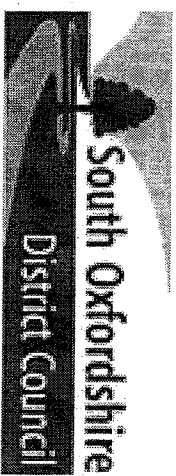




**Vale
of White Horse**

**Ridgeway Shared
Service
Partnership**



Listening Learning Leading

INVESTIGATIONS TEAM

Highlights:

- Vale and South Oxfordshire as a joint team were the two top performing councils in the Benchmarking group (Oxon, Berks and Bucks) for the whole of 2007/2008. We hope to keep this as our team goal and will be ensuring every effort is made to come out on top again this year.
- £1.5million will be recovered from cheats across Oxfordshire, news which received good press in September. All 5 Oxfordshire councils collated sanction and prosecution statistics for a press release which made front page news. Convicted fraudsters have been named and shamed across the County.

General Comments:

- At present the team is comprised of 1 part-time (0.6) Senior Investigations Officer (SIO), 1.9 full-time Investigations Officers (IO), 1 full-time Administration Officer and 1 part-time (0.4) Administration Officer (AO). We have been attempting to recruit an Investigations Officer but were not successful on the last occasion. We recently advertised the position as a training post. Interviews took place on 30 September.
- The joint team is a well motivated and committed team even though it has been through major changes and upheaval in the past 18 months. We continue to get good publicity in the local press when we are successful with prosecutions.
- The 2008 National Fraud Initiative (NFI) is now in progress and will data match payroll, benefits, creditors, licensing and pension records. This will extend to council tax and electoral roll records in 2009. We expect to receive the matches early in 2009 - which can then be examined and investigated as appropriate.

Quality:

- The quality of benefit assessing impacts on the quality of a fraud investigation. It is imperative that data is correct if the councils are planning to sanction benefit fraudsters. Verification requirements have to be carried out and calculations need to be correct.
- The fraud team is still identifying issues which generally relate to errors in assessments however it is pleasing to report the incidence of errors are decreasing. Any issues continue to be raised with Capita as and when they arise and are still being collated and sent to the Benefits Manager each month. The quality of assessments coming out of the Carlisle site are far more superior those coming out of Mendip.



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South Oxfordshire
District Council

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Performance:

Description	Target 2008/2009 September 2008	Achieved to date – Mar 09
Vale	33 per investigator	
Cautions	4	16
Administrative Penalties	0	2
Prosecutions	0	1
		19
South	33 per investigator	
Cautions	3	13
Administrative Penalties	1	1
Prosecutions	0	3
		17

BVPis were abolished and replaced by National Indicators from 1 April 2008. There are no specific indicators for fraud and error so a Local Performance Target (LPT) target will be set for both Authorities at 33 sanctions per investigator. This is a very stretching target.

New Key Lines of Enquiry have been introduced which will result in greater scrutiny of the counter-fraud function. Work will be undertaken to ensure that compliance is achieved.

The contact officer for this report is Paul Howden, Revenues & Benefits Client Manager for Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council, telephone (VWHDC) 01235 540385 and (SODC) 01491 823830.