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OXFORD investigation service

Professional Counter Fraud Services





Introducing Oxford Investigation Service

The Oxford Investigation Service (OIS) is an integral part of Oxford City Council's on going commitment to protecting public funds and ensuring value for money for the local community and beyond.

In early 2020, OIS joined forces with the Counter Fraud team of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council to form a shared service partnership.

The teams have each been independently recognised for excellence in Counter Fraud, by the Institute of Revenues, Ratings and Valuations. In 2021, they were again successful in the awards scheme but this time, winning Excellence in Partnership Working as a joint entity.

Together, the partnership brings considerable fraud investigation experience, with a track record of delivering high value, positive results and significant experience in dealing with both civil and criminal investigations.

Officers are fully trained to an accredited professional standard and receive regular refresher training to ensure they are up-to-date with developments and changes to legislation.

The suite of services offered has grown considerably over the years and with the amalgamation of the two teams, each having their own areas of specialisms; organisations who work with the service get the best of both.

Business as usual activity includes formal interviews under caution in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE), gathering intelligence and evidence, carrying out covert surveillance using the latest technology, investigation casework, providing detailed reports, preparing court files, obtaining witness statements and attending hearings to give evidence when required.

Specialist risk-based data-matching software is utilised, which uses algorithms designed by the team. This enables proactive matching initiatives to identify fraud and error, as well as bulk reviews, such as Housing Waiting Lists, Council Tax and NDR discounts and exemptions, Tenancy Fraud and Empty Properties at the touch of a few buttons. Staff are available to investigate the output from these matching initiatives, to give a fully managed, end to end service where required.

With access to accredited Financial Investigation Officers, the partnership will utilise powers under the Proceeds of Crime Act to restrain bank accounts, confiscate assets and compensate where financial losses have occurred through criminality.

The Oxford and Reigate teams work corporately across multiple

Council Service areas where there is a risk of fraud, theft or financial irregularity, carrying out investigations on their behalf.

Tackling social housing fraud is high on the agenda for both teams, given the pressure on housing needs in the respective communities and affordable rental accommodation being in such high demand.

Both teams have a proven track record in returning misused social housing properties to stock and preventing false applications, particularly housing and Right to Buy applications.

The partnership can deliver all this and more for your organisation; both teams have been providing services externally since 2015. With a diverse portfolio of client organisations and financial outcomes in excess of £67m, client partners take assurance from working with top performers and experienced professionals from two of the UK's best counter fraud teams.

OIS performance and nationally estimated losses

During 2019/20, CIPFA estimated that the total value of fraud identified and prevented is approximately £239.4m, which is an average value of £5,090 per fraud case.

Council Tax fraud represents almost two-thirds (65%) of these identified instances of fraud with an estimated value of £35.9m. This is followed by disabled parking concession and housing fraud, which represent 17% and 11% of the total cases of UK public sector fraud, respectively.

According to the Public Accounts Committee, vital support schemes, introduced by BEIS, DWP and HMRC in response to the CV-19 pandemic, are identified as having the highest risk of fraud and error. Between April 2020 and March 2021, fraud within Universal Credit rose to an all-time high of 14.5% and BEIS estimates that it could lose up to £27 billion through fraud or credit issues related to the bounce-back loan scheme.

Before 2019/20, there was a steady decline of around 20% a year in the number of housing and tenancy related frauds detected or prevented according to the CIPFA fraud and corruption tracker 2020. However, this year there was an increase of 37% overall.

For the 2020-2021 financial year, in spite of significant upheaval and challenge arising from the pandemic, Oxford Investigation Service achieved a total value for the Council of £9,760,072 in additional revenue generation and prevented fraud losses. This represents the best year of performance since the team became corporate in 2015.

Why choose OIS?

