

Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2007

Blackburn with Darwen Borough 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 Blackburn with Darwen Borough 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 8 of the 12 performance measures and 64 of the 65 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it achieved a rating of excellent against 7 of the 13 performance measures scored by the Department and still met 64 of the 65 enablers. This resulted in the scores reflected below:

Performance Standards score	Good
Audit Commission score	3

1.4 The council had improved its overall score for the Claims administration theme by improving accuracy, deciding claims more quickly once all the information had been received and maintaining its 2005/06 performance levels against the other performance measures.

1.5 The council successfully applied 106 sanctions against fraudsters. However, the overall score for the Security theme had worsened because it was not resolving data matches sufficiently quickly.

1.6 The council needed to further improve its performance against performance measure PM18 as it failed to meet minimum requirements for this measure.

1.7 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council provided a full self-assessment against 2006 HB/CTB Performance Standards. The evidence provided by the council supported its self-assessment.

1.8 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.

Figure 1.1: Performance Standards theme scores

Theme	2006	2007	Change
Claims administration	3	4	↑
Security	4	3	↓
User focus	2	2	=
Resource management	4	4	=
Overall score	3	3	=

Source: BFI analysis

Findings

Claims administration

1.9 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's performance measure data for Claims administration is shown in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2: Claims administration performance measures 2006/07						
Performance measure	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Full year	Score
PM 1: Average time for processing new claims (days)	27	25	25	24	26	4
PM 2: % of new claims outstanding over 50 days	3	1	8	7	7	4
PM 3: % of new claims decided within 14 days of receiving all information	89	89	88	84	88	3
PM 4: % of rent allowance claims paid on time or within 7 days of a decision being made	92	100	100	94	92	4
PM 5: Average time for processing changes of circumstances (days)	17	20	19	13	12	3
PM 6: % of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due is correct	98	98	98	98	98	3

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

1.10 In 2006 we reported that the council met 4 of the 6 performance measures. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it achieved a rating of excellent against 3 of the 6 performance measures scored by the Department. We also reported that the council met all 16 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it still met all 16.

1.11 The council improved its overall score for the Claims administration theme. This had been achieved by improving its accuracy levels and deciding claims more quickly once all the information had been received. It also maintained its 2005/06 performance level scores for the other performance measures.

Security

1.12 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.

1.13 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's performance measure data for Security is shown in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3: Security Performance measure scores 2006/07			
Performance measure	Annual target	Performance	Score
PM 10: Interventions where review action completed	7,820	111%	4
PM 11: Data matches resolved within 2 months	Not applicable	81%	2
PM 12: Customers visited	2,610	129%	4
PM 16: Number of successful sanctions per 1,000 caseload	Not applicable	6	4

Source: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

1.14 In 2006 we reported that the council met all of the 3 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 all 21 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it still met all 21.

1.15 The overall score for the Security theme had worsened. This had been caused by its performance against performance measure PM11 which had reduced significantly compared to 2005/06. The council told us it believed this was due to errors in reporting the figure and which had now been resolved.

1.16 During 2006/07 the council successfully applied 106 sanctions, compared to 119 in 2005/06.

User focus

1.17 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's performance measure data for User focus is shown in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4: User focus performance measures 2006/07						
Performance measure	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Full year	Score
PM 17: % of applications for reconsideration /revision actioned and notified within 4 weeks	70	58	63	76	67	4
PM 18: % of appeals submitted to the Appeals Service in 4 weeks	25	67	17	33	34	1
PM 19: % of appeals submitted to the Appeals Service in 3 months	75	100	92	92	90	3

Source: Blackburn with Darwen Borough 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 one of the 3 performance measures. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it achieved a rating of excellent against one of the 3 performance measures scored by the Department. We also reported that the council met all 12 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it still met all 12.

1.19 The council had improved against performance measures PM18 and PM19 compared to 2005/06. However, in spite of this improvement, performance measure PM18 failed to meet minimum requirements. The council had strengthened its Quality Control Team in quarter 4 of 2006/07 to enable more flexibility and further improve performance.

Resource management

1.20 In 2006 we reported that the council met 15 of the 16 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it was still meeting the same 15 enablers.

1.21 The council was still unable to meet the requirements of enabler E53 as it had failed to consistently submit timely performance measure data to the Department. Staff shortages had been cited as the reason. The council told us it intended to address this in 2007/08.