

Corporate Anti Fraud Team (CAFT) Annual Report 2015/16

4th April 2016

Clair Green

Assurance Assistant Director

Executive Summary

The purpose of this annual report is to provide a summary on the outcome of all CAFT work undertaken during 2015-16 including CAFT progress and outcomes set against the objectives as set out in our annual strategy and work plan.

All CAFT work is conducted within the appropriate legislation and through the powers and responsibilities as set out within the financial regulations section of the Council's constitution. CAFT supports the Chief Operating Officer in fulfilling his statutory obligation under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to ensure the protection of public funds and to have an effective system of prevention and detection of fraud and corruption. It supports the Council's commitment to a zero tolerance approach to fraud, corruption, bribery and other irregularity including any Money Laundering activity. Work processes in the team are designed for maximum efficiency and as such all functions are intrinsically linked and are dependent on each other in order to ensure CAFT continue to provide an efficient value for money counter fraud service and that is able to investigate all referrals or data matches to an appropriate outcome. CAFT provide advice and support to every aspect of the organisation including its partners and contractors. This advice varies between fraud risk, prevention and detection, money laundering and other criminal activity as well as misconduct and misuse of public funds. Some of the matters will progress to criminal investigation and others will not, but in all cases appropriate actions, such as disciplinary are taken. It is this element of the work of CAFT that is hard to quantify statistically.

In relation to Housing and Council Tax Benefit Fraud investigations, on the 1st July 2015 Barnet area became a Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) site. SFIS is the creation of a national single integrated fraud investigation service within the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). It has statutory powers to conduct single investigations and sanctions covering the totality of welfare benefit fraud (all DWP benefits, Local Authority benefits and HMRC credits). It will not have responsibility for other Local Authority Fraud such as Internal/staff Fraud, Tenancy Fraud, Council Tax Replacement or discounts Fraud this will remain with the council CAFT Team. As such CAFT migrated 105 on-going benefit cases to SFIS and 3 investigators from CAFT also transferred to the DWP. Following the transfer staff are now employed by the DWP and relocated to DWP offices. The first quarter of 2015 was in effect the transitional months ahead of the transfer, however good results were still obtained in relation to investigations closed during that period and these were the last time that Housing and Council Tax Benefit related investigations and statistics were reported on by CAFT.

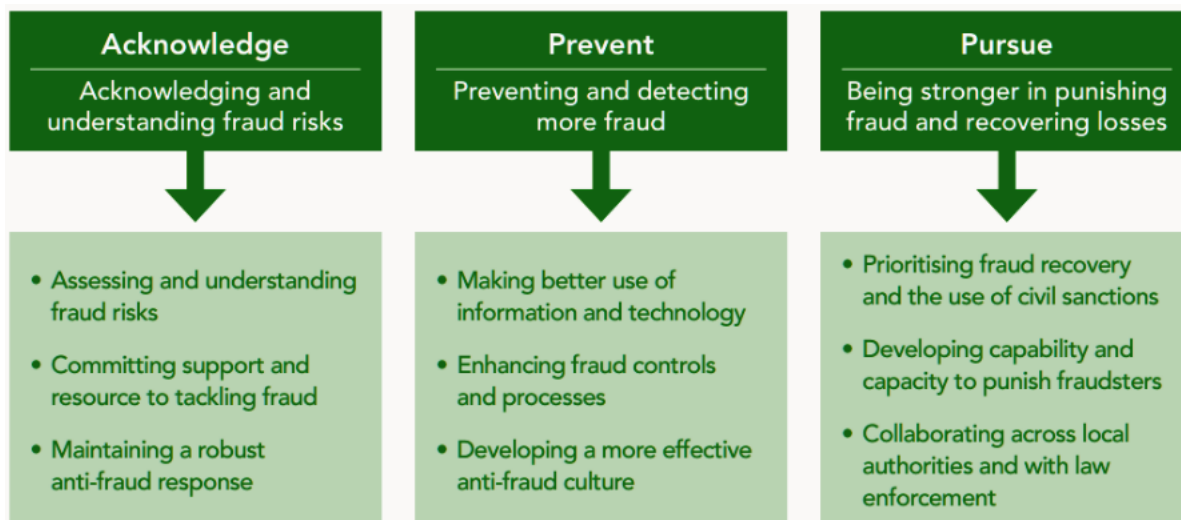
Other changes in year to note are that from October 2015 CAFT became responsible for the investigation of Blue Badge Misuse as well as Blue Badge fraud. Good results have been obtained since that date and these are detailed within the body of the report.

