

Date: 20/08/2024

Ref: CAM8207

Dear Requester,

Thank you for your request for information dated 29/07/2024 about **housing tenancy fraud investigations between 2021/22 - 2023/24**. We have dealt with this under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Response

The Council holds some of the information requested and the answers to your questions are as follows:

1. Please tell me what types of housing tenancy frauds do you investigate?

We investigate the following types of potential tenancy fraud:

- Sub-letting, usually when a tenant lives somewhere else and rents out their council flat or house.
- Accepting money to hand over a council home to someone else.
- Telling the Council things that are untrue to try to get a council tenancy or to help someone else to get a tenancy including when:
 - asking to take over a tenancy after a tenant has died
 - giving information in a housing application or in an application to exchange tenancies
 - asking to change a sole tenancy in one name into a joint tenancy in two names
 - asking the Council to agree to allow someone else to take on your tenancy
- Telling the Council things that are untrue to try and buy a council home.

Moving out and sub-letting a council home is a criminal offence under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013. It is also an offence under this legislation for a secure tenant to sub-let part of a home without the consent of the Council or for a tenant to stop occupying as their only or main home the property the Council has let to them. Under the Housing Act 1996 knowingly or recklessly giving false information in a housing application, or withholding relevant information, is also a criminal offence.

2. Please tell me how many full-time equivalent staff worked on counter housing fraud in each of the following three fiscal years?

Our Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy says council employees have an important role in combating fraud and a responsibility to highlight suspected cases. All staff have a responsibility to identify and to respond to potential tenancy fraud. In most cases this will result in a referral to the specialist Housing Investigations Team (HIT) and the figures

below refer to the staff in that team (where two numbers are listed it reflects that the team numbers were different at the start and end of year). HIT can be contacted on the Council's website at www.camden.gov.uk/report-an-unlawful-occupancy-form.

- a) 2021/22 6-3
- b) 2022/23 3-5
- c) 2023/24 5

3. Please tell me how much you have spent on counter housing fraud measures in each of the following three fiscal years, including staff and professional fees.

- a) 2021/22 £225,425
- b) 2022/23 £230,340
- c) 2023/24 £293,877

4. Please tell me how many housing frauds cases you have investigated in each of the following three fiscal years: a) 2021/22 b) 2022/23 c) 2023/24

We do not hold this data. Reports about potential housing fraud can be made to any of our frontline housing teams or to other services or agencies. In some cases, support from the Housing Investigations Team (HIT) is not needed because the facts are clear and possession proceedings, or other appropriate action can be progressed without a HIT referral.

5. Please tell me how many of these investigated cases did you classified as 'detected frauds' in each of these three fiscal years? a) 2021/22 b) 2022/23 c) 2023/24

The Council does not hold this information because we do not classify casework in this way.

6. Please tell me how many of these detected frauds resulted in some form of action being taken? a) 2021/22 b) 2022/23 c) 2023/24

Not applicable. Please see the response to question 5 above.

7. Please tell me how many social homes you have recovered as a result of your counter fraud work in each of the following three fiscal years:

- a) 2021/22 58 (including 7 ineligibles right to buy applications prevented)
- b) 2022/23 57 (including 16 ineligibles right to buy applications prevented)
- c) 2023/24 62 (including 10 ineligibles right to buy applications prevented)

8. What do you estimate to be the financial saving from your counter housing-fraud measures in each of the following three fiscal years

- a) 2021/22 £2,436,000
- b) 2022/23 £2,394,000
- c) 2023/24 £2,604,000

There are different methods of measuring the cost of tenancy fraud. The Tenancy Fraud Forum (TFF) have recommended that social housing providers base their calculations on a national average of £42,000 per home. Other calculations have used the significantly higher rebuild value of a social housing home. These figures apply the TFF figure. Other savings, not included here, will include fraud prevented including through publicising outcomes from counter fraud work.

Figures provided do not include Unlawful Profit Orders (totalling £15,071,71 in 2022-23) or costs awarded to the Council.

9. Please tell me how many homes cases have you investigated of suspected illegal sub-letting using online websites, such as AirBnB, Booking.com, or Vrbo.

We do not hold or record the information requested. This is because the Council has not recorded or maintained a relevant dataset.

Further Information

We do not give our consent for any names and contact details provided in this response to be sent marketing material. Any such use will be reported to the ICO as a breach of General Data Protection Regulations and the Privacy and Electronic Communication Regulations.

Why not check our Portal [Open Data Camden](#) before making a new request as your question may already be answered by a previous [FOI response](#) or in one of our many useful and interesting datasets.

Your Rights

If you are not happy with how your response was handled you can request an Internal Review within 2 months of this letter by email to foireviews@camden.gov.uk or post: Information and Records Management Team, London Borough of Camden, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE. Please quote your case reference number. If you are not satisfied with the Internal Review outcome you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office at casework@ico.org.uk telephone 0303 123 1113, live chat <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/live-chat/> or webform <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>. The ICO website www.ico.org.uk may be useful.

Yours sincerely,

Lorna Jonas-Tinson
Information Rights Officer