

Babergh District Council

Benefit Service: Summary of current performance

Overall, we found that Babergh District Council's Benefits service was providing a **Fair towards Good** performance. Babergh District Council's current performance demonstrates a number of strengths. These include:

- a clear vision for the service
- Member involvement in the development of the service
- strong links with service users and stakeholders including
 - Registered Social Landlords
 - Jobcentre Plus
 - The Pension Service
- low customer waiting times and high customer satisfaction
- disabled access to all public areas of the council offices
- clear criteria for the provision of home visits
- extended telephone opening hours
- above Standard in 2004/05 for the time taken to process new claims and changes of circumstances
- at Standard for verifying claims
- secure post opening procedures
- 6-monthly renewable declarations of interest for staff
- a clear business plan and strategy for the Counter-Fraud Team
- 24 successful and well publicised prosecutions for fraud
- clear management control of fraud investigations including key stage reviews
- using all overpayment recovery methods
- actively pursuing the recovery of old debt.

However there are some areas where Babergh District Council needs to develop further to fully meet the BFI and Department for Work and Pensions' (the Department) Performance Standards framework. These include:

- linking the benefits vision and strategy to the corporate strategic plans of the authority
- using management information systems to underpin the strategic vision and policy objectives
- identifying under-claiming groups and devising a take-up strategy

- processing 90% of claims within 14 days of all information being received
- vetting staff in accordance with Audit Commission guidelines
- providing fraud awareness training to all appropriate authority staff
- setting a target to achieve top quartile performance in the recovery of overpayments
- monitoring the recovery of overpayments and providing the results to Members.

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