't. The law says we have to keep information about people confidential, so we cannot give progress reports to the person who reported the possible fraud.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

### EASTBOURNE BOROUGH COUNCIL

#### Housing Benefits Office:

1 Grove Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 4UG

#### Opening Hours:

Monday-Tuesday 0900 - 1700

Wednesday 0930 - 1700

Thursday-Friday 0900 - 1700

#### Telephone:

01323 410000 (General Queries)

#### Fax:

01323 415130

#### E-mail:

housing.benefits@eastbourne.gov.uk (General Queries)

### HASTINGS BOROUGH COUNCIL

#### Benefits Service:

41 Wellington Square, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 1PP

#### Opening Hours:

Monday-Thursday 0845 - 1630, Friday 0845 - 1600

#### Telephone:

01424 781900 (Helpline)

01424 781573 (Overpayments)

#### Fax:

01424 781541

#### E-mail:

benefits@hastings.gov.uk (General Queries)  
overpayments@hastings.gov.uk (Overpayment Queries)  
fraud@hastings.gov.uk (Reporting Fraud)

### LEWES DISTRICT COUNCIL

#### Finance and Community Services:

Council Offices, Fisher Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2DQ

#### Opening Hours:

Monday-Thursday 0900 - 1645

Friday 0900 - 1615

#### Telephone:

01273 471600 (General Queries)

#### Fax:

01273 484066

#### E-mail:

Benefit@lewes.gov.uk (General Queries)

### WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

#### Benefits Service:

Vicarage Lane,

Hailsham,

East Sussex,

BN27 2AX

#### Opening Hours:

Monday-Friday 0830 - 1730

#### Telephone:

01323 443500 (General Queries)

#### Fax:

01323 443146

#### Email:

benefits@wealden.gov.uk