

South Wales Fire & 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 Auditor General for Wales appoints the auditor to audit the accounts of this authority. He is also responsible for carrying out data matching exercises.

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 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 Auditor General currently requires us to participate in their anti-fraud initiative. For this initiative, we are providing details of employees for the purposes of comparing these with information provided by other public bodies. This will ensure that no payments are being made to persons who are no longer entitled, and that Fire Service income is being declared when housing benefit is applied for. These exercises, therefore, help ensure the best use of public funds.

The Auditor General requires this authority to provide information it holds for this purpose. We are required to provide particular sets of data to the Auditor General for matching for each exercise, and these are set out in the Auditor General's handbooks, which can be found at <http://www.wao.gov.uk/whatwedo/1252.asp>.

The use of data by the Auditor General in a data matching exercise is carried out with statutory authority under its powers in Part 3A of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 1998. It does not require the consent of the individuals concerned under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Data matching by the Auditor General is subject to a Code of Practice. This may be found at <http://www.wao.gov.uk/whatwedo/codeofauditandinspectionpractice.asp>

For further information on the Auditor General's legal powers and the reasons why he matches particular information, see:

<http://www.wao.gov.uk/whatwedo/2060.asp>

Or Contact: Katrina Febry, NFI, Co-ordinator, Wales Audit Office, 24 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9LJ, 029 2032 0616 or email infoofficer@wales.gov.uk. Tel: 029 2032 0616

Contact Officer for South Wales Fire and Rescue Service: Mrs Clare Smith, Payroll Manager on 01443 232078.