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1. Anti-Fraud Strategy

Our anti-fraud strategy is centred on the strategic approach as outlined in 'Fighting Fraud Locally' (Local Government Fraud Strategy) and provides a blueprint for a tougher response to tackle fraud. Within CAFT we adopted this approach and our work throughout the year compliments the objectives detailed below.



Acknowledging (and detecting) Fraud

CAFT is the council's dedicated fraud team, which consists of counter fraud specialists that operate under a framework of relevant policies and internal working procedures.

Each year we consider national fraud risks against local intelligence and local fraud risks to develop our risk based annual work plan. We continue to work collaboratively with our audit team and key partners ensuring that anti-fraud arrangements are fit for purpose on all aspects of fraud risk. We have a working protocol with both CAPITA covering the CSG and Re contractual arrangements that address anti-fraud responsibilities as well as Barnet Group in relation to the management agreement arrangements that address anti-fraud responsibilities.

Each year we devise an annual risk based work plan, which is then approved by senior management and the Audit Committee. In doing this we review that the CAFT team has sufficient resources in order to make sure that they are able to respond to demands and deliver the objectives as set out in the annual plan in order to deliver a robust anti-fraud response. Progress on and changes to the plan are reviewed constantly and reported quarterly to senior management and the Audit Committee.

Preventing (and deterring) Fraud

We recognise that employees are often the first line of defence in preventing fraud. The Financial Regulations within the Council's Constitution places the responsibility for fraud prevention on all employees. Staff are aware that they should therefore be alerted to the possibility of fraud and to report any concerns to CAFT. We have many open and easily accessible channels for reporting fraud, as well as confidential reporting 'Whistle blowing' policy in place to assist employees in reporting concerns about fraud and other issues without fear of harassment or victimisation. CAFT have revised and launched a new dedicated e-learning training into the new corporate 'induction' programme for all new starters. We have also delivered bespoke face to face session on fraud awareness as part of the council's 'Safeguarding Month' on financial fraud and abuse and on Tenancy Fraud to many Barnet Homes front line staff.

CAFT routinely use data matching techniques to identify possible fraudulent activity as well as centrally co-ordinating and investigating referrals relation to the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data matching exercises to ensure that it is given high priority within services, we are also founding members of the London Fraud Hub which assists to combat tenancy fraud across London.

CAFT work closely with management in high fraud risk area's to ensure that working procedures and practices include robust fraud preventative measures. CAFT also conduct targeted proactive anti-fraud activity throughout the year, joint reviews with internal audit as well as re-active investigation work. Outcomes from reviews and investigations where appropriate are reported to management to support their on-going work and to assist in either confirming effective anti-fraud controls and or suggested areas for improvement.

Our communications strategy and approach remains the same in that we always been to ensure that we issue press releases are issued on all successful prosecutions in order to act as a deterrent factor to the resident and Barnet community. Further details on our investigations and outcomes are reported quarterly to Senior Management and Audit Committee and our CAFT Annual Report is reported to Full Council as part of the Audit Committee Annual Report.

We have effective liaison and working relationships with our HR team and where criminal activity is suspected or found, CAFT will deal with the criminal matter and disciplinary process in parallel to avoid duplication,

Pursuing Fraud (and seeking redress)

Within CAFT we ensure that each investigation is carried out in compliance with our policies and appropriate legislation, consistently apply 'zero Tolerance' approach and sanction ensuring that we take appropriate action against anyone who commits fraud whether they are members of staff or members of the public.

To this end we have developed a financial investigation team within CAFT dedicated to this area of work. They liaise closely with other internal departments and external partner's (including the Police) that prosecute offenders in order to raise awareness around POCA and ensure that where possible financial investigations are undertaken by CAFT so that we can assist in the recovery of losses to the public purse and obtain where possible compensation and/or confiscation under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA).

We also ensure that we utilise civil recovery procedures in relation to Tenancy Fraud and work collaboratively with other LA's and Law enforcement agencies to ensure best use of resources with holistic approach to counter fraud at all times.

