

Ashford Borough Council

Benefit Service: Summary of current performance

Overall, we found that Ashford Borough Council's Benefit Service is currently providing a **Fair** performance. The council's current performance demonstrates a number of strengths. These include:

- compliance with the Verification Framework (VF)
- explicit links between corporate and service objectives
- publication of counter-fraud strategy
- processing times for new claims and changes of circumstance exceed targets set in Performance Standards
- memorandum of understanding with Weald Police
- advice to claimants about the need to tell the council about changes of circumstance
- specialist debt recovery team.

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

- processing times for renewal claims
- gaining a better understanding of customers' needs and expectations
- encouraging take-up of benefits
- uncertainty over extent of management checks
- procedure manuals not fully developed
- recovery rates for overpayments.

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