- An experienced team of specialist professional investigators
- The ability to ensure resilience and continuation of service
- Value for money
- A multi-award winning, high quality service
- Experience of working with registered providers of social housing
- Advanced case management and data matching technology
- Established working relationships with local authorities, government agencies and private sector companies
- National recognition as one of the leaders in the field
- Innovative fraud detection and prevention techniques
- Access to specialist in-house legal advice and support
- Fast response and bespoke service provision
- Competitive rates

Our Performance

From April 2016 to March 2021, the Oxford Investigation Service has achieved:

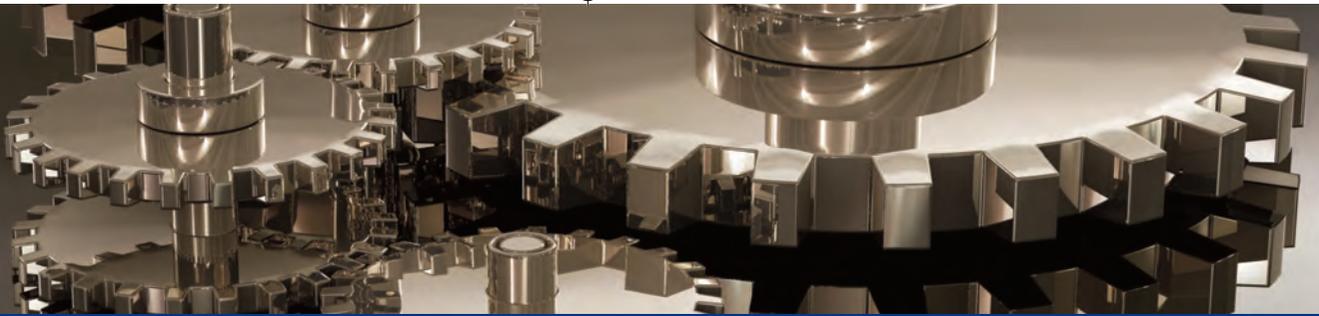
- ▶ £26.5m in financial savings and income (prevention of losses to fraud and revenue generation for Oxford City Council alone)
- ▶ £12.5m fraudulent and irregular payments prevented from Business COVID Grants
- ▶ Second highest Unlawful Profit Order ever obtained, of £145,178 for Riverside Housing

Services offered

- Due diligence checks and advice to prevent application fraud
- High revenue-generating data matching services such as Empty Properties/New Homes Bonus and Council Tax Single Person Discount reviews
- Risk analysis service*
- Anti-money laundering advice and assistance (e.g. Right to Buy, Right to Acquire)
- Interviews (PACE and informal)
- Visiting individually and jointly, in and out of normal working hours
- Joint working
- Covert surveillance
- Evidence and intelligence gathering through legal gateways
- Obtaining and providing witness statements
- Preparation of court files to prosecution standard
- Professionally prepared reports of findings
- Feedback on concerns and recommendations, both process and systems
- Training
- Advice on the prevention of all types of fraud
- Service of Legal Notices
- Specialised legal advice
- Obtaining Profit Orders

* Regularly scheduled or one-off services





Meet the Oxford Team

Our Managers



Scott Warner Counter Fraud Manager

Scott has been working in the local government counter fraud arena since 1991. An accredited Counter Fraud Manager specialising in covert surveillance, he has trained international police forces in surveillance techniques. Scott took on his current role in 2014 and under his leadership, Oxford Investigation Service has prevented fraud losses and generated revenue of over £26.5 million for Oxford City Council and over £14 million for partner organisations.

Scott successfully commercialised the work of the team with the formation of the Oxford Investigation Service in 2015. Developing the service and growing the client portfolio since inception, Scott has embedded a high level of business acumen into the team. All team members share the ongoing desire to ensure the Oxford Investigation Service retains its place as a centre of excellence in countering fraud.

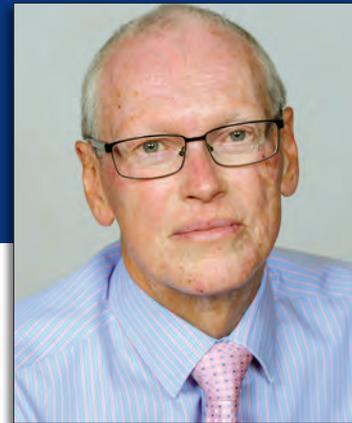


Mick Hopkins Senior Investigation Officer/Project Manager

Mick has worked in the fraud arena for over 30 years. This has been mainly with local authorities, though he started his career in Central Government. More recently he has been working in the technology sector developing smart-data analytics solutions, and in the gambling sector where he dealt with fraud, organised crime and money laundering in an international online environment.

