

PRESS CUTTING

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Racist taxmen who deliberately under-paid child benefits to non-nationals are sacked

By DAILY MAIL REPORTER



Dave Hartnett: He said HMRC operates a zero-tolerance policy on racial discrimination

Seven taxmen have been sacked for deliberately underpaying child benefit to ethnic minority families. Two other workers quit when an investigation was launched earlier this year.

All nine were based at an HM Revenue and Customs contact centre in Belfast, where they had access to computerised national benefits records.

They were accused of tampering with files to ensure a number of people from ethnic minority backgrounds were paid less money than they were entitled to.

All of the victims, who were living in various parts of the UK, have now been paid in full.

The resignations and sackings of the nine men followed an internal investigation into allegations of racially motivated conduct going back to the second half of last year.

The investigation started last January when a complaint was lodged by somebody who claimed that their records had been changed.

A detailed audit was carried out and the inquiry then widened to take in another 16 cases.

It is understood the nine men were suspended once the investigation started, but two quit immediately. Dave Hartnett, permanent secretary for tax at HMRC, said the department operates a zero-tolerance policy on racial discrimination.

He said: 'The vast majority of our people are entirely professional and one of the ways we support that professionalism is by taking decisive action against the tiny minority who let us all down by falling far short of those standards.'

Last night **Ronnie Fox**, employment specialist at **Fox Lawyers**, said: 'It appears as though HMRC went through the appropriate steps by holding an investigation and giving the staff concerned an opportunity to respond.'

'If the facts are as I understand them to be, it is difficult to see how the employees involved could possibly have justified their actions.'