

**Jobcentre Plus  
Fraud Investigation Service**

**&**

**Local Authorities**

**Fraud Partnership Agreement**

*FINAL VERSION 1.0*

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This agreement sets out the principles for effective partnership working between Jobcentre Plus Fraud Investigation Service (FIS) and Local Authorities (LAs). It sets out the reasons *why* we should work together and *what* we are jointly trying to achieve in doing so.
- 1.2 The agreement should be communicated to and understood by all relevant staff to help reinforce the benefits to be gained and the importance placed upon effective partnership working. The process detail of *how* we work together can be found in relevant guidance.

## **2.0 Aims and Objectives**

- 2.1 Partnership working is a commitment from both organisations to the Department for Work and Pensions' (the Department) that they will share information where legislation allows and pool their resources. The main aims of an effective partnership are:
  - Commitment to maintain regular effective communication on operational and performance matters that impact on the prevention, detection and sanction of benefit fraud;
  - Joint working activity that sees expertise, intelligence and resource shared to secure more efficient and effective outcomes from counter-fraud activity;
  - The efficient exchange of information in support of counter fraud activity;
  - Identifying the necessary steps to be taken to correct benefit, where criminal sanctions are not appropriate; and
  - Supporting each organisation to enable them to follow procedures and comply with legislation.

## **3.0 Headline principles for effective partnership working**

### **3.1 Notifications**

FIS and LAs undertake to inform each other of cases under investigation and their outcomes to avoid duplication and maximise prevention, deterrent and detection opportunities.

### **3.2 Investigations and Sanctions**

Joint investigations and sanctions should be offered/ take place where there is a joint benefit interest and joint working is the most practical and efficient way to progress a case towards its conclusion. During joint investigations, investigators will follow relevant procedures and adhere to legislation.

### **3.3 Customer Compliance**

Customer Compliance is used by Jobcentre Plus as an alternative to criminal fraud investigations and sanctions. It addresses incorrectness in benefit cases by carrying out formal face-to-face interviews with the customers and encouraging future compliance with the benefit reporting process.

Customer Compliance guidance and procedures must be followed, giving due care to ensuring these cases do not undermine or interfere with ongoing LA investigations.

### **3.4 Publicity**

Publicity is an integral part of fraud deterrence and detection. Close liaison on joint benefit interest cases is required to optimise publicity opportunities, whilst ensuring relevant prevailing procedures are followed and the publicity is co-ordinated appropriately.

### **3.5 Local Agreements**

Local procedures can be agreed where these meet specific local requirements and comply with the aims and objectives of effective partnership working. Agreements should be negotiated at the lowest operational level and, where appropriate, should be agreed through Joint Board arrangements.

## **4.0 Escalation Procedures**

4.1 As an overarching principle, day-to-day business management and any issues arising will be dealt with and resolved at the most appropriate and lowest level, through normal management routes.

4.2 If LAs have exhausted all normal management routes without success, they should escalate the issue to the Jobcentre Plus District External Relations Manager (ERM), in the first instance. ERMs are responsible for managing the local relationship between Jobcentre Plus and its partners including representing other areas of Jobcentre Plus business. ERMs are supported by a comprehensive group of operational colleagues in Jobcentre Plus throughout the management chain up to

national level, who will provide appropriate briefing to aid issue resolution.

- 4.3 If FIS have exhausted all normal management routes without success, they should escalate issues to the relevant LA Head of Service. The relevant LA Head of Service will then take responsibility to ensure appropriate information is provided to aid issue resolution.

## **5.0 Agreement, Monitoring and Evaluation of the agreement**

- 5.1 This agreement has been endorsed by the Local Authority Associations (LAA) and FIS. Its contents will be communicated to all relevant management and staff within Jobcentre Plus, FIS, ERMs and LAs. Where deemed necessary, they may put additional local arrangements in place (see para 3.4).
- 5.2 Individual signatures to the FPA are not required as the endorsement of the LAA and FIS meets this requirement for all.
- 5.3 Detailed monitoring of the agreement should be carried out by exception and outcomes should be monitored rather than processes. Outcomes should be monitored through the respective target regimes in each organisation and if it is perceived there is a problem, then both organisations should work backwards in the process to identify where the problem has occurred. Once the problem is resolved a local decision should be taken as whether it is necessary to put further monitoring arrangements in place.
- 5.4 The FPA is intended to be a long-term standing agreement, which will be reviewed and evaluated every 12 months (or sooner if required), led by Jobcentre Plus Partnerships Division and including the Fraud Operational Group (FOG) and other key stakeholders such as Jobcentre Plus ERMs and LA Heads of Service. Suggested changes to the FPA must first be agreed by the LAA and Jobcentre Plus and then communicated to all stakeholders. As part of the review, Jobcentre Plus Partnerships Division will also lead on evaluating the effectiveness of the FPA and the relationship as a whole, involving relevant stakeholders.