

Brentwood Borough Council

Benefit Service: Summary of current performance

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

- a service plan including targets
- Investors in People accreditation
- an action plan to achieve full compliance with Performance Standards by the end of 2004
- formalised procedures for handling complaints
- 10% management checks undertaken before the claimant is notified of the decision
- risk groups used to allocate benefit periods
- a landlords information pack
- documented post opening and distribution procedures
- an annual assessment of the IT system
- a counter-fraud business plan which includes planned activities and counter-fraud targets.

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

- improving the speed of processing claims in all areas
- introducing procedural manuals covering all aspects of benefits and counter-fraud work
- completing the proposed inclusion of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound targets in staff job descriptions
- monitoring waiting times for personal callers to the office
- ensuring the new telephone system due to be introduced in April 2004 provides adequate information to enable the service to be monitored
- assessing and meeting the needs of its in work claimants
- undertaking annual reviews of recruitment procedures by an independent body, such as Internal Audit
- providing Members with copies of audit reports
- improving performance in applying sanctions

- providing annual refresher training on fraud awareness to all staff
- maintaining central records to show when an Authorised Officer's powers were used.

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