

Tackling Housing Benefit Fraud

Housing and Council Tax Benefit



Contact us



Phone:

Our Benefits and Council Tax Helpline
01395 517446 between 8.30am
and 5.00pm



Visit us at:

- **The Council Offices,
Knowle, Sidmouth**
daily between 8.30am and 5.00pm
- **Exmouth Town Hall**
daily except Wednesday
from 9.00am to 1.00pm
and 2.00pm to 4.30pm
- **One of our regular surgeries**
in Axminster, Seaton or Honiton
(phone **01395 517446** for
dates and times)



Write to us:

Housing Benefits
East Devon District Council
Knowle, Sidmouth EX10 8HL



Email us:

benefits@eastdevon.gov.uk

Visit our website:

www.eastdevon.gov.uk

Do you need help with this leaflet?

Maybe English is not your
first language, you have
difficulty reading it because
the print is too small, or you
are not sure what it means.

Please phone
01395 517446.

Benefit fraud is theft!

All benefit theft is a crime and those found breaking the law face a criminal record.

In East Devon, we know that most of our housing and council tax benefit claimants are honest but we are out to catch benefit thieves and make benefit theft harder to get away with.

At the Council, we have targets for reducing the amount of money lost through benefit theft and to help us do this we have our own Fraud Investigation Team. They are responsible for:

- detecting fraudulent claims
- stopping or reducing payment in fraudulent cases
- reclaiming overpayments on the discovery of the true facts.

What is benefit fraud?

There are many different ways in which benefit cheats commit fraud. Here are some typical examples:

- not telling us that they have started work or about any earnings;
- not telling us that they now live with a partner;
- not telling us that they have changed address or gone to live abroad;
- not telling us the full amount of income, savings, pensions, capital or other benefits;
- landlords getting benefit paid directly to them after the claimant has left;
- not telling us about other adults living in the property;
- claiming for children who have left home.

There are no exceptions. People who **knowingly** withhold information or **deliberately** fail to report a change in their circumstances are benefit thieves.

It is not 'playing the benefits game' it is breaking the law!

What is the Council doing about it?

We are tracking benefit thieves in every way we can. Our Fraud Investigation Team has access to many different ways of tracking down and identifying people who commit benefit fraud. Some examples of these are:

- From our own council tax and housing benefit records and by liaising with other councils.
- From social security records through the Benefits Agency (BA), particularly Income Support (IS) and income-based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA).
- Through HM Revenue and Customs, who hold information about people claiming social security benefits, including details about tax credits, income, investments/savings and national insurance contributions.
- From the Home Office who supply information about passports and nationalities.
- From banks, where we can apply for information about people's bank accounts.
- From household utility companies (such as fuel and water companies) where we can apply for information about people's bills.

How you can help

If you know (or suspect) that someone is committing benefit fraud, please let us know about it and we will investigate, in strictest confidence.

Please call our dedicated **Fraud Hotline 01395 517400** or email us at: **stopbenefitfraud@eastdevon.gov.uk**.

Please give us as much detail as possible. We treat all the information we get in the strictest confidence.

If you prefer, you can phone the **National Benefit Fraud Hotline** on **0800 854 440** or text on **0800 328 0512**. Calls are free of charge.

You can find out more about benefit fraud on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) website **www.targetingbenefitfraud.gov.uk**. There is also an online form if you want to report a benefit thief.

Benefit fraud is benefit theft !