

# Cherwell District Council

## Benefit Service: Summary of current performance

Overall, we found that Cherwell District Council's Benefit service is currently providing a **Fair towards Good** performance.

- a range of policies and strategies for HB and CTB administration and counter-fraud
- performance is regularly reported to senior managers, Members and staff
- a Service Delivery Plan containing targets based on Best Value Performance Indicators
- regular customer surveys and exit polls are conducted to measure satisfaction levels
- effective handling of appeals and complaints
- Verification Framework compliance since March 2001
- processing cases accurately and changes of circumstances quickly
- effective arrangements for working with landlords
- new staff are vetted as part of the recruitment policy
- full range of sanctions are used to deter fraudulent activity
- formalised management checks of investigations
- wide range of methods used to recover debts, including county court judgements and the use of external agents.

However there are some areas where Cherwell District Council needs to develop further to more fully meet Performance Standards. These include:

- developing a business continuity plan
- processing new and renewal claims more promptly to achieve Standard
- take-up and access for minority groups
- developing a debt management strategy to facilitate improvements in:
  - the level and age of outstanding debt
  - reporting the age of debt to Members
- target setting for reducing the number and amount of inactive debt.

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