

Example Cases

Case 1

A 44 year old man accepted a caution after admitting offences of failing to report increases in his own and his partner's wages.

This investigation began after the customer came into the Dolphin Centre to report a change in tax credits. This visit prompted the officer to check the wages that were included in the claim and went on to establish that the claim had been incorrectly paid between February 2013 and August 2014.

Overpayments of £5,769.38 Housing Benefit, £43.04 Council Tax Benefit and £1,638.30 Council Tax Support were identified.

The customer was interviewed under caution and admitted that he had failed to report the changes but could not provide a reason for not doing so.

Prosecution would usually be considered as the first sanction option on this level of overpayment but a caution was authorised after taking the full facts of the case into consideration. This decision took account of the effect that a prosecution would have upon the family who no longer receive any Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support. A criminal conviction would almost certainly impact on the customer's employment, which would result in a further benefit dependency. There had also been previous changes to tax credits and had the decision been made to check the wages then, the benefit would have been corrected much sooner and the overpayments much lower.

Recovery of the overpaid benefit is currently being pursued.

Case 2

The investigation into a the claim of a 22 year old woman who continued to claim Housing Benefit after leaving the area was closed without sanction.

This case was identified through a HBMS data match indicating that the customer had 2 claims running, one in Bromsgrove and the other in Stoke on Trent.

A Housing Benefit overpayment of £1,153.80 was established for the period 13.10.14 to 22.12.14 after evidence was obtained showing the date of the move. The customer was issued a letter reminding of her responsibility to report future changes in her circumstances as they take place and recovery of this overpayment is also in pursuit.