

Carrick District Council

Benefit Service: Summary of current performance

Overall, we found that Carrick District Council's HB/CTB service is currently providing a **Fair** performance. The council's performance demonstrates a number of strengths. These include:

- a vision statement and strategic aims for the Benefits service linked to corporate aims
- an action plan to meet Performance Standards by July 2005 showing action to be taken, responsible officers and target dates
- a Customer Charter, which sets the standards of care and service that customers can expect to receive in their dealings with the Benefits service
- a claim form that follows the model of the Department's form HCTB1
- a prompt service for telephone and personal callers
- implementation of the Verification Framework in March 1999
- comprehensive pre-notification management checks
- a helpful HB guide for landlords
- a service level agreement with Carrick Housing Limited, the Arms Length Management Organisation
- at Standard for all aspects of payment and accounting
- a fraud strategy and a newly developed fraud business plan
- management monitoring of progress of fraud investigations and checks on investigation quality
- processes to prevent benefits overpayments
- monitoring of the level and age of the authority's debt.

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

- providing an accessible quality service for people with specific needs
- improving the speed of processing claims and changes of circumstances
- making payments on account when appropriate
- processing claims more accurately
- making the area in which the post opening operation is carried out more secure

- improving its document management, although the introduction of a document image processing and workflow system is planned for the middle of 2004/05 to address this.

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