

Chichester District Council

Benefit Service: Summary of current performance

Overall, we found that Chichester District Council's Benefit service is currently providing a **fair** performance. This was based on a score of approximately 60% following a self-assessment against Performance Standards. Chichester District Council's current performance demonstrates a number of strengths. These include:

- improved performance management and reporting linking information at all levels
- a structured training programme for new and existing staff
- consultation with benefit customers
- compliance with the Verification Framework
- average time for processing new claims (34 days) in line with the Standard
- regular forums held with private and Registered Social Landlords
- a full range of sanctions used against fraudsters
- specialist staff to deal with overpayment work.

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

- a vision for the Benefits service
- explicit strategic policies and objectives drawn from a vision statement
- a strategy to improve and measure take-up of benefit
- procedures to make payments on account, although claims are fast tracked if the customer indicates they are in financial difficulty
- the need to improve the efficiency of the document management process
- improved post-opening security
- an annual business plan for counter-fraud activity
- reporting of the level and age of debt to Members.