

Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2007

Greenwich 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 Greenwich 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 11 of the 12 performance measures and all 65 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it achieved a rating of excellent against 9 of the 13 performance measures scored by the Department and met 63 of the 65 enablers. This resulted in the scores reflected below:

Performance Standards score	Excellent
Audit Commission score	4

1.4 The council had experienced IT problems in 2006/07 and, as a result, its performance in processing new claims and changes of circumstances had deteriorated slightly. However, it had successfully used its Business Continuity plan to minimise service disruption to customers and achieved average processing times for 2006/07 of 32 days for new claims and 11 days for changes of circumstances, compared to 30 days and 8 days respectively in 2005/06. The percentage of cases decided within 14 days of receiving all information in 2006/07 had reduced to an average of 80%, compared to an average of 89% in 2005/06.

1.5 The council achieved a rating of excellent against all of the Department's Security performance measures and met all of the 21 Security enablers. It exceeded its 2006/07 targets for interventions and visits and its corporate anti-fraud team successfully applied 45 prosecutions, 43 cautions and 36 administrative penalties in 2006/07.

1.6 Greenwich 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.

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

Source: BFI analysis

Findings

Claims administration

1.8 Greenwich 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)	28	27	35	38	32	3
PM 2: % of new claims outstanding over 50 days	2	12	9	4	6	4
PM 3: % of new claims decided within 14 days of receiving all information	90	81	79	66	80	2
PM 4: % of rent allowance claims paid on time or within 7 days of a decision being made	96	99	95	99	96	4
PM 5: Average time for processing changes of circumstances (days)	9	8	12	17	11	3
PM 6: % of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due is correct	97	98	99	98	98	3

Source: Greenwich 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 5 of the 6 performance measures. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it achieved a rating of excellent against 2 of the 6 performance measures scored by the Department. We also reported that the council met all of the 16 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it now only met 14 enablers. It no longer met enablers E9 and E10, as it had failed to carry out enough quality checks to meet the Department's minimum standard of 4%.

1.10 The council had experienced significant problems with its document management system during August and September 2006 and had introduced a new Benefits IT system in February 2007. It had successfully invoked its Business Continuity plan to

minimise the disruption caused by the loss of the document management system and a strategy had been developed to efficiently introduce the new Benefits IT system. As a result, there was only a slight deterioration in service with the average time taken to process a new claim rising from 29 days to 32 days, and the average time taken to process a change of circumstances rising from 7 days to 11 days.

Security

1.11 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.

1.12 Greenwich 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	12,941	101%	4
PM 11: Data matches resolved within 2 months	Not applicable	100%	4
PM 12: Customers visited	4,410	103%	4
PM 16: Number of successful sanctions per 1,000 caseload	Not applicable	4.28	4

Source: Greenwich council

1.13 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 all 4 performance measures scored by the Department. We also reported that the council met all of the 21 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it continued to meet all 21 enablers.

1.14 The council exceeded its targets for interventions and visits. It had dedicated teams for data matching, interventions and visits which had helped it focus on areas of potential fraud. Its corporate anti-fraud team exceeded its target for sanctions and prosecutions, successfully applying 45 prosecutions, 43 cautions and 36 administrative penalties. The team also continued to work very effectively in partnership with the London borough of Bromley and the Metropolitan police.

User focus

1.15 Greenwich 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	91	86	62	99	84	4
PM 18: % of appeals submitted to the Appeals Service in 4 weeks	83	100	50	92	83	4
PM 19: % of appeals submitted to the Appeals Service in 3 months	100	100	100	92	97	4

Source: Greenwich council

(Full year figures are based on an annual calculation and may not reflect the average of 4 quarters performance)

1.16 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 all of 3 performance measures scored by the Department. We also reported that the council met all of the 12 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it continued to meet all 12 enablers.

1.17 The council had worked in partnership with a range of internal and external stakeholders to improve take-up of HB/CTB and other welfare benefits. It had also embarked upon a programme to improve customer service by consolidating its front line services into 3 *one-stop-shop* centres.

Resource management

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

1.19 The council had comprehensive performance management arrangements in place to effectively monitor its achievement against targets.

1.20 The training needs of staff had been identified through the council's *Performance Review and Development Scheme* and the training of staff on the new Benefits system continued to be the number one priority in 2007/08. The cost of the service had been monitored on a monthly basis and the council planned to conduct an efficiency review of its Benefits service in 2007/08.