2.Pro-active fraud plan

Table 1 provides an update against all CAFT pro-active activity as set out within the 2015/16 plan

CAFT Pro-active review	Outcome
<p>Children's - Schools Admissions</p> <p>Proactive targeted anti-fraud work in this area to ensure the safeguarding of school placements.</p>	<p>As part of the CAFT exercise we reviewed applications in respect of the three most desirable secondary schools in Barnet.</p> <p>After the initial matching exercise a total of 17 cases were identified as having potential discrepancies relating to the residential address stated on the application.</p> <p>Following a further round of checks after school placement offers had been made the number of cases that were still of interest was reduced down to four. The reason for this is that the 13 other applicants were either offered school placements at alternative schools that were undersubscribed or they were offered their preferred school but on a sibling basis so the residential address would not have formed part of the decision to offer a place. It was therefore not deemed in the public interest to pursue any of the discrepancies.</p> <p>Visits were carried out on the four cases of interest, two were verified as the family being resident at the property, the third confirmed that the family lived at more at one address but all were within the catchment area of the school applied for and the final school place was withdrawn after investigation on the basis that the applicant and the family were not known at the address. Refer to noteworthy investigation section for details of this case.</p>
<p>National Fraud Initiative data matching exercises</p>	<p>The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) is an exercise that matches electronic data within and between public and private sector bodies to prevent and detect fraud.</p> <p>In February 2015 as a result of the NFI matching exercise Barnet received 13,984 matches in various areas of the council ranging from Disabled Blue Badge, Parking Permits, Direct Payments, duplicate Invoices, Pensions, Payroll and Housing Benefits. By March 2016 as the exercise draws to a close 6,363 high priority matches had been reviewed by either the service or CAFT which resulted in the process identifying £655,233 of fraud and error which is currently in the process of being recovered by each service.</p>

	<p>This can be broken down into the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing benefit to Student loans Data identified £517,417 of fraud / error • Housing Benefit to Deceased persons data identified £27,688 of fraud/ error • Housing Benefit to Payrol identified £10,100 of fraud/ error • Housing benefit to Taxi drivers data identified £6,436 of fraud/error • Care Homes to Deceased persons data identified £36,778 of error over payments • Direct Payments to deceased Persons data identified £35,514 of fraud/error • The remaining £21,300 is split between various areas across the council <p>The remaining 7,621 matches were of low quality and did not furnish enough evidence to justify further investigation.</p> <p>The next NFI matching exercise is due to take place in October 2016 with matches due to be received at the council in January 2017.</p>
<p>Disabled Blue Badge Street Operations</p>	<p>Three proactive exercises were carried out by CAFT during 2015 -16.</p> <p>The first of these exercises took place in October 2015 when CAFT officers accompanied by NSL officers carried out a street patrol in the Edgware area. During this exercise 40 Blue badges were checked for validity which resulted in 2 being seized for misuse and 1 being seized for not having any start or expiry date printed on it.</p> <p>The second exercise took place in January 2016 where after a number of referrals indicating that Blue badge misuse was taking place CAFT officers who were accompanied by officers from the Safer Neighbourhood Team carried out a patrol in the Hendon area. During this exercise 20 badges were checked for validity with 2 being seized.</p> <p>The third exercise took place in March 2016. This was a larger exercise as it utilised Officers from CAFT and NSL and Metropolitan Police. It was a full day operation and covered two areas that were highlighted as high risk from intelligence received and gathered were Hendon and Finchley Central areas. During this exercise 84 badges were checked for validity. During this operation nine criminal offences were identified relating to Blue Badges fraud/misuse. Six badges were seized; Two were taken by</p>

	Police as evidence relating to offences of theft and forgery. Ten Penalty Charge Notices (PCN's) were issued during the Operation generating fines (and income) totalling £600 back to the council.
Tenancy Fraud Data matching	<p>In August 2015 we agreed a Memoranda of Understanding with Circle 33 Housing Trust to pro-actively data match and validate all of the 164 properties they manage in Barnet. Two properties have been recovered as a result of this exercise and checks have been done on all the other properties to ensure correct tenants are in occupation.</p> <p>In September 2015 as part of the 'London Fraud Hub – 360 Call Credit Matching' we bulk data matched all 9,767 Barnet Homes rented properties. Following an initial check it was decided that 411 cases needed to be further investigated. To date 372 cases have been reviewed and validated, 10 properties have been recovered and 29 cases are still under investigation.</p>

Table 2 provides details of joint CAFT and Internal Audit Reviews and overall assurance ratings as set out within the 2015/16 plan. Full details of these reviews can be found in the Internal Audit quarterly progress reports.

