

Prison for benefit cheat mother

A MOTHER who worked as a cleaner while fraudulently claiming up to £37,000 in benefits has been sentenced to 14 months' imprisonment.

Karen Clancy, aged 37, claimed income support, housing and council tax benefits over two and a half years, while earning a living as a self-employed cleaner.

Wendy Hewitt, prosecuting for the Department of Work and Pensions, said that as a lone parent, she was entitled to the maximum level of support when her claim began legitimately in 1999.

As well as repeatedly signing the non-declaration of work, she also attended sessions designed to help her get back into employment.

Miss Hewitt added: "A total of 21 witness statements were taken, saying they had employed her during the course of this period as their cleaner.

"An aggravating feature is she was employing others to work with her as cleaners and some of those were in receipt of benefits.

"It is also plain that there was a loan application for a car in 2007 where she declared she had been self-employed for four years and three months with an income of £1,030 a month.

"She was working with undeclared cash in hand and had the true circumstances been known, she would not have received these benefits."

Clancy, of Nether Jackson Court, Blackthorn, Northampton, pleaded guilty to two charges of failing to notify a change of circumstances, between August 2005 and March 2008.

Paul Tweddle, mitigating, said the mother-of-four, who is now paying the money back weekly, had not been running a company but working for cash in hand.