

**International Fraud Week**

**What is Fraud Week?** Every November, hundreds of organisations around the world pledge to increase fraud awareness in their workplaces and communities.

To support this, we will be advising on key areas that impact our current fraud environment.

Fraud, corruption, or theft, both from within the Council and from external sources, is bad for the economy and can adversely affect the provision of public services for residents of the Vale of Glamorgan.

Here in the Vale, the council continues to develop an anti-fraud culture which reinforces a zero tolerance of fraud, corruption, and theft, actively engaging with all those in our borough who have a responsibility in the combating of fraud, corruption, and theft against the Council e.g., Council employees, Council members, suppliers, contractors, and residents of the Vale.

The Council will deliver the highest standards of honesty, Integrity, and accountability, to protect public funds and will actively seek to deter and prevent fraud, corruption and theft and ensure that all possible risks are minimised.

**Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally:** Local authorities continue to face a significant fraud challenge and the argument about protecting funds and vulnerable people remains. The most robust figures currently available from the Crime Survey of England and Wales reveal there were 3.7 million incidents of fraud in England and Wales in the year ending December 2022

The Annual Fraud Indicator Report 2023 suggests annual UK fraud losses could reach £219 Billion with public sector losses rising to £50.2 Billion.

**Economic Crime:** Economic crime touches virtually all aspects of society, ranging from low-level frauds through to sophisticated cyber-enabled market manipulation. Fraud is now the most pervasive and evolving crime type in England and Wales, with nearly every individual, organisation and type of business vulnerable to fraudsters.

**Fraud Risk Areas:**

* **Social Care Fraud:**Personal budgets and direct payments: overstatement of needs through false declaration, multiple claims across authorities, third party abuse by carer, family or organisation, posthumous continuation of claims.
* **Money Laundering:**Exposure to suspect transactions.
* **Commissioning of Services:** Including joint commissioning, joint ventures, commercial services, third sector partnerships – conflicts of interest, collusion.
* **Tenancy:**Fraudulent applications for housing or successions of tenancy and subletting of the property.
* **Procurement:**Tendering issues, split contracts, double invoicing.
* **Payroll:** False employees, overtime claims, expenses.
* **Identity Fraud:** False identity/fictitious persons applying for services or payments.
* **Council Tax:** Discounts and exemptions, council tax support.
* **Blue Badge:**Use of counterfeit/altered badges, use when disabled person is not in the vehicle, use of a deceased person’s Blue Badge, badges issued to institutions being misused by employees.
* **Grants:** Work not carried out, funds diverted, ineligibility not declared.
* **Business Rates:**Fraudulent applications for exemptions and reliefs, unlisted properties.
* **Insurance Fraud:** False claims including slips and trips.
* **Disabled Facility Grants:** Fraudulent applications for adaptions to homes aimed at the disabled.

*\*This is not a definitive list.*

**Mandate Fraud:** Councils and schools are now regularly approached by fraudsters, asking for payments to be made to “new bank accounts”.

Emails are being intercepted and councils are then being asked to make payments to new bank accounts, by scammers impersonating as our suppliers.

**Please be vigilant on this point. If you are asked to pay money to a new bank account, please contact the provider and check the information. Do not use any phone details provided on the revised instruction email, always contact the company on the original telephone number held on our records and request them to confirm details of previous transactions with VOG.**

**What should you do if you suspect Fraud?** As soon as you have a reasonable suspicion that something may be wrong, you should refer to the Council’s Anti-Fraud, Bribery, & Corruption Policy and Whistle blowing Policy (see link below). This sets out the procedures to be followed by staff where instances of fraud, bribery, and corruption are suspected or detected. <https://staffnet.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Directorates/Resources/HR/HR-Policies/Whistleblowing-Policy.pdf>

**In all instances of suspected fraud, retain all original copies of paperwork or emails relating to the suspect case and report the issue to Internal Audit, by contacting:**

Joan Davies: jdavies@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Nic Galvin: ngalvin@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

You can also report your concerns confidentially using the Speak Out online form, via email or on the phone line listed below. Alternatively, if you prefer, you can report your concerns directly to your line manager.

Email: speakout@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk Telephone:01446 731115

**Message for staff:** Council to take part in anti-fraud exercise.

As part of the National Fraud Initiative, The Vale of Glamorgan Council participate in a computerised data-matching exercise with the office of the Auditor General for Wales.

Computerised data-matching involves comparing personal information held by different organisations. Where matches are found, it can indicate an inconsistency which requires further investigation, and can reveal instances where claims and payments may have been made either fraudulently or in error.

To support this, the council will provide specific data to the Auditor General which will be used under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.

While it is not necessary to obtain the consent of any individuals concerned under the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the data-matching will be carried out in full accordance with an appropriate code of practice.