CAFT and Audit Joint Reviews	Outcome / Assurance rating
Financial Assessments	Satisfactory
Street Scenes Operations Review	No Assurance
CCTV	Satisfactory

2. Performance Indicators

Table 3 provides an update against all performance indicators as set out within the 2015/16 plan

Performance Indicator	2015-16	Comments
Corporate Fraud Team deal with the investigation of any criminal and fraud matters (except Benefit and Tenancy related fraud) attempted or committed within or against Barnet such as internal employee frauds, frauds by service recipients and any external frauds.. They work in partnership with partners, other organisations and law enforcement agencies to ensure that the public purse is adequately protected		
Number of carried forward Fraud investigations from 14-15	44	
Number of new fraud investigations	59	
Total Number of closed fraud investigations	73	Please refer to noteworthy investigations sections of the report for further details if fraud is

		proven.
Total number of on-going fraud investigations	30	Of these 30 investigations, 6 relate to Adults and Communities, 10 relate to education and skills, 7 relate to CSG, 1 relates to RE, 5 relate to Street Scenes, 1 relates to commissioning. Details of cases are reported on closure if fraud is proven or another sanction given.
Number of prosecutions this year.	3	Please refer to noteworthy investigations sections of the report for further details
Number of staff no longer employed / dismissed as a result of CAFT investigations.	7	Please refer to noteworthy investigations sections of the report for further details for details of closed cases.
Number of school places withdrawn as a result of CAFT intervention / investigation.	4	Please refer to noteworthy investigations section of the report for further details
<u>Disabled Blue Badge Misuse and Fraud</u> From 1st October 2015 The CAFT became responsible for the investigation of Blue Badge Misuse as well as Blue Badge fraud so these statistic refer to the period 1 st October – 31 st March 2016.		
Number of new referrals received	62	As a result of these 62 referrals 21 badges have been seized.
Prosecutions	3	Please refer to noteworthy investigations sections of the report for further details
Warning letters issues	14	In addition to these warning letters being issued to the badge holder 9 (Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) were issued to the actual offender.
With or being prepared for legal action	8	Details of cases are reported on closure if fraud is proven or another sanction given.
Cases closed insufficient evidence to investigate	22	
On-going investigations at year end	15	
<u>Financial Investigations</u> - a Financial Investigation under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 ensures that any persons subject to a criminal investigation by Barnet do not profit from their criminal action		
Number of carried forward Financial investigations from 14-15	8	
Number of new Financial investigations	6	
Number of closed Financial investigations	6	5 related to revenues and Benefits and 1 related to counterfeit school cheque.
Total Number of on-going Financial investigations	8	Of these investigations, 3 relate to planning, 3 relate to Revs and Bens, 1 elates to Trading standards and 1

		relates to Direct Payments. Details of cases are reported on closure if fraud is proven or another sanction given.
<p>Tenancy Fraud Team prevent, identify, investigate, deter and sanction or prosecute persons that commit tenancy fraud in Barnet, ensuring maximising properties back to the council where Tenancy Fraud has been proven.</p> <p>CAFT provide a detailed monthly statistical report , along with a more comprehensive half year and year end report to Barnet Homes outlining how many properties have been recovered, along with a list of all referrals from the neighbourhood officers and the current status of the cases referred.</p>		
Number of carried forward Tenancy Fraud investigations from 14-15	87	Of the 103 on-going investigations there are currently 3 cases with legal awaiting criminal hearings and 3 cases are awaiting civil hearings.
Number of new Tenancy Fraud investigations	423	
Total Number of closed Tenancy Fraud investigations	407	
Total number of on-going Tenancy Fraud Investigations.	103	
Number of properties recovered	57	Of the 57 properties recovered this year these include 4 successions denied and 7 temporary/emergency accommodation ceased. The savings that this number of recovered properties equates to is £8,550,000* (*according to audit commission calculation of £150k per recovered property)
Number of 'Right to Buy' applications denied as a result of CAFT intervention	18	There is a maximum discount of £103,900 per property on right to buy cases. CAFT have saved £1,022,520 in discounts in the current financial year .
Number of Homeless Applications denied as a result of CAFT intervention	6	We have been working pro-actively with the housing options team in order to make relevant checks prior to accommodation being handed to new tenants.
Number of Assignment applications denied as a result of CAFT intervention	2	These relate to investigations where the tenant has requested that the tenancy be transferred to someone else, but the eligibility criteria was not satisfied
Other information reported as per requirements of policy.		
Number of requests authorised for surveillance in accordance with Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).	Nil this year. This statistic is reported for information purposes in accordance with our policy and statistical return to the Office of Surveillance Commissioners. In May 2015 the council had an inspection by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners (OSC) in relation the management and policy relating to covert activities	

