

## **Case Study 1 – Glasgow City Council – Blue Badges**

Recent legislative changes allow for the confiscation of blue badges from those who choose to abuse this valuable scheme. The newly formed Corporate Fraud Team developed a partnership with colleagues in Parking Glasgow and Police Scotland to tackle abuse of the blue badge scheme.

An intelligence based approach using information obtained from the National Fraud Initiative has resulted in 5 vehicles, suspected of fraudulently displaying blue badges, being impounded and the drivers of the vehicles being subject of reports to Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

The financial cost of blue badge fraud, although important, is not the main driver for tackling such fraud. The scheme provides an essential service for disabled people by allowing access to parking bays which are normally closer to work, shops and other community services. This parking access often makes the difference as to whether people with mobility problems can live their lives as fully as they can.

## **Case Study 2– West Dunbartonshire Council – Care Home**

As a result of an intelligence led operation the council established that a benefit recipient was the holder of numerous bank accounts, all of which she had failed to declare on her applications.

During interview the benefit recipient stated that she was merely holding the money for a family member.

Investigators established that the family member was resident in a local authority controlled care home and that the existence of the bank accounts had not been declared in her financial assessment on admission.

The financial assessment was reassessed and £31,447.31 will be repatriated to the public purse

## **Case Study 3 – Lincolnshire County Council**

In 2004, former leader of the Council was imprisoned for 18 months for misconduct in public office, after seeking to influence the council decision on the route of a new bypass so as to divert it through his own land, increasing the land's market value. There was a failure to publicly declare a personal interest in the route until the police were brought in to investigate some 18 months later.

### **Case Study 4 – Kent County Council**

In May 2012, the Head of energy procurement for the Local Authority South East Region, an organisation known as LASER which buys gas and electricity for Kent County Council (KCC) and 120 other local authorities, was convicted of fraud. Knowles had asked British Gas to add an extra charge to their contract as a “comfort blanket”, which would be reclaimed by KCC and LASER at the end of the year. However, instead of claiming a rebate, he forged invoices and diverted the money to his own bank account, for a personal gain of around £400,000.

### **Case Study 5 – Head Teacher in £7,000 Fraud**

A head teacher who raided more than £7,000 worth of funds set aside for children at a West Midlands school has been given a 10-month prison sentence suspended for two years.

The Court heard that as part of her role as head teacher, she was allowed to order items on behalf of the school. In a number of transactions, she visited websites to order items and printed off web pages that detailed the cost of what she said she had ‘ordered’ so she could claim the money back.

However, the prosecutor told the court that the orders never actually processed past the ‘proceed to checkout stage’ on the websites and that the goods never arrived. In one transaction, the head teacher obtained money from a school fund allocated for activities, presents and Christmas and Easter treats for pupils.

The head teacher must carry out 240 hours unpaid work and repay her remaining debt to the school as well as £1,200 court costs

### **Case Study 6 – Manchester City Council**

Care packages and other associated welfare related benefits can involve high value payments over the course of a year. A social worker became suspicious that an individual in receipt of support funding had overstated their level of need. A subsequent investigation by counter fraud specialists from the council and DWP identified a number of irregularities resulting in overpayments in excess of £100,000 of public funds. The suspect no longer receives personal budget funding or Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and the case has been referred to the Crown Prosecution Service.

## **Case Study 7**

A long established customer of a bank came into the branch accompanied by their 'social worker'. The gentleman wanted to switch his bank account from a savings account to an account he could access with a cash card.

The bank ran his details through Cifas and matched on a Protective Registration for the Vulnerable case. The bank contacted Cifas for advice, who in turn contacted the local authority. The local authority advised Cifas that this situation could not be genuine, as no social worker would accompany one of their clients to a bank and that any change in financial products would come from the local authority and not from the individual himself.

Cifas relayed this information back to the bank and also provided the local authority with the name of the individual so that they could carry out welfare checks.

## **Case Study 8 – London Borough of Bromley (NFI 2010/11 exercise)**

A NFI blue badge to deceased persons' records match resulted in a woman being convicted of fraud and fined £181.

As a result of the match, London Borough of Bromley's parking services team put the badge on a hot-list for traffic wardens and, when the woman challenged 2 penalty notices she had received, they were able to confirm that she was using the badge that belonged to her deceased mother. When questioned by the fraud team, she admitted using the badge on 2 occasions.

## **Case Study 9 – Plymouth City Council – Plymouth Magistrates Court 15 May 2015**

Mrs A used an out of date blue badge to get free parking. She admitted that she had deliberately altered the expiry date of the badge so that she didn't have to pay parking charges.

She was charged with Counterfeiting and Fraud Act offences.

## **Sentencing**

Mrs A pled guilty and was sentenced to a £200 fine, £400 towards costs and a further £60 victim surcharge.

## Case Study 10 – Plymouth City Council

Miss N committed the offence of using a disabled person's blue badge to obtain free parking on 1 October 2014. The blue badge belonged to her father-in-law who had died 12 months previously.

Miss N pleaded guilty to the Fraud Act offence.

### Sentencing

Miss N was given a 12 month conditional discharge which means that if she commits another offence within 12 months she will be resentenced for this offence as well.

The Court felt that she had suffered for her actions on the day in question as she has been suspended from her nurses training for two years and the conviction for fraud will affect her future employability. She stated that she was also planning to emigrate to Australia after qualifying as a nurse and that the strict immigration rules for entry into Australia may well mean that she would not be accepted. She was also ordered to pay £200 towards costs.