

## Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2007

### **London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council**

#### *Introduction*

1.1 This assessment has been undertaken as part of the 2007 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) programme and does not represent a full inspection of London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council's Benefits service. This report has been produced pursuant to powers contained in sections 10 and 11 of the Local Government Act 1999.

1.2 We gathered information for this assessment from a range of sources including:

- the self-assessment and evidence provided by the council
- Best Value Performance Indicators and performance measures
- discussions with senior officers in the council
- BFI's CPA 2006 report.

#### *Overall Performance*

1.3 In 2006 we reported that the council met 4 of the 12 performance measures. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it achieved a rating of excellent against 3 of the 13 performance measures scored by the Department. In 2006 the council met 60 of the 65 enablers, this year it met 63. This resulted in the scores reflected below:

<b>Performance Standards score</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Audit Commission score</b>	<b>3</b>

1.4 Performance on claims administration had deteriorated during 2006/07. This was due to the introduction of a new Benefits IT system, which meant that the council was unable to process claims on the IT system for 4 weeks. The council took steps to minimise the impact of this change. These included taking on temporary staff and manually pre-assessing cases whilst the IT system was closed down. The implementation of the new IT system went smoothly and data for the final quarter of 2006/07 showed that performance was improving.

1.5 The council's performance in dealing with requests for reconsiderations and appeal deteriorated significantly during 2006/07. This resulted in the score for the User Focus theme falling to below minimum requirements.

1.6 London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council provided a full self-assessment against 2006 HB/CTB Performance Standards. The evidence provided by the council supported its self-assessment.

1.7 Figure 1.1 compares the scores for the individual Performance Standards theme scores for CPA 2006 and CPA 2007 to highlight any changes in reported performance.

<b>Figure 1.1: Performance Standards theme scores</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>Claims administration</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>↓</b>
<b>Security</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>=</b>
<b>User focus</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>↓</b>
<b>Resource management</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>=</b>
<b>Overall score</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>=</b>

Source: BFI analysis

# Findings

## Claims administration

1.8 London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council's performance measure data for Claims administration is shown in Figure 1.2.

<b>Figure 1.2: Claims administration performance measures 2006/07</b>						
<b>Performance measure</b>	<b>Qtr 1</b>	<b>Qtr 2</b>	<b>Qtr 3</b>	<b>Qtr 4</b>	<b>Full year</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>PM 1: Average time for processing new claims (days)</b>	31	32	33	26	<b>30</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PM 2: % of new claims outstanding over 50 days</b>	11	38	58	40	<b>40</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PM 3: % of new claims decided within 14 days of receiving all information</b>	76	76	64	75	<b>72</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PM 4: % of rent allowance claims paid on time or within 7 days of a decision being made</b>	72	70	64	76	<b>70</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PM 5: Average time for processing changes of circumstances (days)</b>	14	14	21	15	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PM 6: % of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due is correct</b>	98	98	98	99	<b>98</b>	<b>3</b>

Source: London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council  
(Full year figures are based on an annual calculation and may not reflect the average of 4 quarters performance)

1.9 In 2006 we reported that the council met one of the 6 performance measures. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it achieved a rating of excellent against none of the 6 performance measures scored by the Department. We also reported that the council met 14 of the 16 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it met all 16.

1.10 The introduction of the new Benefits IT system in October 2006 had a significant impact on the council's performance for both the speed and accuracy of its claims processing. The performance measures relating to the speed of processing deteriorated as the council were unable to assess any benefits claims for 4 weeks. PM6 also deteriorated with more errors made on claims as staff were unfamiliar with the new IT

system. However, performance for the fourth quarter for all 6 performance measures showed an improvement compared to quarter 3.

1.11 Targets for the recovery of new and old debts were introduced in April 2006 and reports of progress against targets reported monthly to the Revenue Monitoring Panel.

1.12 The introduction of the new Benefits IT system meant that since October 2006 the council had been able to maintain records of outstanding overpayments on claims where benefit had ceased.

## Security

1.13 In April 2006, Performance Standards were revised to include a scoring mechanism for performance measure PM16. This takes account of the number of successful sanctions applied in relation to a council's live caseload.

1.14 London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council's performance measure data for Security is shown in Figure 1.3.

<b>Figure 1.3: Security Performance measure scores 2006/07</b>			
<b>Performance measure</b>	<b>Annual target</b>	<b>Performance</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>PM 10: Interventions where review action completed</b>	10040	126%	<b>4</b>
<b>PM 11: Data matches resolved within 2 months</b>	Not applicable	94%	<b>4</b>
<b>PM 12: Customers visited</b>	3350	292%	<b>4</b>
<b>PM 16: Number of successful sanctions per 1,000 caseload</b>	Not applicable	2.4	<b>2</b>

Source: London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council

1.15 In 2006 we reported that the council met all 3 of the performance measures. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it achieved a rating of excellent against 3 of the 4 performance measures scored by the Department. We also reported that the council met 20 of the 21 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it still met the same 20.

1.16 The council demonstrated an improvement during 2006/07 in its performance on preventing fraud and error. It exceeded its targets for both interventions and visits and increased the number of sanctions applied, from 7 in 2005/06 to 56 in 2006/07. However, there was still scope for further progress on sanction activity, as at 2.4 the number of sanctions per 1,000 caseload could be improved. The council also needed to improve on how quickly it sifts referrals. It averaged 15 days in March 2007, compared with a requirement of 10 days.

## User focus

1.17 London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council's performance measure data for User focus is shown in Figure 1.4.

<b>Figure 1.4: User focus performance measures 2006/07</b>						
<b>Performance measure</b>	<b>Qtr 1</b>	<b>Qtr 2</b>	<b>Qtr 3</b>	<b>Qtr 4</b>	<b>Full year</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>PM 17: % of applications for reconsideration /revision actioned and notified within 4 weeks</b>	58	39	30	24	<b>34</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PM 18: % of appeals submitted to the Appeals Service in 4 weeks</b>	0	23	20	21	<b>20</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PM 19: % of appeals submitted to the Appeals Service in 3 months</b>	0	69	36	54	<b>48</b>	<b>1</b>

Source: London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council  
(Full year figures are based on an annual calculation and may not reflect the average of 4 quarters performance)

1.18 In 2006 we reported that the council met none of the 3 performance measures. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it achieved a rating of excellent against none of the 3 performance measures scored by the Department. We also reported that the council met 10 of the 12 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it met 11.

1.19 The council's performance for dealing with reconsiderations and appeals deteriorated significantly during 2006/07. We were told that this was due to the backlog of benefits work and difficulty in filling vacancies for 2 appeals officers.

1.20 The introduction of the new Benefits IT system led to a review of both the content and speed of despatching decision letter to customers. Letters had been improved and were clear and concise. A Service Level Agreement was introduced in 2006 with the council's internal supplier that set out that the printing and despatching of letters was to be completed with 24 and 48 hours respectively.

1.21 Although the council had Service Level Agreements in place with organisations connected to benefits delivery, not all of these were monitored.

## Resource management

1.22 In 2006 we reported that the council met all 16 of the enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it continued to meet all 16 enablers.