

Raising Fraud Awareness with Meritec's Focus on... Portfolio

Case Study from London Borough of Newham

"With the constraints currently affecting all Local Authorities Meritec is proving a cost effective way of ensuring we continue to get the right information to our staff so that frauds are identified and reported appropriately at the earliest opportunity"
by Marianne Wood, Chief Internal Auditor, LB Newham



The Need

The risk of fraud is a major concern for Local Government. This is not surprising when statistics indicate that 10% of people will always commit a fraud if the opportunity arises.

Effective fraud awareness training is key in helping to mitigate this risk. This is essential in Local Government at a time when Authorities are continuing to implement significant change with much reduced resources.

Meritec's Response

Meritec's Focus on... portfolio of e-awareness products effectively delivers key messages to large numbers of staff for whom in-depth training is neither necessary nor affordable. This portfolio includes a range of fraud awareness products to ensure staff are aware of the signs of fraudulent activity and what to do about them.

Focus on... Benefit Fraud, for example, raises awareness on the various types of benefit fraud. It explains why preventing and detecting frauds on housing benefit, council tax benefit and local housing allowance are in everyone's interest.

Focus on... Fraud & Corruption, meanwhile, is Meritec's corporate fraud solution. It is based on good practice from 8 Local Authorities and is fully endorsed by CIPFA's Better Governance Forum.

There is also a supplementary **Management Edition of Focus on... Fraud & Corruption** that addresses the awareness needs of all managers and re-affirms their responsibilities for fraud prevention in their service areas.

The content of all the above products can be easily customised to meet local needs and changing circumstances.

LB Newham Experience

Despite limited resources, LB Newham has been at the forefront of developing an effective anti-fraud culture and a wide-reaching awareness programme. The latter includes the roll out of Focus on... Benefit Fraud, and both the staff and management versions of Focus On... Fraud & Corruption.

Since January 2010...

- 146 Benefits Staff have undertaken Focus on...Benefit Fraud training
- 305 Council employees have undertaken Focus on... Fraud & Corruption training.

There are plans in place to extend roll out to schools and to Members.

Feedback has been very positive with user comments including:

- *Very interesting and informative*
- *45 minutes well spent*
- *Good introduction to the Council's Counter Fraud Policies*

LB Newham Benefits

Emma Vick, Counter Fraud Manager at LB Newham, confirms that:

"The use of Focus on... Benefit Fraud and the Focus on... Fraud & Corruption products has enabled us to significantly improve the Counter Fraud team's performance. Being Internet-based, we were able to quickly roll out the products to an unlimited number of users at minimal cost.

The prevention and detection of fraud have also improved as a result. For example, the team has dramatically improved its Housing Benefit Sanction results and this is in part due to the increased quality of the referrals we receive from staff who, thanks to the training, are better informed as to what they need to tell us.

I'm pleased to say that our improvements have been recognised in our recent selection as one of the finalists for IRRV's Anti-Fraud Excellence Awards for 2010."

Highly cost effective learning

Contribution to governance requirements

Anywhere, anytime use

Unlimited numbers of users

Helps protect service delivery, budgets and reputation