

SUPPORT FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS

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Introduction

A review of the asylum support investigation function in 2005 set out a number of recommendations to help the UK Border Agency meet the aim of ensuring asylum support is only given to those claiming asylum support for as long as they remain eligible. The recommendations recognised:

- the need to deliver a more strategically focused investigation function
- the important role that effective administration plays in preventing and detecting fraud.

The 2005/06 operational year saw the majority of these recommendations being implemented and a number are highlighted below.

Implemented Recommendations

Anti-fraud Strategy

The anti-fraud strategy sets out our approach in preventing and detecting asylum support fraud wherever it may occur. It includes information on the:

- policies and procedures that must be adopted by staff
- standards of behaviour expected from staff
- organisation's commitment to prevent, detect and investigate fraud and corruption.

Deterrent Policy

The deterrent policy sets out the sanctions that will be applied against those who commit asylum support fraud, or who fail to report a notifiable change of circumstances. It includes:

- how investigations will be conducted
- the factors that will be taken into account when deciding what further action is appropriate
- the sanctions that will be used when wrongdoing has been identified.

One of the sanctions outlined in the Deterrent Policy refers to the recovery of asylum support that has been overpaid. Comprehensive guidance on the recovery of overpayments was released in September 2006 and can be found in the Asylum Instruction Overpayments. Firm and fair action in administering overpayment recovery will have the effect of encouraging support applicants or their representatives to give correct and timely information regarding their asylum support claim, will help to reduce the loss to public funds and deter asylum support fraud.

Strategy and Policy

Both the Anti-fraud Strategy and Deterrent Policy provide senior managers and staff with a clear understanding of what the organisation expects its investigation function to deliver. They provide the focus for continuing work to deliver a targeted and outcome based asylum support investigation function. The introduction of the above strategy and deterrent policy has seen a number of cases being pursued to prosecution.

Referral Form

A new fraud referral form was introduced in September 2005, supported by guidance for staff, and is underpinned by risk scoring methodology to prioritise investigation resource in respect of fraud work.

Investigation Standard Operating Procedures

Investigation Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) were also reviewed in the latter part of 2005 and were re-launched in February 2006. They must be used by all staff and managers who have responsibility for undertaking and controlling investigation work. They contain the relevant instructions and guidance for all types of investigations. The Standard Operating Procedures aim to ensure staff:

- carry out investigation work within the legal framework
- interpret correctly asylum policy in the procedures undertaken
- conform to professional standards.

These Standard Operating Procedures are split into 3 parts. The first 2 set out the investigation procedures and guidance that staff must follow, while the third refers to supporting documents and forms.

Summary

The Anti-Fraud Strategy, Deterrent Policy, Investigation Standard Operating Procedures and Referral Form apply to all staff working in the Asylum Resources Directorate and the New Asylum Model. Together, they help the organisation demonstrate:

- it is managing risk effectively
- that the administration of asylum support is secure, fair, provides help where it is needed and is vigilant in tackling fraud to ensure value for taxpayers money
- it is meeting one of the key aims in the Home Office Strategic Plan 2004 – 2008, namely to ensure those not entitled to receive support are denied it as soon as possible.

Document Control

Change Record

Version	Authors	Date	Change Reference
1.0	MM	26/07/2007	Incorporating support processes and implementing website format
2.0	BF	03/11/2008	Update branding only