

Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) High Level Design

Additional Question and Answers

Date: 30/04/2012

This document should be read along side the SFIS High Level Business Design and is intended to answer any additional questions you may have. Whilst we have now completed the high level design for SFIS we will now work on completing and agreeing the lower level detail.

For that reason we may not be able to provide a full answer at this point in time.

Unless specified the response below is in respect of the SFIS design for 2013

Staff issues

Q1. Will I be working as part of SFIS?

A SFIS will be a partnership between DWP, HMRC and Local Authorities (LA). It has been agreed that any staff who are predominantly working on welfare benefit and tax credit fraud and in post at the start of SFIS in 2013, will work as part of SFIS, this will include Fraud managers, investigators and support staff.

Q2. My LA has contracted out our Housing/Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) Fraud service, what will happen with SFIS?

A SFIS will include existing LA fraud staff, DWP are content if the LA wishes to use contractors for SFIS rather than those employed by the LA. However the contract will remain with the LA as will the payment arrangements etc. The LA will also remain responsible for the management & performance etc of those staff.

Q3. You have said that all LA fraud managers can be part of SFIS but what if my LA does not want to release me into SFIS?

A Being part of SFIS does not involve changing your employer or going on secondment. SFIS will take on the investigation of welfare benefits and tax credits and Option 1 agreed that LA staff will remain employed by their LA. This will mean that any investigation relating to HB/CTB fraud will be carried out under one SFIS policy and procedure and therefore any LA staff carrying out that work will be doing so as part of SFIS. If a LA does not have any managers who are predominantly involved in the investigation of HB/CTB fraud then they will not be working as part of SFIS. The number of staff and managers that your LA employs for HB/CTB fraud is the same as it is today, although more detail around this, will follow in the detailed design phase.

Q4. When and how is the head of SFIS going to be recruited?

A It is proposed that a SFIS Management Board, with a representative from each organisation, is created. Over the coming months we will establish and agree the terms of reference for this board as well as considering how Local Government (LG) representation is achieved.

Q5. Model 2 shows staff having a manager from a different organisation, however Option 1 agreed that LA staff would remain managed by the LA.

A We are still keeping to the commitment of Option 1 - however feedback from the joint LA and FIS workshops suggested that it would be practical to have one manager who deals with day to day activities such as allocation of work and it should not matter where this person comes from. For example in SFIS team X, the work could be allocated by a DWP manager to all members of staff (HMRC, DWP & LA).

Q6. We would like to offer our local DWP colleagues a desk in our LA premises - how do we go about this?

A This is something which will be worked out during the detailed design phase.

Q7. Do all SFIS teams have to look like model 2?

A No - we know that we will see different levels of integration and co-location as the teams evolve and it is possible that model 1 or 2 or a variation of both will be the best arrangement for SFIS teams in different areas. The models will be tested in the pilots we plan to set up later this year so that the best model or models can be taken forward in 2013.

Q8. We currently use our own solicitors, under SFIS will we need to start using CPS?

A Currently DWP use CPS, we recognise that LAs have different prosecuting practises and this will be looked at in the detailed design.

Process and design

Q9. Will there be a requirement for NAFN, OIU or Authorised Officers?

A Over the next few months we will look at the current intelligence capacity including OIU and NAFN. This will include looking at the processes, timescales and costs to establish how best to utilise these services under SFIS.

Q10. Will we continue to use the same IT systems?

A A decision on the IT solution has not yet been made, following our workshops a list of IT requirements has been drawn up and work will now be undertaken to establish which system(s) will fulfil these. It maybe that we initially start with an interim solution.

Q11. Currently if a LA does a joint investigation they have to wait for DWP to reassess the claim (and visa versa), this often takes a long time - how will these type of delays be managed in SFIS?

A The programme is currently undertaking a review of the length of time taken to complete an investigation, which includes the decision making time, and from that we will consider introducing new processes to improve. These improvements will also be tested in the pilots we will undertake in the coming months.

Q12. My LAs fraud agenda is set by elected members - how will the local wishes and needs be reflected in SFIS?

A We don't have an answer for this yet but are aware of the issue and when we work on the detailed design will look at how we balance the need to meet national targets with local flexibility.

Q13. I currently investigate HB/CTB fraud, whilst doing this, if I identify potential fraud against another area of the council I will also investigate – what will happen under SFIS?

A SFIS will be responsible for the investigation of fraud in respect of welfare benefits and tax credits. In 2013, its remit will not include other fraud such as tenancy fraud, however we will be looking at how the areas can work together. This will be done during our detailed design phase.

Q14. Will documents be standardised in 2013 across SFIS?

A Assumption is that IRIS will standardise the referral process and capture all types of allegations. How referrals are routed to teams or investigators needs to be discussed and assessed with our IT team once the overall business design process is mapped out. Other processes for example interview letters will be reviewed to agree standard approach.

Q15. In the transition period how will fraud referrals be captured that are made direct to HMRC and LA hotlines?

A Building on the use of data from outside and inside of government, we are looking at the fraud hotline to see how it can be improved and transformed and how it can complement the Crimestoppers initiative. How and where best to use this invaluable information from the public and our own staff is being tested in order to generate more accurate referrals for investigation.

Q16. How will historical and current information re fraud and risk, both locally and nationally, from LAs, HMRC and FIS feed into the IRIS to enable accurate risk assessment and effective grading to take place?

A The effective management of this area of work is vital to ensure that SFIS get the best quality referrals and these are enhanced with the best information available. As the IRIS Project goes through design stage, full engagement with relevant stakeholders will ensure that existing knowledge regarding fraud and error risks are overlaid against new analytical capabilities.

Training/ Costs

Q17. The design document states that the technical role of managers may be strengthened. What does this mean?

A We will look to establish if the manager requires a more active role, in the detailed design phase.

Q18. Who will fund training requirements for LA staff that are part of SFIS?

A As we move into the more detailed design phase we will also

- identify the different areas for training (eg system training, new policies etc).
- Consider the different ways these could be delivered (eg face to face training or e-learning).
- Consider who could deliver these (eg FIS staff, LA staff, DWP trainers etc).

Once we have defined the training package we will then look at any associated costs, alongside the current costs of running the functions.

Q19. How much administration subsidy will LAs receive for 2013/14?

A LA currently receive funding for Housing and council tax benefit (HB/CTB) administration through the admin grant and subsidy. As we move into the more detailed design we will need to reflect whether the current funding arrangements cover the SFIS requirements and take any necessary steps, including whether we carry out a new burdens assessment. Throughout this process we will be working with SOG/LAA Steering group, the Department of Communities and Local Government and the devolved administrations.

Communication

Q20. How will I find out more about the detailed design?

- A** The Fraud and Error programme wants to continue to communicate with its stakeholders over the next year, this will include
- A monthly newsletter
 - For HMRC/DWP – through the Business Governance Board
 - For LAs – through the LAA steering group, SOG and the various representative groups (eg LAIOG, IRRV,SLAIG,WBIG etc)

If you have a query, comment or suggestion you can also contact the team by emailing

fraudanderrorprogramme.communicationsteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Q21. My LA/FIS team would like to be part of the pilots - how do they volunteer?

- A** We are delighted that a number of our partners have already volunteered their assistance and there will be lots of opportunities to be involved. If you would like to be involved whether its to be part of a pilot or simply to Q&A some of our design work then please email fraudanderrorprogramme.communicationsteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk