

Chesterfield Borough council

Benefit Service: Summary of current performance

Overall, we found that Chesterfield Borough Council's Benefits service is providing a **Fair towards Good** performance. Chesterfield Borough Council's current performance demonstrates a number of strengths. These included:

- clear links in the council's Corporate Plan to the Benefits service plan and individual objectives in the Staff Development and Review scheme
- a Race Equality Scheme implemented in May 2002
- in conjunction with 5 neighbouring councils, securing funding from the Department's Performance Standards Help Fund for the provision of benefits and personal development training for staff
- meeting the minimum standards of the Department's Verification Framework
- above Standard performance in processing new claims
- the appointment of a Quality Assurance officer to help ensure that management checks are carried out on 10% of all work
- the appointment of a Benefits Advisor to encourage the take-up of benefits
- the production of information leaflets for landlords and the establishment of a forum for landlords, in conjunction with neighbouring councils
- an audit of the Benefits IT system in March 2003 which concluded that key controls within the Benefits IT system were operating satisfactorily
- a counter-fraud business plan with key objectives and deliverables.

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

- improving the claim form to meet the Standards
- providing cultural awareness for all staff to promote racial equality
- improving performance against Best Value Performance Indicators to achieve Standard for the:
 - average time to process changes of circumstances
 - percentage of renewal claims processed on time
 - percentage of cases processed accurately
- making payments on account to meet legislative requirements
- carrying out an independent annual review of its procedures for the recruitment and vetting of staff
- carrying out internal data matching exercises

- prioritising the recovery of fraud overpayments to act as a deterrent to potential fraudsters.

How BFI's current performance assessment informs the Audit Commission's overall assessment is described here.