	<p>and directed surveillance. Following the inspection the OSC inspector wrote to the Chief Executive stating <i>'the standard of your directed surveillance applications and authorisations were extremely good'</i> and made 'no recommendations' for change or improvement on practice. A full copy of the inspection report letter is available to Audit Committee members should they wish to review in detail.</p>
<p>Number of referrals received under the council's whistleblowing policy.</p>	<p>Three whistleblowing letters were received in the last year – they all relate to the same matter; alleged criminal activity, impropriety and financial regularities within the Street Scene Delivery Unit particularly around the Council Depot operations and work practices.</p> <p>As previously reported in quarter 3 due to the varying nature of allegations within the referral it was decided to approach the issues by conducting a CAFT investigation into some specific elements of the referral and address the other elements by conducting a joint Internal Audit and CAFT review covering all of the Street Scenes operations. The review has now concluded with a 'No Assurance' report being issued and a number of high priority recommendations being made. Details of this report can be found within the Internal Audit Quarter Three progress report. The CAFT investigation has also now concluded with no evidence of criminal activity being found relating to the allegations. However CAFT did make recommendations to the service regarding consideration of disciplinary action for some staff members in relation to non-compliance with council policy and all staff matters have been subsequently dealt with.</p> <p>Full details of the matters referred cannot be publicised due to confidentiality, however all matters within the letters have been thoroughly reviewed and/or investigated and actions taken or recommended where appropriate to do so.</p> <p>The letters have been from anonymous source/s and have been sent and copied to various senior officer and members by the whistleblower. The letters have been very helpful in identifying matters within the service however the council would urge that the source/s come forward in accordance with the Whistleblowing Policy and the protections set out within the policy so that we can engage with them personally.</p>

Table 4 provides an update against all performance indicators relating to benefit fraud and error as reported at Q1 prior to the transfer to the DWP.

Performance Indicator	Quarter One 2015-16 only	Comments
<p>Benefit Compliance Team identified and corrected fraud and error in our benefits and council tax systems through various methods including dealing with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Housing Benefit Data Matches (HBDMS) and the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) Benefit Matches.</p>		
Total amount of Fraud overpayments identified in Benefits system	355,903	
Total amount of Error overpayments identified in Benefits system	105,345	
Combined amount Fraud and Error identified within the Benefits System	461,248	
<p>Benefit Fraud Investigation Team prevented, identified, investigated, deterred, sanctioned and/ or prosecuted persons that committed benefit fraud in Barnet.</p>		
Number of carried forward Benefit Fraud investigations from 14/15	148	As part of the SFIS – 105 ongoing investigations were transferred to the DWP on the 1 st July 2015.
Number of new Benefit Fraud investigations	5	
Total Number of on-going Benefit Fraud investigations transferred to the DWP	105	
Total number of closed cases – no fraud	25	
Total number of Sanctions issued	23	These figures relate to the differing sanctions that are available under the DWP's Fraud and Error Strategy in relation to benefit fraud investigations where fraud is proven.

