

Alnwick District Authority

Benefit Service: Summary of current performance

Overall, we found that Alnwick District Council's HB and CTB service is providing a **Fair** performance. Alnwick District Council's current performance demonstrates a number of strengths. These include:

- strategies and policies that cover most areas of HB/CTB administration
- a performance management system that enables managers at all levels to monitor and report progress on their specific responsibilities
- compliance with the Verification Framework since April 2001
- a strong commitment to customer care
- effective partnership working
- good bottom up and top down communication and feedback channels with Benefits service staff
- top quartile performance in respect of claims processing.

However there are some areas where Alnwick District Council needs to develop further to more fully meet the BFI and the Department's Performance Standards framework. These include:

- the need for a HB/CTB procedures manual
- re-organisation of the HB/CTB caseload split so that it is on a multi-function basis rather than by claim type
- review of letters produced by the new IT system to improve clarity
- an action plan to take forward race equality issues
- a review of the arrangements to effectively monitor service level agreements
- establishing a regular two-way communication link with landlords
- a detailed Business plan is needed to pro-actively manage the counter-fraud function
- the internal audit plan should include an assessment of Benefits service performance against standards and be approved by Members
- a follow up system of internal audit recommendations should be developed to ensure implementation
- the debtor functionality of the Benefits service IT system should be fully utilised.

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