Mick is Senior Investigation Officer/Project Manager at Oxford City Council and leads on fraud risk assessment and the development of a data-matching service. His experience from the business sector is helping with the aims and ambitions of Oxford Investigation Services around innovation.

Mick has represented local authorities at the LGA and on the Counter Fraud Professional Accreditation Board. He established a national CPD scheme and a set of professional standards and is currently part of the Cabinet Office Cross Sector Advisory Group.



Rob Ducker Senior Investigation Office

Rob joined Oxford City Council as a Senior Investigation Officer in 2016, having previously retired from Thames Valley Police after 25 years. Whilst in the police, he managed a team of detectives dealing with highly sensitive intelligence and giving advice to senior detectives around covert tactics and deployment. He spent the majority of his police career in the Criminal Investigation Department and has dealt with cases such as murder, rape, serious assaults, firearm incidents and terrorist related enquiries. Since joining the Council, he has managed a team of investigators and intelligence officers dealing with reactive and proactive investigations. Rob is the Chair of the Thames Valley Tenancy Fraud Forum and he also sits on the National Executive Board of the Tenancy Fraud Forum.

Investigation officers



Dan Barker Investigation Officer

Dan has been a Local Authority Investigator since 2007. He spent the first six years investigating environmental crime and anti-social behaviour and has worked in fraud for the last eight years. Dan is currently leading on the use of a data warehouse and data-matching service to detect housing and Council Tax discount fraud, where significant savings are being made. He is passionate about making the best use of technology and data in the fight against fraud.



Gareth Luscombe Investigation Officer

Gareth joined the Oxford Investigation Service in 2018. Prior to this, he had eight years experience as a police officer and worked in a local CID team of detectives. In this time, he gained a Policing Diploma. Gareth has extensive investigative experience, latterly in complex cases with a particular focus on robberies, burglaries, sexual assaults and frauds.

Gareth jointly provides fraud investigation services to a partner authority and is involved in the delivery of fraud awareness and conflict resolution training sessions.



Chris Morbey Investigation Officer

Chris joined Oxford City Council as an Investigation Officer in May 2019.

He has worked as an Investigator since 2000, previously working for Ealing Council and the DWP.

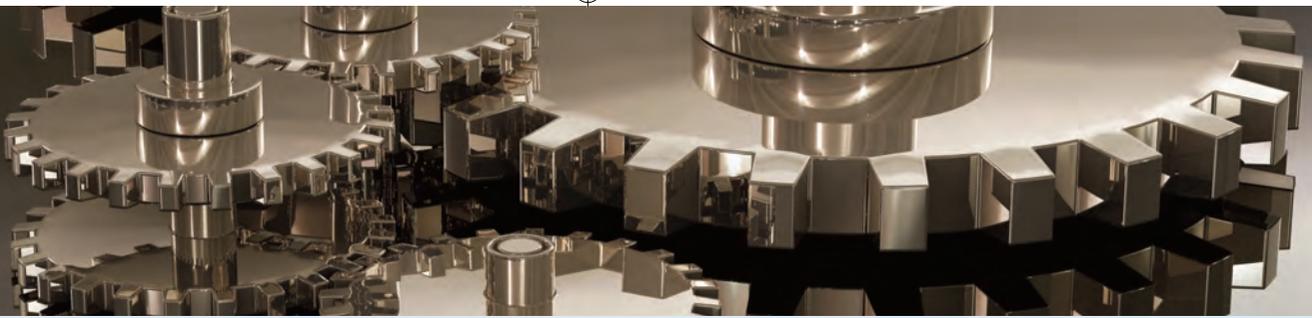
Most of his work has involved investigating benefit fraud and he has a wealth of experience in serious, sensitive and complex investigations. One of these cases resulted in an appearance on the BBC 1 programme 'Saints and Scroungers'.