3. Noteworthy investigations summaries from 2015/16

Corporate Fraud

Investigations outcomes whereby staff are no longer employed / dismissed as a result of CAFT investigations case summaries

Case 1 – relates to an internal investigation in which 2 school based catering service staff members who were suspected of stealing food from the school kitchen on a regular basis. CAFT officers attended the school to speak with the staff members and witnessed them leaving the kitchen area with bags containing food supplies that had been cooked that day for the children. They were stopped and asked to empty their bags. The bags contained quantities of cooked food supplies from the school kitchen. Due to the low monetary value of the offence, the evidence was passed to the service to conduct a full disciplinary hearing. On 1st June 2015 both staff members were found to be guilty of gross misconduct and were dismissed from the council.

Case 2 – relates to an investigation into a refuse crew who were suspected of taking cash in exchange for either removing rubbish that should not have been collected from traders. CAFT initiated an investigation and the CCTV footage taken from the refuse vehicle was viewed and evidence of exchanges between members of the refuse crew and traders was identified.

One member of the crew resigned as soon as he was aware that the allegation was being looked into, a second member of the crew resigned upon receiving a letter from CAFT requesting that he attend an interview under caution and the third crew member was dismissed following CAFT investigation and disciplinary action. On 15th March 2016 all 3 defendants attended Willesden Magistrates Court after pleading guilty to Fraud Act offences relating to Fraud by abuse of position.

- **Mr Lee Doult** was sentenced to a 12 month community order with a 60 hour unpaid work requirement, a £60 victim surcharge and ordered to pay £1,000 costs.
- **Mr Wayne Elliott** was sentenced to a 12 month community order with a 60 hour unpaid work requirement, a £60 victim surcharge and ordered to pay £1,000 costs.
- **Mr Martin Corbishley** was sentenced to a 12 month community order with a 60 hour unpaid work requirement, a £60 victim surcharge and ordered to pay £1,000 costs.

Disabled Blue Badge Misuse – prosecution case summaries

Mr Titi –relates to the use of a stolen Disabled Blue Badge by the owner of a Hair Salon in Golders Green. CAFT officers investigated the referral and identified that the Blue Badge being used had been reported Stolen in 2012. Mr Titi was found working in his salon where he was arrested by Police and charged with theft by finding and handing stolen goods as well as Fraud by false representation. He appeared at Highbury Magistrates court in September 2015 where he pleaded guilty and received a £200.00 fine, a victim surcharge of £20.00 and also crown prosecution service charge £85.00 and criminal court charge of £180.00.

Mr Ghadakchi –relates to the misuse of a Disabled Blue Badge by a visitor to the North London Business Park who had parked his vehicle in a disabled bay and displayed a Blue Badge. Mr Ghadakchi was approached by CAFT officers who asked to inspect the badge. On Inspection the Badge was seen to be that of an elderly female which turned out to be his mother. Mr Ghadakchi was interviewed under caution for Misuse of a Disabled Blue Badge and pleaded guilty to Wrongful use of disabled person's badge contrary to Section 117 Road Traffic Act 1984. He received a fine of £300, a court charge of £150, a victim surcharge of £30 and ordered to pay prosecution costs of £600. *This case represents the first formal prosecution by the London borough of Barnet for Misuse of a Disabled Persons Blue Badge.*

Mr Anush – relates to the use of a stolen Disabled Blue Badge by a visitor to the North London Business Park who had parked his vehicle in a disabled bay and displayed the Blue Badge. CAFT officers approached the driver Mr Anush and on carrying out a validation check found that the badge belonged to an elderly resident from Enfield. Mr Anush stated to officers that his client had given him the badge to use. The badge was seized and Anush was summonsed to Wilsden Magistrates court on 22 March 2016. Mr Anush pleaded guilty by post and by way of mitigation stated that he found the badge and had no intention of using the it. He was fined £400, ordered to pay £40 victim surcharge and ordered to pay full costs of £908.

Schools Admission Investigations Case Summaries

Case A - As part of 2015-16 pro-active anti-fraud exercise we looked at a sample secondary schools applications in the borough to identify any fraudulent applications. This case relates to the false application for a school place at **East Barnet School**. An application was received stating that a child on their waiting list was not living at the address stated and that the address given was a family member whose address was being used as it was inside the catchment area. CAFT Intelligence checks revealed that the child's family address was in fact different to that stated to the school and the child was included on a live benefit claim at an address outside the catchment area for the school. The school place was therefore withdrawn and the applicant has now been placed back on the waiting list at their true address, which will therefore mean they will not be offered a place at East Barnet School in the future.

