

Skipton Fund

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A Joint Letter from Nick Fish of The Skipton Fund and Dave White, Head of the Department for Work and Pension's Fraud Investigation Service

Representatives of the Department for Work and Pensions and The Skipton Fund met in August 2011 to discuss a number of issues concerning beneficiaries of the Fund. The Fund's concern was that there had been cases where beneficiaries had been asked to attend an interview arising from anti-fraud data matching processes that flag up undeclared capital and income.

The Skipton Fund wanted to establish whether beneficiaries of the fund could be excluded from such fraud investigations as a result of their apparent non-declaration of income or capital when they have claimed means tested benefits. You will be aware that capital and income paid through the Fund does not impact on means tested benefits paid through the DWP. It was recognised that in the majority of cases investigations start because of data matching carried out between Government Departments and there is no way that matches relating to beneficiaries can be separated out. We agreed that, between our organisations, we will do all we can to minimise the risk of beneficiaries being called to a fraud investigation interview. Internal processes are being created to make this happen. If you are called to such an interview please feel free to quote or show this letter. The investigator will then know what action to take.

The Fund also told the Fraud Investigation Service that the Government is setting up a discretionary trust, to be known as the Caxton Foundation. The foundation will potentially be able to offer financial support to anyone who has received at least the first stage payment (or their dependants if they have died) and is not registered with the Macfarlane or Eileen Trusts. Data matching arising from the discretionary payments could be a difficulty in the future and it was the Skipton Fund's express wish to avoid beneficiaries being interviewed by the Fraud Investigation Service if at all possible.

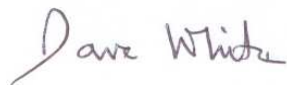
As a result of our meeting, the Fraud investigation Service agreed to prepare instructions and a notification that will go to all investigators and their managers advising them of the various developments. The notification, in respect of disbursements to the Fund's primary beneficiary community or the "eligible person" under the Caxton Foundation will be agreed and included in guidance for investigators as soon as possible. Points of contact in each organisation will be appointed to confidentially confirm receipt of money paid through the Fund.

In the event you are asked to attend an interview in connection with your payments, you should first contact the Skipton Fund office before doing anything. Do not attend the interview until you have obtained our advice. The Skipton Fund acknowledges that over-zealous approaches by DWP officials are relatively few and far between and the Fraud Investigation Service is very keen to do all they can to ensure the lives of those connected with the Fund are disrupted to an absolute minimum.

However, the Fraud Investigation Service does reserve the right to still investigate if there are grounds to suspect that offences do still exist relating to undeclared circumstances beyond that relating to the Fund's payments.

The Skipton Fund can be contacted on 020 7808 1160, e-mail apply@skiptonfund.org.uk or The Skipton Fund, PO Box 50107, London, SW1H 0YF. We can then provide advice and support as appropriate.

DWP is committed to providing the best possible service for all its customers and the Fraud Investigation Service is pleased to, once again, have the opportunity to alert our investigation teams to this matter. We are pleased to be able to do all we can reasonably try to do to separate out a small, but important, sector from the many thousands of investigations we undertake each year. This will help us improve our service to customers while fulfilling our obligation to ensure public funds are protected.



Dave White
Head of Fraud Investigation Service
Jobcentre Plus



Nick Fish
Scheme Administrator of the
Skipton Fund