He also has experience conducting covert surveillance, as he was on the Surveillance team at the DWP for two years.



Dawn Burford Investigation Officer

Dawn began her investigative career in 1992 and she has worked for several local government organisations as well as the DWP. Dawn joined the Oxford Investigation Service in August 2019, and after many years of investigating mainly benefit fraud, she is now enjoying a greater variety of investigation casework. Dawn has a keen eye for detail and a particular interest in complex investigations.



Investigation officers



Richard Farrow Investigation Officer

Richard joined the team in February 2020 and had previously worked as an Investigator for local authorities since 2010. Most of this work involved benefit fraud cases and joint working with the DWP. Richard has experience of working with housing Associations on housing fraud cases and he is a qualified Counter Fraud Technician in housing fraud.

Richard jointly provides fraud investigation services to a partner authority and is involved in the delivery of Fraud Awareness training sessions.

Intelligence officers



Nathalia Odwin Intelligence Officer

Nathalia started work at the Council as a Customer Service Officer in 2016 after completing a Graduate Diploma in Law at BPP Law School. Prior to this, Nathalia gained a BA in Political Science and International Relations from Oxford Brookes University and went on to pursue a Masters in International History at the London School of Economics. She then moved to the Czech Republic where she interned for two non-governmental organisations focusing on human rights and cross cultural educational programmes.

Nathalia joined the Investigations team in 2017 as an Intelligence Officer. She is responsible for building high-quality intelligence packages, as well as jointly leading the Right to Buy due diligence process. Nathalia also represents the team's interests at Customer Service Excellence Meetings, feeding back and contributing towards Oxford City Council's ongoing accreditation.



Aleksis Sorsa Intelligence Officer

Aleksis is an accredited Intelligence Officer and since 2017, he has worked in both the public and private sector in this capacity.

He provides both operational support and contributes to overall fraud strategy. His experience ranges from data matching, analytics, and investigations to providing consultation both internally and for external organisations.

In addition, he also holds a number of qualifications, being accredited by the University of Portsmouth as a Counter Fraud Technician and also holds a Level 4 Diploma in Intelligence Operations.

Meet the Reigate and Banstead Team

Our Managers



Simon Rosser

Head of Revenues, Benefits & Fraud

Simon has worked at Reigate & Banstead Borough Council for over 25 years, initially working in Benefits and Fraud Investigations. Since 2012, Simon has run the Revenues, Benefits & Fraud service, and in 2015 embarked in a new direction by expanding the service to support other local authorities and housing providers under the Council's commercial agenda. The service now has a portfolio of clients, providing help with debt recovery, business rates, fraud investigations and property inspections



