

### **Benefits Customers: How we may use your details**

Our claim forms for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support explain that the details our customers tell us are confidential and are used for working out and awarding your benefits and support and for getting back any money you owe to the council. We may use third party processors to for this service. Your information is covered by the Data Protection Act, which gives you the legal right to put right any information about you which we get wrong. The Act also means we must not give out details about your claim except when we need to do so to sort out your claim.

However, the law also says that

- we (the council) must protect the public funds we handle; and
- we may share information that is given to us with other organisations that inspect or handle public funds, to prevent and detect fraud. Examples are the Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue & Customs, the National Audit Office and the Cabinet Office.

The National Audit Office appoints an auditor who checks the council's accounts. The Cabinet Office is responsible for the National Fraud Initiative which carries out data matching exercises. Data matching is comparing computer records held by one organisation with other computer records held by the same organisation or a different one. This is usually personal information.

Computerised data matching allows us to identify claims and payments that may be fraudulent. A match means that there is an inconsistency between the two sets of records that needs investigating. The inconsistency may be because of fraud, error or another explanation. We cannot decide which until we investigate.

The council has to give information to the National Fraud Initiative and HMRC for data matching exercises. You can find out more about the kinds of data required in their guidance in the [data specifications section](#) of their web site.

The law says that the Audit Commission has legal powers to use data in data matching exercises and that it does not have to get the agreement of the people whose details are being matched. National Fraud Initiative documents setting out the [code of practice for data matching](#).

#### **Data sharing with credit reference agencies**

We may also share information with a credit reference agency to prevent and detect fraud. The council currently has to give information to Experian (a credit reference agency) for them to carry out data matching to check on whether you are living with a partner you have not told us about.

#### **Other ways we may use your details**

As well as sharing details with the Audit Commission and other organisations that inspect or handle public funds, we may also use our customers' details within the council for

- keeping the electoral roll right;
- licensing private rented properties;
- checking school attendance;
- collecting debts owed to the council (for example council rents and Council Tax); and
- preventing and detecting fraud and other crime.