

Dover Mercury
15/04/10Dover Express
15 April 2010**Benefit fraud**

A BENEFIT-swindling mum has been given a suspended sentence at Canterbury Crown Court.

Tina Turner, 39, of Colorado Close, Dover, was sentenced on April 7 after pleading guilty to three benefit offences.

She received an eight-month prison term, suspended for one year, and was ordered to do 240 hours of unpaid work.

Dover District Council will recover the overpaid housing and council tax benefit.

Suspended prison term for cheat

A DOVER woman has been given a suspended prison sentence after admitting three benefit fraud offences.

Tina Turner, 39, of Colorado Close, appeared at Canterbury Crown Court on Wednesday last week charged under the Social Security Administration Act 1992.

She was given an eight-month custodial sentence, suspended for 12 months, and ordered to do 240 hours of unpaid work. She had claimed income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit as a single parent when in fact she had been living with a partner since September 2002.

She failed to declare this to the Department for Work and Pensions or Dover District Council.

The total overpayment of benefit was in the region of £56,000. The district council will recover the overpaid housing and council tax benefit which she was paid.

Dover Mercury
15/04/10**Benefit cheat mum swindled £57,000**

A DOVER benefit cheat has escaped an immediate jail sentence after swindling the equivalent of the wages of two teachers.

Mum Tina Turner, 39, said she was living alone in Colorado Close, on the Buckland Estate, with her two children.

She began receiving income support and both housing and council tax benefits – even though she was living with her partner.

She had fiddled more than £57,000 during a six-year period, Canterbury Crown Court heard.

The judge, Recorder John Hardy QC told her: "It is all too clear, when public finances are under terrible strain, that those who deprive the public purse of monies of which they are not

'In effect what you took was equal to the yearly salaries of two teachers or possibly three or four nurses'

entitled, are draining finances which are desperately needed elsewhere.

"In effect what you took was equal to the yearly salaries of two teachers or possibly three or four nurses."

Turner had pleaded guilty to three charges of failing to notify the Department of Works and Pensions of the change in her circumstances. Prosecutor William Hays said in 1995 her

benefit claims were genuine but by September 2002 she was living with her partner.

By last year, she had received £57,000 that she wasn't entitled to – although, had she been honest, she would have been eligible for reduced assistance, he added.

Dominic Webber, defending, said the money "hadn't been used to fund an extravagant lifestyle".

He said Turner was caught "in something of a poverty trap" and had used the money to pay off a bank loan. She was now repaying the money at £250 a month, the court heard.

The judge suspended the eight month jail sentence for 12 months and ordered her to do 240 hours of unpaid work. He warned her: "Don't you ever come back to this court again."

Pensioner convicted Of £13k benefit fraud

Repayment of £9.90 per week is set to take 25 years

Report by Eleanor Jones

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A PENSIONER who swindled more than £13,500 in benefits said he used the extra money because he "liked nice things".

Edward Unsworth, of Churchill Road, Dover, pocketed the taxpayers' cash in income support payments while he was also receiving two private pensions, Folkestone magistrates heard last Thursday.

The 60-year-old pleaded guilty to two charges of failing to notify authorities of a change in circumstances.

Prosecutor Mary Jacobson told the court Unsworth started claiming the handouts, on the basis that he was incapable of working because of ill-health, in 2002.

In 2005 and 2006, he filled in review forms on which he denied receiving any other form of income or pension.

Income

Miss Jacobson said: "His income support was between £77 and £91 a week, but it came to light he was getting about £200 per month from the Merchant Navy Officers' Pension Fund and about £27 per month from Guardian Financial Services.

"The MNOP records go back to April 2004 and GFS to July 2006. Had this been known, his income support would have been reduced by more than half in that time, so he got £13,611 in benefits which he was not entitled to.

In interview, he seemed ambivalent as to whether he had declared them, but then said he didn't know why he hadn't.

"Later, he said he might have lost his income support had he declared them, and he said he used the extra money as he liked nice things."

The court heard Unsworth is repaying the cash, via deductions from his pension credit benefit at a rate of



Caught: Edward Unsworth wrongly claimed £13,611 in benefits

85, to pay the full amount. Stuart Green, defending, said: "He finds these proceedings somewhat confusing.

"He'd contributed to two pensions and thought he had been taxed on them, so the money was his to keep and that he didn't have to declare it.

"He did tick 'no' when asked about pensions, but he thought they wouldn't affect his benefits.

"He knows he's been paying the money back but doesn't know exactly what his income is or how much he spends - he's someone who gets confused easily. There are no aggravating factors to this - no greed or desire to live beyond his means.

"It's not a case of being dishonest, I'd say it's a case of being confused."

Magistrates adjourned the case for a report to be made, but warned Unsworth he could face a prison term.



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The programme starts at 7.30pm and will include traditional Welsh hymns, as well as songs from 20th century musicals. One of the most moving pieces, Flowers of the Field, was created especially for the choir. Tickets cost £7.50 including wine, soft drinks and mince pies, from margaret.hanton@susyevdercare.org.uk, or call 01233 732684.

All dressed up

MEMBERS of the Kent Timewarp Car and Costume Group, which is based in Dover, will be collecting money for charity in the town centre on Saturday, at the Christmas lights switch-on.

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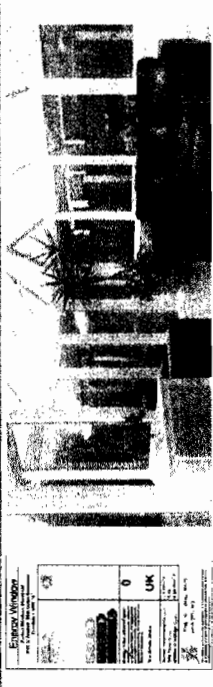
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