Case B – As part of 2014 -15 pro-active anti-fraud exercise we looked at a sample secondary schools applications in the borough to identify any fraudulent applications. This case relates to the false application for a school place at **Mill Hill County School** which resulted in the place being offered. The application stated that the child and the parents were residing at an address within the Borough of Barnet. Checks carried out by the CAFT identified that the family were actually living and claiming benefits at an address in Hornchurch in Essex at the time that the application was submitted. The case was presented to the School Admissions department and after due consideration the school place was withdrawn.

Case C - As part of 2014 -15 CAFT pro-active anti-fraud plan we looked at a sample secondary schools applications in the borough to identify any fraudulent applications. This case relates to the false application for a school place at **The Archer Academy** which resulted in the place being offered. The application stated that the child and the parents were residing at an address within the New Barnet area. Checks carried out by the CAFT identified that the family were actually living at an address in East Barnet at the time that the application was submitted. The case was presented to the School Admissions department and after due consideration the school place was withdrawn.

Case D - As part of 2014 -15 CAFT pro-active anti-fraud plan we looked at a sample secondary schools applications in the borough to identify any fraudulent applications. This case relates to the false application for a school place at **Mill Hill School** which resulted in the place being offered. The application stated that the child and the parents were residing at an address within the Grahame Park area. Checks carried out by the CAFT identified that neither the child nor the family were known at the address given and there was no record of them living anywhere within the London borough of Barnet. The Place was withdrawn.

Financial Investigation / Proceeds of Crime (POCA) – Case Summaries

Mr SABET was investigated by CAFT and convicted of benefit fraud in March 2012. He was at the time sentenced to 9 months imprisonment for a fraud that spanned 7 years with a total benefit overpayment of approx. £36,000 spread between, LB Barnet, Enfield, Haringey and the DWP. The case was featured on Saints and scroungers in 2014. As the lead investigating authority Barnet initiated a financial investigation into Mr SABET's after noting a number of unusual transactions within his personal accounts. The financial investigation concluded in December 2015 when a confiscation hearing took place at Wood Green Crown Court, the judge made a confiscation order against Mr SABET for the sum of £71,880 as well as a compensation order of £18,120 to cover the outstanding balance of his overpayment. *(Under the Governments Incentivisation scheme Local authorities carrying out Proceeds of Crime Investigations receive 37.5% of any proceeds that is confiscated from criminals who have benefited from their criminal activity. 12.5 % is given to the courts for the administration costs and 50% goes directly to the Treasury).*

Mr Viren Amin, was investigated by CAFT, for fraudulently obtaining more than 20 refund payments in respect of Council Tax relating to overpaid amounts or cancellations due to vacation of property. As well as the 20 fraudulent refunds from Barnet which totalled more than £28,000, the investigation further identified that Mr Amin had used the same scam to defraud funds exceeding £4,000 from the London Borough of Merton. Mr Amin was arrested and pleaded guilty to 27 counts of fraud totalling more than £33,000 and was subsequently sentenced at Harrow crown court to 14 months in prison. CAFT worked with the service during the investigation to ensure that processes and controls with regard to refunds were amended to prevent this type of fraud from re-occurring. Recovery will be made through the normal council tax overpayment process as ruled by the courts.

Tenancy Fraud

Mrs Labi had a two bedroom property in the EN5 area. There were suspicions that she was sub-letting her property and also claiming housing benefits for a period when she had moved abroad with her daughter. Investigations showed that she was abroad from September 2013 to August 2014. In view of the evidence gathered, Mrs Labi was asked to attend an interview under caution. She admitted that she had been abroad for the above period. She was charged with a social housing offence contrary to Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 and also for claiming housing benefit totalling £2816.13 while she was abroad. Mrs Labi pleaded guilty to these offences and was given 2 years conditional discharge and ordered to pay £500 costs.

Mr J had a two bedroom property in the NW9 area. There had been suspicions for a long period of time that Mr J had not been residing in his property. CAFT were asked to investigate the matter. Checks showed that he had been out of the country for several months. He was interviewed under caution regarding the matter and was adamant that he was now back in the country and living in the property. However, we took civil action to recover the property and this was granted in April 2015.

