

Cannock Chase District Council

Benefit Service: Summary of current performance

Overall, we found that Cannock Chase District Council's Benefits service is providing a **Fair** performance. Cannock Chase District Council's current performance demonstrates a number of strengths. These include:

- a Commissioning Statement and Business Plan that are directly linked to the council's corporate aim of alleviating poverty and tackling social exclusion
- a detailed Service Improvement Plan
- a commitment to staff training and development
- steady and continuous improvement in the time taken to process new claims and changes of circumstances
- performance against Best Value Performance Indicators and those included in the Service Improvement Plan is reported to elected Members quarterly
- an annual test by Internal Audit of the integrity of the Benefits system
- a counter-fraud policy and strategy with an emphasis on sanctions
- an overpayments policy to manage benefits debt.

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

- introducing the Department's Verification Framework and complying with its minimum standards
- improving performance against Best Value Performance Indicators, in particular for processing new and renewal claims
- monitoring the quality and the time taken to respond to caller enquiries, telephone calls and correspondence
- developing a strategy for promoting the take-up of benefits that targets information at particular under-claiming groups
- increasing the level of management checking to the minimum levels recommended by the Audit Commission
- introducing written procedural guidance that covers all aspects of the Benefits service
- introducing fraud investigator targets for administrative penalties, formal cautions and prosecutions
- increasing the value of overpayments recovered.

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