

Fraud checks identify 'discrepancies' in £95,000 worth of claims to East Renfrewshire Council

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Drew Sandelands

Email

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Fraud checks identify 'discrepancies' in £95,000 worth of claims to East Renfrewshire Council

Potentially fraudulent and erroneous claims of more than £95,000 were made to East Renfrewshire Council last year.

A counter-fraud exercise led by Audit Scotland found 4422 claims where "discrepancies" were identified.

Around 2000 of these were identified as "high risk" and investigated, while a sample of "low risk" cases were also examined.

More than £23,000 was recovered as a result of the exercise.

The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) involved checking the information in claims made to the council against other data, including the Electoral Register, HMRC information on pensions and income, Student Loans, immigration and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) records.

It found "discrepancies between different data sets" in relation to a number of claims made to East Renfrewshire Council.

The scheme covers areas such as housing benefit, council tax reduction, council tax single person discount, blue badges, housing waiting lists, payroll and creditors history.

A report to councillors states: "The council has a robust and effective approach to NFI, which is complemented by existing fraud prevention measures.

"While the recovery through the NFI exercise is relatively low at £23,652, the main benefit from carrying out the exercise is the reduction in ongoing fraud and the deterrent effect gained from regular data matching."

Each area of the council takes responsibility for comparing its own data sets and for subsequent recovery or follow up action.

During the high risk review, 18 claimant errors were identified within housing benefit and council tax reduction, including one possible fraud.

These were valued at £18,045 and the possible fraud was referred to the DWP for further investigation and possible prosecution.

The exercise also highlighted 1006 cases where council tax single person discount had been awarded and may no longer be valid.

This resulted in the cancellation of 168 single person discounts, which equates to an annual saving for 2019/20 of £77,315 and prior year recovery of £21,135.

The National Fraud Initiative data-matching exercise is undertaken every two years.

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Re: Fraud checks identify 'discrepancies' in £95,000 worth of claims to East Renfrewshire Council

Posted by RM64 - 10 Oct 2019 09:14

Published Barrhead News On Line -

News

5th October

Cost of false benefit claims in East Renfrewshire revealed

FRAUDULENT or erroneous claims made to East Renfrewshire Council potentially totalled more than £95,000 last year.

The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) – a major data sharing and counter-fraud exercise led by Audit Scotland – found 4,422 matches within the council over 2018/19.

Data matching connects “discrepancies between different data sets,” including the Electoral Register, Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs information on pensions and income, student loans, immigration and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) records.

The initiative was organised to “make a significant contribution to the security and transparency of public sector finances by confirming that services are provided to the correct people and by reducing fraud and error.”

At East Renfrewshire Council, the scheme covers areas such as housing benefit, council tax reduction, council tax single person discount, blue badges, housing waiting lists, payroll and creditors’ history.

Almost 2,000 matches were identified as high risk and investigated, with a sample of lower risk cases also investigated.

More than £23,000 was recovered as a result of the exercise.

A report to councillors states: “The council has a robust and effective approach to NFI, which is complemented by existing fraud prevention measures. While the recovery through the NFI exercise is relatively low at £23,652, the main benefit from carrying out the exercise is the reduction in ongoing fraud and the deterrent effect gained from regular data matching.”

Each area of the council takes responsibility for comparing its own data sets and for subsequent recovery or follow-up action.

During the high risk review, 18 claimant errors were identified within housing benefit and council tax reduction, including one possible fraud.

These were valued at £18,045 and the possible fraud was referred to the DWP for further investigation and possible prosecution.

The exercise also highlighted 1,006 cases where council tax single person discount had been awarded and may no longer be valid.

This resulted in the cancellation of 168 single person discounts, which equates to an annual saving for 2019/20 of £77,315 and prior year recovery of £21,135.

The NFI data-matching exercise is undertaken every two years.

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