

PROSECUTION CASES NOT PREVIOUSLY REPORTED

Wendy Nash

Mrs Wendy Nash (46) of Brickworks Close Tonbridge, pleaded guilty to all three charges of benefit fraud at Sevenoaks Magistrates Court on Tuesday 20 September. Mrs Nash had claimed housing and council tax benefit as a single person with two children and failed to inform Tonbridge and Malling Council that her partner had returned to the property in 2008. Mrs Nash claimed £7,105.77 in housing and council benefit

The defence solicitor, Mr Maine informed the court that Mrs Nash did not tell Tonbridge and Malling Council about the change because her partner did not support her financially or emotionally and because of this she was having financial difficulties as well as having to bring up two teenage children. However, the Prosecution on behalf of the Council provided evidence that Mrs Nash had taken holidays abroad with her partner and children.

On sentencing Mrs Nash to a 12 month supervision order and ordering her to pay £262 costs, The Chair, Timothy Bowlet, informed Mrs Nash "that because of her circumstances at home the court had been sympathetic in the sentencing and she was a lucky lady as they considered this to be a very serious offence". He further added, "what you have done means everyone else has to pay more tax".

Mrs Nash is also required to repay the overpaid benefit.

Amanda West

Miss Amanda West of Mount Pleasant, Hildenborough, pleaded guilty to benefit fraud at Sevenoaks Magistrates Court on Monday 12 September, after telling Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council she was a single parent. Miss West failed to tell the council that her partner was also living at the property.

The 29-year-old, who claimed £9,589.83 in housing and council benefit, told the court that she did not tell the council her partner was living with her because he was not working and had no income.

Chair Magistrate, Clive Evans informed Miss West that "had she given the correct information she may have been entitled to some benefits." He sentenced her to one year conditional discharge, ordered her to repay the amount in full and pay £100 in court costs.

Miss West has started to repay the money she fraudulently claimed.

Marie Mann (aka Sangster)

This case was dealt with by the DWP under the one file concept arrangement. Mrs Mann (aka Sangster) aged 34 of Roundhay, Leybourne, was sentenced to a four-month curfew order on 28 September 2011.

Mrs Mann had failed to tell the DWP or the Council that she was working as a relief site manager at a school. She claimed to have notified this fact to the DWP but there was no evidence of this letter ever being received and she continued to receive the same level of Benefit. As a result of her employment she was overpaid Income Support of £1,267.62. In addition she was also overpaid Housing Benefit of £812.11 and Council Tax Benefit of £255.57. These overpayments are being recovered by the Council.

Wayne Allingham

Mr Wayne Allingham (37) of Riding Park, Hildenborough pleaded guilty to benefit fraud at Sevenoaks Magistrates' Court on Thursday 3 November 2011. The Court heard that Mr Allingham had claimed Housing and Council Tax Benefit from Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council as a single person. However, he did not declare that his partner was also resident at the property throughout the life of the claim. As a result, he was overpaid benefits to the value of £807.81.

The prosecution stated that Mr Allingham was appearing in the court for the second time because he had committed a similar offence in 2010. Mr Allingham was not represented on the day.

Mr Allingham was sentenced to a 12-month community order with a direction that he must complete 80 hours unpaid work. He was also ordered to attend a minimum of 10 Skills for Life sessions. In addition, Mr Allingham was ordered to repay the housing and council tax benefit fraudulently claimed and to pay £511.50 costs.

Ricky Morris

On 24 February 2012 Ricky Morris aged 48, of Alex Hughes Close, Snodland appeared before Sevenoaks Magistrates' Court charged with two offences of making false statements to the Department for Work and Pensions and Tonbridge and Malling Council. When he completed his claim forms he stated he was single. Mr Morris failed to inform the agencies that his wife lived with him and that she was in employment. Mr Morris had been overpaid benefits to the value of £3,200.37. He pleaded guilty to both charges.

The defence solicitor, Mr Ferris, stated that Mr Morris had lost his job and knew he could not afford to pay the rent and council tax so had applied for the benefits as a single person. During his interview under caution, Mr Morris made full admission to giving the DWP and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council false information. Mr Morris has been paying back the monies owed.

The chairman, Alan Knight, stated that the court takes matters of benefit fraud very seriously as this was taking money from fellow citizens.

Mr Morris received 300 hours community service which was reduced to 200 hours for an early guilty plea, he was also ordered to pay a total of £100.00 costs.

Andrew Thompson

Andrew Thompson aged 39 of London Road, Wrotham Heath pleaded guilty at Sevenoaks Magistrates' Court on 22 December 2011.

Mr Thompson had claimed council tax benefit but failed to tell the Council that whilst on benefit that he had purchased a five-room villa in Turkey costing £90,000 in 2009. In mitigation Mr Thompson stated that because of Turkish law he was not sure when he became the actual owner of the property and because he had taken out a loan to purchase the property he did not think that he had any equity in it. The bench questioned why he continued to make payments in respect of the property if he did not own it. He also admitted that he had visited the property and stayed overnight in it.

As a result of the offence Mr Thompson had received benefit in excess of £3,000 that he was not entitled to receive. This is being recovered in full.

The Chair, Beverley Sharman, stated that the Court had to consider how long the offence continued and the fact that benefit fraud is a burden on the taxpayer. She sentenced Mr Thompson to a Community Order for 12 months with 100 hours unpaid work. In addition he was ordered to pay the Council £1,007 in costs.