

Appendix 1: Press Release – Housing Benefit Fraud Prosecution



AMELIA BURR (13 August, 2015) **CRIME**

Defendant let off after she paid back money claimed in full with interest

A Bermondsey benefits scammer has been spared jail after she was found guilty of claiming £72,000 in benefits when she had over £80,000 in the bank.

XX, a resident of the Avondale Square Estate just off the Old Kent Road, was found to have fraudulently obtained housing benefit, council tax and job seeker's allowance payments between 2003 to 2013.

The City of London Corporation, which owns the estate, took XX to court when staff discovered she had £84,000 in the bank, which Judge Nicholas Cooke QC said appeared had been paid in by XX's mother to avoid tax. Before sentencing the 51-year-old to 20 weeks' imprisonment suspended for two years, Judge Cooke said: "It is the hypocrisy that is distasteful."

But he added he was prepared to pass a suspended prison sentence because XX had repaid the full amount plus interest, totalling £79,877.33.

The Old Bailey heard how the defendant did not touch the money in the savings account during the fraud and in fact lived a "very modest lifestyle."

Chris Keesing, Anti-Fraud Manager for the City of London Corporation, said: "There is no hiding place for people who commit benefit fraud. It is a myth that benefit fraud is a victimless crime. It is public money that could have gone towards helping someone in genuine need or towards funding cash-strapped public services. I would urge anyone who suspects fraud to report it to the authorities."