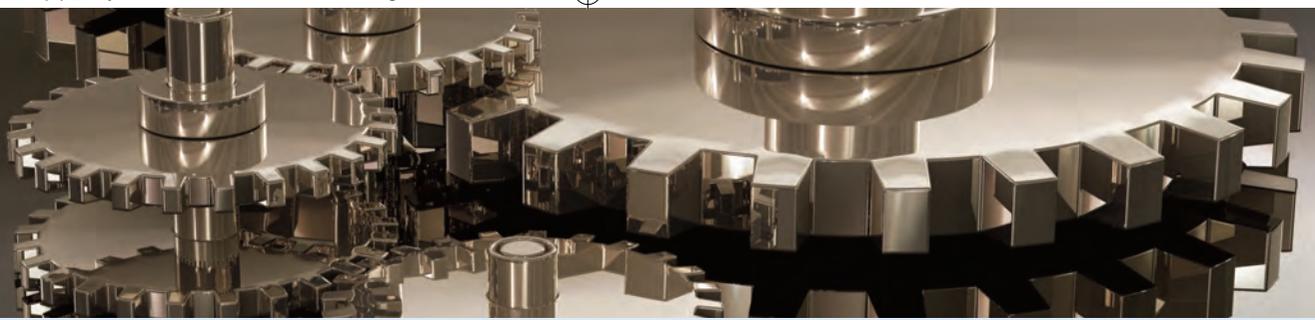
Michaela Lambart

Fraud Manager

Michaela joined Reigate & Banstead Borough Council in 2006 as an Investigation Officer specialising in Benefit Investigation. In 2015, she took on the role of Fraud Manager. As an accredited Counter Fraud Manager, she has expanded the team since this time and now has four fully qualified Investigation Officers, and eight Intelligence Officers working for clients to reduce the risk, and to prevent and detect fraud within Local Authorities and partner Organisations.

More recently, Michaela has been working on a project with Samuel Roberts – Investigation Officer to provide a cost-effective surveillance operation that deals with the end to end process of covert surveillance under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.





Investigation officers



Remy Sylvester Investigation Officer

Remy joined Reigate & Banstead Borough Council in October 2014 as a Legal Services Apprentice and went on to join the Fraud and Financial Investigations Team in November 2017 as an Intelligence Officer. During this role she completed the Level 5 Professional Certificate in Investigation and has been an Investigation Officer since March 2019.

Reigate & Banstead Borough Council work closely with Spelthorne Borough Council to investigate allegations of fraud against their authority, and Remy is responsible for overseeing this contract. Most of her work has involved investigating housing fraud, including the allocation of social housing, social housing fraud, false homelessness and claims for Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction Support. Remy is an Authorised Officer under PoSHFA and CTRS powers.



Samuel Roberts Investigation Officer

Samuel Roberts is an Investigation Officer with the Reigate & Banstead Borough Council Fraud and Financial Investigations team – he joined in 2017, after having graduated from the Institute of Criminology in Cambridge. Samuel is responsible for overseeing our Guildford contract. Since joining, Samuel has helped to redesign and streamline open source intelligence gathering procedures, in addition to covert directed surveillance operations.



James Martin Investigation Officer

James has been working within Local Government since 2002 after graduating from university with a History and Law degree. He joined the Fraud team in 2015 as an Investigation Officer and is a qualified counter fraud specialist with accreditation from multiple professional bodies. He is currently working across all areas of reactive and proactive fraud within multiple contracts.



Colette Goward Investigation Officer

Colette joined Reigate & Banstead Borough Council in November 2018 to work within the Benefits Team. Having previously worked for the Metropolitan Police Service, Colette moved across to the Fraud and Financial Investigations team as an Intelligence Officer. She completed the Level 7 Advanced Professional Certificate in Investigative Practice and has been an Investigation Officer since April 2020. Reigate & Banstead Borough Council work closely with Runnymede Borough Council to investigate allegations of fraud, and Colette is responsible for overseeing this contract. Colette is an Authorised Officer under PoSHFA and CTRS powers.

Intelligence officers



Becky Sales Intelligence Officer

Becky started working for Reigate & Banstead Borough Council in 1992, originally working as a temp within the Benefits team. She joined the Fraud team in 1994, where she has worked in a fraud support role and more recently as an Intelligence Officer. Becky has seen many changes during her time in the Fraud team and has been key to many of the changes being implemented.



Saskia Clarke Intelligence Officer

Saskia joined the Fraud team in Reigate in April 2020 on a short-term contract, following a period of casual working for the team to assist with the National Fraud Initiative. In April 2021, she took on an Intelligence Officer role, assisting the team with all levels of Intelligence work. In addition, she started an apprenticeship with CIPFA in April 2021 and is working towards her qualifications to become a Fraud Investigation Officer.



Ana Parker Intelligence Officer

Ana has previously worked at the BBC and The Royal Botanical Gardens in Kew. She joined the Fraud team in January 2020, working within an Admin Support role. She very quickly identified she had a passion for fraud investigation, and in April 2021 she became an Intelligence Officer. Ana began the CIPFA two-year apprenticeship qualification to become a Fraud Investigator in April 2021.



