

# Risking It All

## ...in Hull

NOVEMBER 2007



Hull & Holderness  
Magistrates' Court

### Benefit thieves in Hull, your number's up!

**In 2006/07 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) took criminal action against an average of 23 benefit thieves every month in the area, thanks to improved technology and techniques being used by Anti Fraud teams across Hull.**

Benefit Fraud Manager for Hull City Council, Mark Bell comments:

"The cases highlighted here are blatant examples of people who receive wages through employment, but due to sheer greed have made conscious decisions to steal taxpayers' money.

By just leading everyday lives benefit fraudsters leave a trail of information that is available to the Fraud

Investigation Team. We will continue to use all the powers at our disposal and work with other agencies to ensure that money goes to those that genuinely need it and not the dishonest minority."

Most of us agree that some of the money we pay in taxes should go towards benefits for people who need them. But did you know that as much as £700 million in 2006/07 went into the pockets of people who claim benefits fraudulently?

In Hull alone, there could be £6.5 million finding its way into the pockets of the greedy.

### Self-employed? Make sure we know about it

East Hull resident 'Sheila D' pleaded guilty to committing benefit fraud in a case brought to the attention of magistrates following investigation by officers from Hull City Council.

The local benefit fraud team found that Sheila was working for a greeting card company on a self-employed basis and earned £30,000 over a three year period, which she had failed to declare.

As a result of dishonestly failing to declare this income, Sheila was overpaid Housing and Council Tax Benefits in excess of £10,000. In addition to having to repay the money, she was sentenced to a Community Order for 12 months with a requirement to do 100 hours' unpaid work.

If your personal circumstances change while you are claiming benefits, you must report these changes to your local benefits office.



### Live-in liars

#### Couples in Hull prosecuted for 'living together'

An increasing number of couples in Hull are being caught every week for secretly living together while claiming benefits separately and stealing taxpayers' money.

'Sharon J' had been claiming Income Support since September 2003. After anonymous information was received that she was living with her partner, a full investigation was undertaken. Her overpayment of benefit was £2,000. Sharon appeared in Court and was ordered to pay back the £2,000 and in addition, a £300 fine and costs of £200.

If you have a live-in partner but still claim benefits as a single person, then you're committing benefit theft. When caught, you'll have to pay back all the money you owe and could face an interview under caution. If found guilty, you could end up with a fine and a criminal record.

If your personal circumstances change while you are claiming benefits, you must report these changes to your local benefits office.

# Fraud Investigators on the streets of Hull

Another local resident from West Hull, 'Karen M', was recently prosecuted for dishonestly failing to declare a change in circumstance and making false declarations over a two-year period.

Investigators from Hull City Council found that Karen's husband had been working for a local paint manufacturing firm for the past three years. On claims for Housing and Council Tax benefit Karen had declared earnings from her own employment, but had failed to declare her husband's income.

As a result of her dishonesty she was overpaid Housing and Council Tax Benefits in excess of £6,000 which she will have to repay in full. Karen was also sentenced to a Community Order with a requirement to do 100 hours' unpaid work.

Hull City Council's Benefits Manager, Andy Sims, is pleased about the rising numbers of benefit thieves being caught.

"Benefit fraud is not a victimless crime; all taxpayers are victims, as are the people who could benefit from more appropriate use of these public funds.

The cases highlighted in this newsletter show instances where people have deliberately acted dishonestly. We will use all the powers at our disposal to ensure that those who abuse the system are dealt with in the appropriate manner and that they repay every penny stolen."

## Benefit thieves being shopped by neighbours



Ever get the feeling people are talking about you behind your back? Well for benefit thieves in and around Hull this is a very real possibility.

Anyone who suspects an individual of committing benefit fraud can call the National Benefit Fraud Hotline. All calls are confidential and callers can remain anonymous if they wish.

All leads are followed up to make sure suspected benefit thieves are brought to justice.

**National Benefit Fraud Hotline: 0800 854 440**



**Fraud Investigators in Hull have a range of far-reaching powers to help them detect those who think they can steal from taxpayers, including:**

- surveillance of suspected fraudsters
- authority to check customer details including investments, savings and bank accounts
- authority to check for inconsistencies on utility bills
- a close working relationship with police, local authorities and the courts

## It's against the law!

**Many people assume that benefit fraud applies to only those who are working for 'cash in hand' but this is not the case. If you are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support, benefit fraud includes:**

- not telling us that you are now living with a partner
- claiming for children who have left home
- not telling us that you have started work, or about any additional earnings
- not telling us that you have inherited money, have any savings or additional bank accounts
- not telling us that you are going abroad, living abroad, or have changed address

There are no exceptions – any attempt to steal taxpayers' money is taken very seriously. People who lie about their earnings or deliberately fail to report a change in their circumstances are benefit thieves and are stealing from the public.

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**For more information visit [www.dwp.gov.uk/benefit-thieves](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/benefit-thieves)**

**If you would like this information in an alternative format please call: 0207 025 6661**

This newsletter has been produced by DWP with support from Hull City Council. It contains stories based upon hundreds of real life experiences. Don't let it happen to you. Benefit fraud is a crime – No ifs, No buts.

**TARGETING  BENEFIT THIEVES**

**Benefit fraud is a crime, break the law and you could face a criminal record.**  
[dwp.gov.uk/benefit-thieves](http://dwp.gov.uk/benefit-thieves)

**DWP** Department for Work and Pensions