



National Fraud Initiative (NFI)

What is the NFI?

This is a special edition of the **cw audit services** counter fraud Newsletter designed to explain details of the forthcoming Cabinet Office NFI exercise and address some of the questions and concerns raised in the past.

Since 1996, the NFI exercise has taken place every two years. Previously administered by the Audit Commission it is now managed by the Cabinet Office. The exercise matches electronic data within and between public sector bodies, such as the NHS, Home Office and Councils and is used to help prevent and detect error, overpayments and fraud. The NFI exercise plays an important role in protecting the public purse. The most recent summary report states that NFI is highly successful at what it does, matching an extensive range of data from almost 1,300 organisations from across the UK to help prevent and detect fraud. Over the years it has enabled participants to identify fraud and overpayments totalling in excess of £1.39 billion.



It is vitally important that NHS organisations take action to protect their resources, more so given the financial pressures the NHS continues to face. The exercise involves comparing our payroll and creditor computer records against other computer records held by the same or another body to see how far they match. Computerised data matching allows potentially fraudulent claims and payments to be identified. Where a match is found it may indicate that there is an inconsistency which requires further investigation. These matches are reviewed and investigated by the CCGs Counter Fraud Specialist (CFS).

Common Questions

What Information Is Collected from the CCG?

NHS organisations are required to submit a number of data sets relating to payroll and trade creditors to the Cabinet Office. The payroll data will include employees details such as home address, National Insurance number, date of birth and earnings in the year to date.

What Authority Is There For My Data To Be Used?

The use of data by the Cabinet Office for this data matching exercise is carried out with the statutory authority under Part 6 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. It does not require the consent of the individuals concerned under the Data Protection Act 2018.

What Is The Information Required For?

The information is used for the prevention and detection of error, overpayments and fraud. It does this by cross referencing information held by the public sector e.g. NHS, DWP, Local Authorities, Pen-

Your Questions

If Data Is Used To Prevent And Detect Fraud, what Types Of Fraud Can It Detect And Prevent?

The NFI exercise is very successful at identifying instances where false statements have been made. In relation to the NHS such offences would include; working illegally - without the right to work, gaining employment using false documents, working whilst on sick leave and invoice frauds. Outside of the NHS the main area of fraud identified by the NFI exercise relates to benefit fraud, such as false housing benefit claims or working whilst on state benefits.

What Happens If I Refuse To Give The Information?

Your permission is not required for the use of the data. It is a mandatory requirement for public sector bodies include NHS bodies to provide the information to the Cabinet Office. Under Part 6 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Cabinet Office was given statutory responsibility for the use of the data.

I Don't Work In Finance, So Do I Still Have To Comply?

The payroll data that is selected and uploaded covers all staff within the CCG. All you need to be aware of is that your data is used in the exercise. The more complete your data is, the less likely you will be identified as a data match that needs to be reviewed.

What happens If I Am Identified In The NFI Exercise?

Since the NFI exercise started in 1996 there have been many matches identified that raise no concerns. Examples include part time staff who may work at more than one employer or who may be in receipt of some state benefits to support their income. All matches are reviewed for materiality and to establish the facts as to why the match has occurred. Where the review indicates that offences may have been committed, formal investigation proceedings will be instigated. All matches are different and generally the only people who need to worry are those who have knowingly committing an offence.

Why Is My Passport Number Used?

This is one of the data sets which is cross referenced under the NFI exercise between public sector payroll information and UK Home Office records. As part of the recruitment and pre-employment checks undertaken by the CCG we have to be satisfied that employees have the right to work in the UK. In addition, the CCG can be fined for employing someone that does not have this right. By supplying the passport number there can be more certainty as to the accuracy of the match. This match also identifies instances of where a false passport has been supplied as proof of an individuals right to work.

What If I Don't Have A Passport?

Passport numbers will be used where available to confirm the accuracy of matches with UK Home Office records including the validity of the passport. If you don't have a passport, this cross reference will still take place using other information but will be less certain to validate.

Why Is Payroll Information Being Used, When Human Resources (HR) Complete Pre-employment Checks?

Your Questions

What Safety Measures Are In Place To Ensure My Personal Data Is Safe?

The Cabinet Office places great emphasis on the importance and principles of the Data Protection Act, to ensure that the Data Protection Act requirements are complied with. Payroll information is processed by the CCG's payroll provider and uploaded to the Cabinet Office via a secure link.

The information is retained and processed by the Cabinet Office and only the matched data relating to the CCG released to the CCG to enable it to be reviewed, processed and investigated. The matched data is only viewable via the NFI secure site by users who have been nominated and approved by the Chief Finance & Strategy Officer. The number of nominated users is limited and those individuals have specific functions and roles under the exercise. All the information held relating to the NFI exercise is retained and held by the Cabinet Office. All file notes and reports in relation to data matches are generated within the NFI System and saved to it.

If criminal or disciplinary investigations result from the matched data, these records are held under the required systems, legislation and data storage regulations.

The **cw audit services** Counter Fraud Team consists of accredited NHS counter fraud specialists who are all trained and used to handling sensitive data.

In Summary

The NFI exercise is a data matching exercise designed to help protect the public purse from error, over-payments and fraud. With the current budget pressures placed on the CCG and wider NHS, any system that helps to protect NHS resources and ensure that they are not wasted is a good thing, as ultimately every pound saved is a pound more for patient care. The exercise has taken place every two years since 1996, and if you have been employed in the NHS for more than two years, your details will have been included in previous exercise.

Report Your Concerns


Lisa Hines is the nominated CFS for the CCG. If you have any suspicions or concerns relating to fraud, bribery or corruption affecting the CCG or the wider NHS then these should be referred to:

**Report fraud
confidentially
here**
or call
0800 028 4060



Tel: 02476 536880
Email: lisa.hines@cwaudit.org.uk
lisahines@nhs.net

**Fraud in Your
NHS Workplace?**
Report it!



If you have any suspicions or concerns,
you can call us anonymously on
0800 028 40 60
POWERED BY CRIMESTOPPERS

or search 'NHS Fraud' online for more information.
The NHS Counter Fraud Authority leads on fighting fraud, bribery
and corruption in the NHS and the wider health group


Counter Fraud Authority


Department
of Health &
Social Care