Mrs Thompson had a two bedroom flat in the NW9 area. There were suspicions that Mrs Thompson was not actually resident and the matter was passed to CAFT. Investigations began into the residency of the property and appeared to show she was actually living elsewhere. When she became aware that she was being investigated, Mrs Thompson returned the keys to the property and surrendered the tenancy. Mrs Thompson was interviewed under caution regarding a criminal offence and she was subsequently found guilty of two offences under the Fraud Act 2006. She was sentenced to a 12 month community order and 200 hours unpaid work. *Confiscation proceedings are still ongoing.*

Mr Savani made a right to buy application on his elderly mothers two bedroom property in N10 area. He stated that he had been resident for over 12 months. CAFT looked into the application and there

were concerns that he lived elsewhere and had submitted a false application to purchase his mother's property. Mr Savani was interviewed under caution and admitted he actually lived with his wife elsewhere. Mr Savani was prosecuted and pleaded guilty to an offence contrary to the Fraud Act 2006. He was sentenced to 12 months custody, suspended for 18 months. A curfew was imposed saying he could not leave home between 7pm – 7am for 6 months and was electronically monitored. He was also ordered to do 80 hours unpaid work within 18 months and ordered to pay full costs of £4129.00. If the right to buy application had been successful, Mr Savani would have been entitled to purchase the property with a discount of £103,900 less than the current market value.

Mr Haq had a two bedroom property in the NW4 area. A referral was received from Metropolitan Housing stating they had concerns that the tenant was not resident. Checks showed many links to another address. Mr Haq was interviewed under caution regarding the matter and admitted to not being resident in the property since 2010. Following discussions with CAFT, Mr Haq agreed to relinquish the tenancy of the property. *Nomination rights are then given to Barnet Homes to rehouse a tenant into the property.* However due to the evidence obtained in the investigation the matter was passed for criminal proceedings. Mr Haq pleaded guilty and was fined £500, as well as costs of £700 and a victim surcharge of £50. In addition, an unlawful profit order of £782.50 was awarded against Mr Haq.

Mrs N had a two bedroom property in the EN5 area. This case was looked into as part of an exercise undertaken with Circle 33 Housing where we reviewed all their properties in our area. Mrs N had been a tenant since 1993. Intelligence checks showed many links to another address in the Isle of Wight. Mrs N was interviewed under caution regarding the matter and denied living in the Isle of Wight, even though checks had shown her to be in employment there and her daughter going to school there. Following the interview with CAFT, Mrs N agreed to relinquish the tenancy of the property. *Nomination rights are then given to Barnet Homes to rehouse a tenant into the property.*

Mr U had a two bedroom property in the N11 area. A CAFT data matching exercise undertaken against all Barnet Homes tenants showed up a possible discrepancy in this tenancy. It showed Mr U as having many links to another address in the Borehamwood area. Visits were undertaken simultaneously to the tenants address and the address in Borehamwood. The tenant was at the address in Borehamwood and another person was resident in the Barnet Homes property. Following discussions with CAFT, Mr U agreed to relinquish the Barnet Homes property with immediate effect.

Mr A was in temporary accommodation. Barnet Homes contacted CAFT as they had concerns he was not resident at the placement. CAFT undertook Intelligence checks and as such we were satisfied that Mr A was not residing in the property. Contact was made with Mr A and he relinquished the property and returned the keys.

Miss B had a two bedroom property in N3. The case was referred from the rental income team, who had concerns that the tenant had a foreign contact number. Several visits were made to the property and the tenant was never present. Cards were left but checks showed that the tenant was in Cameroon. She did return in November and was interviewed regarding the tenancy. She did ask if the property could be assigned to her non dependant daughter and was told this was not possible. She returned to Cameroon in December and notices to quit and notices of seeking possession were issued in January. Following discussions with CAFT, Miss B agreed to relinquish the property.

Mr S submitted an application to succeed his late Mothers property in HA8. He stated that he had been living in the property for over 12 months prior to her passing away. The referral was passed over to CAFT from the neighbourhood housing team who had concerns that he had not been resident. Checks linked Mr S to another property. A visit was made and another male answered the door. Contact was then made with Mr S after a card was left asking him to ring the office. Following discussions with CAFT, Mr S agreed to relinquish the keys to the property.