

Ashfield District Council

Benefit Service: Summary of current performance

Overall, we found that Ashfield District Council's Benefit service is currently providing a **fair** performance.

Ashfield District Council currently demonstrates a number of strengths. These include:

- a Best Value Review of the Benefits service has resulted in an action plan that details the service improvements required to meet Standards
- performance monitoring procedures reporting weekly at operational level and to Members on a quarterly basis
- a benefit claim form that meets the standards of the model BFI form
- compliance with the Verification Framework since October 1999
- the creation of a new dedicated reception facility for personal callers to enhance the service provided to its customers
- telephone call management facilities have been introduced.

However there are some areas where Ashfield District Council needs to develop further to more fully meet Performance Standards. These include:

- formally introducing policies and strategies that provide comprehensive coverage of HB and CTB administration (due to be presented to Cabinet on 24 July 2003)
- introducing relevant operational plans to turn these policies and strategies into action
- improving initiatives to encourage benefit take-up
- improving the speed of processing new claims, changes of circumstances and renewal claims
- introducing management checking procedures in line with Standards to provide the necessary management assurance
- the Fraud team needs to use all types of fraud sanction, as detailed in the Counter-fraud Policy and Strategy document, to provide an effective deterrent.

How BFI's current performance assessment informs the Audit Commission's overall assessment is described [here](#).