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A CRACK team of data analysts is being hired by ministers to root out benefit fraudsters who falsely claim they live alone.

Some £110million is paid out each year to claimants who fail to declare they are cohabiting.

Examples include those who apply for income support despite secretly living with someone who is earning a wage.

The Department for Work and Pensions revealed yesterday that it will take on a specialist data company to help identify claimants with an undeclared partner.

They will scour insurance contracts, financial transactions, credit checks and other data to spot supposedly single people who may be living with someone else.

For example, if someone has a second named driver on their car insurance, it could mean they are not living alone.

The evidence will be passed on to officials at the DWP, who will investigate and strip any fraudsters of their benefits.

The crackdown will first target recipients of income support, which pays out at least £57.90 a week to single households with no income.

Couples get less between them to take into account the fact they share their rent – so some increase their benefits by both declaring themselves single.

One overpayment saw £25,000 go to a woman who was claiming her partner, the father of her baby, was her landlord, enabling

her to claim housing benefit. Last night Work and Pensions Secretary Damian Green said: 'We won't tolerate benefit fraud because it takes away vital

### **'Lie about a partner'**

support for people who rely on it ... The fight to stop those who commit fraud never stops and today I am announcing a new

drive to clamp down on those who lie about a partner to cheat the system.

'It's a small minority of people who defraud the benefits system but we owe it to the taxpayers who fund it, and those who rely on it, to stop them.'

In total, fraud and error accounts for around 1.9 per cent of benefits paid – an annual loss of £3.3billion. One fraudster caught out was Anne Klemis, of Northampton, who falsely claimed nearly £60,000 over six

years by pretending she was a single parent, despite living with her partner Dennis Kennedy. She was given a suspended sentence and ordered to take part in a rehabilitation programme.

It is believed around 1.5 per cent of income support is overpaid a year as a result of a partner not being declared.

If the data specialists' crackdown on false income support claims is successful, it could be extended to other handouts such as housing benefit.

# Crackdown on the benefit cheats who say they live alone