

NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE 2026

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service is required by law to protect the public funds it administers. It may share information provided to it with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds in order to prevent and detect fraud.

The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) is the responsibility of the Cabinet Office. It is a data matching exercise that runs every two years and is designed to help participating bodies identify possible cases of fraud and detect and correct any consequential under or overpayments from the public purse.

Data matching involves comparing computer records held by one body against other computer records held by the same or another body. This is usually personal information. Computerised data matching allows potentially fraudulent claims and payments to be identified. Where a match is found it indicates that there is an inconsistency which requires further investigation.

No assumption can be made as to whether there is fraud, error or other explanation until an investigation is carried out.

The Cabinet Office requires us to participate in the NFI exercise, and the use of the data is carried out with statutory authority under its powers in Part 2A of the Audit Commission Act 1998. **It does not require the consent of the individuals concerned under the Data Protection Act 1998.**

For information, data matching by the Cabinet Office is subject to a **Code of Data Matching Practice** and this can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-data-matching-practice-for-national-fraud-initiative>

The purpose of this note is to inform you that County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service is required to submit personal data for all employees, members and pensioners held in the payroll system to the Cabinet Office by **21st October 2026** so that data matching with the data from other public bodies can be carried out. The information provided is the minimum needed by the Cabinet Office to undertake the matching exercise but does include personal information such as names, addresses and annual remuneration. The data will be used to ensure, for example, that income is being declared when housing benefit is being applied for, and no pensions are being paid to persons who are deceased or are no longer entitled.

Sometimes wrong payments are made because of genuine error. Previous exercises have uncovered instances of underpayments as well as overpayments resulting in payments / entitlements being increased. The exercise, therefore, helps promote the best use of public funds.

The data will be uploaded from Durham County Council to the Cabinet Office over the internet via a secure website. Access to the website is restricted to authorised personnel only, is password protected and all data is encrypted to '128-bit SSL' which is a similar level to that used for internet banking.

You do not need to respond to this communication, but you may be contacted again if the exercise raises any issues with the level of your pension or benefit claims.

Further information relating to the NFI exercise, including the Cabinet Office's legal powers and reasons why it matches particular information, can be obtained from the **Gov.uk website** - www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-fraud-initiative

Please also refer to their **Fair Processing Notice Full text** webpage at <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fair-processing-national-fraud-initiative/fair-processing-level-3-full-text>

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please e-mail the Finance Office at Finance@ddfire.gov.uk or, if you prefer, telephone on 0303 0032955