

This is a letter in response to my query on how we report benefit fraud:

REPORTING SUSPECTED BENEFIT OR TAX FRAUD

Dear Jim Knight MP,

Thank you for your letter of 5 December 2005 on behalf of Councillor Richard Peacocke of Crossways about fraud and abuse arising from the employment of youngsters in receipt of benefit.

I note Councillor Peacocke's perception that it is difficult to report suspected tax and benefit fraud. I am happy to reassure him that this is not the case.

There are many ways in which the public can provide information to the Department. A simple telephone call to the local Job Centre Plus or Social Security Office (*Note: Dorchester is 01305 326800*) can be made, or a letter can be sent addressed to the Counter-Fraud Investigation Service at the local Jobcentre Plus or Social Security Office. Alternatively, reports can be made to the National Benefit Fraud Hotline on 0800 854440.

It helps if the caller or informer provides their personal details as an investigator can then contact them to check further should this become necessary. However, many people prefer to remain anonymous and the Department does not discriminate between information received from a named source or an anonymous one. Information is vital in the fight against fraud. All information is treated as confidential.

In addition, people can now use the Internet to report suspicions of fraud by filling out a simple on-line form. The Internet reporting form can be found at the 'Targeting Fraud' website at www.targetingfraud.gov.uk.

People using the new Internet service will be able to remain anonymous, and the information they submit using the form will remain confidential. We would ask only that the informant provides as much information as possible if they wish to remain anonymous, thus enhancing the possibility of a successful investigation from the outset.

All referrals received from members of the public are treated seriously and never ignored. They are sent to specialised operational intelligence units where they are assessed and prioritised using an unbiased risk scoring system. Referrals can take some time to investigate and it is not always obvious to the person who has made the allegation that the suspect is under investigation.

Allegations of tax fraud can be reported to HM Revenue and Customs via the Freephone telephone number (0800 59 5000), by writing to Freepost Customs Confidential, Freepost SEA 939, PO Box 100, Gravesend, Kent, DA 12 2BR or by emailing the information to customs.confidential@hmce.gsi.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

James Plaskitt MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State