Tristana Boylan Intelligence Officer

Tristana has been working in various Local Authorities for nearly 20 years. Her initial role was as a Revenues Recovery Officer. In 2019, she joined the Fraud team as a Trainee Intelligence Officer, and in April 2021, she commenced a two year CIPFA apprenticeship training to be an Investigation Officer.

Intelligence officers



Suman Chaudhary Intelligence Officer

Suman has been working as an Intelligence Officer at Reigate & Banstead Borough Council since 2019, having initially joined the Fraud team as an Admin Support Officer in 2018. Suman has previous experience as a Clinical Investigator for a Medical Insurance Company, which inspired her to join the team. Suman enrolled in a Counter Fraud apprenticeship to become a Fraud Investigator in April 2021.



Zara Collip Intelligence Officer

Zara joined the Fraud team in 2015, through a DWP Worker Scheme. She initially supported the Fraud Investigation Officers in an admin support role. In 2018, she was taken on as an Intelligence Officer dealing with all areas at the start of an investigation.



Ian Sharpling Intelligence Officer

Ian has previously worked for the NHS and Surrey Police. He has always been interested in intelligence and investigation and was fortunate to secure a placement within the Force Intelligence Bureau of Surrey Police. It was this placement that inspired Ian to take on the role as an Intelligence Officer for Reigate & Banstead Borough Council. Ian is the newest recruit in the team, joining in August 2021. He is hoping whilst in this role to further his interest in open source intelligence.



John Lambart Visiting Officer

John joined the Fraud team in 2017 as a Visiting Officer. He conducts visits for Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, as well as contracts in relation to Revenues, Fraud and POCA. John plays a key part in the implementation of the New Homes Bonus visits conducted for various authorities during August and September each year. John has worked with other partners to develop the ICT equipment and software to use during these large-scale exercises, which has been key in reducing the admin required in this work and delivering great results for our clients.



Testimonials

“Following an introduction at the 2019 IRRV awards, we soon realised that the Counter Fraud teams at Oxford City Council and Reigate & Banstead BC have similar goals and aspirations around prevention and investigation of fraud. It became apparent that by working together, we could enhance the services that we offer to other local authorities and organisations, and we signed a partnership agreement in 2020. Since then, we have worked on several projects together and are looking to develop the partnership further.

Scott and the team have demonstrated that they provide a very effective Counter Fraud service, which has generated significant savings for local authorities, in a time when local authorities are facing greater financial pressures. They are a fantastic team to work with, and we look forward to working with them for many years.”

Simon Rosser, Head of Revenues, Benefits & Fraud (May 2021)

“We wanted to learn from the best when we started our Tenancy Fraud service in 2018 and whilst attending the Tenancy Fraud Forum conference that year, we came across Oxford Investigation Services. Their credentials were very impressive and after speaking with Mick and Scott, we knew these were the people we wanted to work with. In partnership, we have built up our internal service over the past years to a point where we are making a difference in the fight against tenancy fraud. We work together in a number of ways, including: training, proactive fraud initiatives, supporting our network of counter fraud champions, and supporting our counter fraud officer in her case work. There is so much more we want to achieve, so we will continue in partnership with Oxford Investigation Service.”

Michael Anderson, Regional Services Manager (March 2021)

“The two investigators assigned to us, Dawn and Rich, exhibit high levels of knowledge, expertise and professionalism. Equally, they are forging excellent relationships across the Council. In short we are very pleased with the service being provided.”

Richard Barr, Audit and Risk Manager, Warwick District Council

“Oxford CC have repeatedly been a key partner in looking at new areas or work, both for them and other organisations, and have been heavily involved in trialling the vast majority of INTEC’s new solutions.

To support Oxford CC’s vision of supplying fraud services to local authorities around the country, we have also developed a unique re-seller agreement with Scott and his team, allowing them to market and re-sell INTEC’s software. A good example of the trust and partnership working we have with Oxford CC is the fact that they are the only local authority in the UK authorised to deliver training on INTEC’s product suite to other organisations.”

Mark Grimley, Director, Intec For Business



OXFORD investigation service

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Working Together to Combat Fraud

