

# Chelmsford Borough Council

## **Benefit Service: Summary of current performance**

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

- a range of policies and strategies that impact on the Benefits service
- comprehensive procedure guidance manuals for the Benefit Investigations Team
- team meetings to discuss Benefits service performance
- risk-based audit planning and structured monitoring of the implementation of recommendations
- pre-notification management checks
- analysis of quality checks to identify individual training needs
- compliance with the Department for Work and Pensions' (the Department) Verification Framework
- designated liaison and contact facilities for private and registered social landlords
- formalised agreement with the council's Cashiers Services
- a Code of Conduct for the Benefit Investigations Team.

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

- developing its planning and monitoring arrangements to provide assurance to Members and senior officers that HB and CTB administration is effective and secure
- collecting and routinely analysing performance information to inform formal, timely and structured management decision making
- developing the use of performance targets to underpin corporate policy objectives and service standards
- undertaking regular and systematic management checks of all aspects of HB and CTB administration
- developing a training strategy for all new and existing staff including a formal mechanism for evaluating the training provided
- planning and undertaking activities to underpin the council's policy to encourage the take-up of all welfare benefits

- failing to achieve Standard for any of the Best Value Performance Indicators
- communicating the council's corporate Policy Statement on Fraud and Corruption to staff, customers and stakeholders
- evaluating the effectiveness of its fraud partnership with a neighbouring local authority
- developing risk and quality criteria to sift fraud referrals
- developing a strategy to manage the overpayments recovery process with the council's biggest registered social landlord
- maximising the use of all available overpayment recovery methods monitoring the level, age and profile of HB debt .

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