



COMMUNITY COMMISSION 04 October 2007

Report of the Assistant Director Customer Services

Housing and Council Tax Benefit Service Performance

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Commission consider the performance of the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Service as at 10 September 2007.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 This report provides information about performance improvement requested by the Community Commission at the meeting of 23 July 2007.
- 2.2 The Benefit Service has put in a place several improvement strategies, to improve benefits performance. The latest improvement strategy was put in place on 21 May 2007 resulting in a restructure within the benefits teams to enable them to tackle a claims backlog over a 1,000 claims and changes caused by the conversion of benefits processing computer system. This was a significant achievement for benefits service, which provided the platform for improved performance.
- 2.3 Since the introduction of the improvement strategy the backlog of claims has been cleared. All claims are either processed or the customer is asked to provide information required to process the claim within 3 to 4 days of the claim being received.
- 2.4 The data in appendix 2 shows the average times for processing new claims, the service is improving through Q1 and Q2 of 2007/08:
 - The average days to process during 2006/07 = 58 days.
 - In Q 1 2007/08 this improved by 10 days to 48.69 days
 - Q2 2007/08 (so far) average time for new claims is 44.16 days.
- 2.5 Processing times for new claims have shown a marked improvement since the backlog was cleared during week commencing 16 July 2007. In the period 23 July 2007 to 9 September 2007 performance has averaged 34.29 days, bringing us closer to our target of 30 days which is the national standard.

- 2.6 The data in appendix 3 shows that we processed all changes in circumstances received on average within 18 days during financial year 2006/07. Performance at the end of quarter 1 2007/08 continues to average 18 days.

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

- 3.1 This current strategy for processing benefit claims continues to deliver performance improvements.
- 3.2 The Customer Services management team have implemented a performance management framework that proactively manages performance. Our Performance Framework has developed and identifies quality and financial improvement targets. It incorporates BVPI compliance and performance standards, CPA assessment scores and service specific local indicators. These local indicators will bring in the expectations of our stakeholders, particularly in verification of claims.
- 3.3 It was reported to the Commission in July 2007 that a major factor affecting claim processing is that only a third of new claims can be processed without having to write to customers to get information required to process their claim. Customers are then allowed a calendar month to supply the information.
- 3.4 Analysis of our new claims shows that The Revenues Service, Derby Direct and other stakeholders including Derby Homes and Housing Options all play a major part in verifying claims and meeting benefit performance targets and customer service levels.

The Benefits section is working with its stakeholders to help improve the numbers of claims we can process first time. Clear service arrangements have been put in place with key stakeholders accepting claim forms, for example Derby Homes.

- 3.5 We have re-shaped our performance management arrangements, which will help us build on the improvements already made. Individual and team productivity measurement is aligned to the volume of benefit claims received and required outputs. Targets are embedded in the daily work routines of all personnel within the Benefits Service.

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Background papers:	Appendix 1 – Implications
List of appendices:	Appendix 2 - BVPI 78a performance
	Appendix 3 – BVPI 78b performance

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

None arising from this report

Legal

The Council has a statutory duty to provide a Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Service under the provisions of the Social Security Act 1986.

Personnel

None arising from this report.

Equalities Impact

Our benefits take up strategy is aimed at encouraging all low income households to apply for housing and council tax benefits with specific targeting of pensioners, low earners and black and minority ethnic communities.

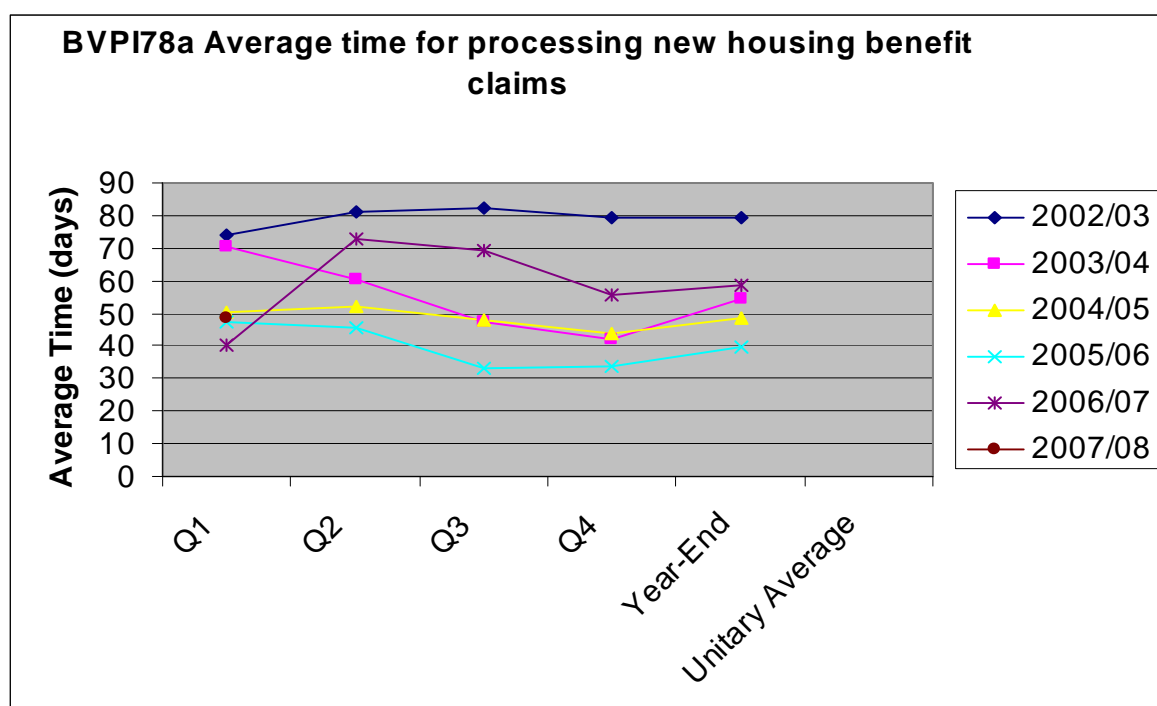
Corporate Priorities

The Council's Corporate Plan 2007-2010 recognises the importance of a high performing and quality Benefits Service in helping meet its priorities of "giving you excellent services and value for money". This report identifies the actions we are taking in the Benefits Service to help achieve this priority.

Appendix 2

BVPI 78a average time taken to process new claims

Comparative Data	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-End
2002/03	74.28	81.08	82.08	79.12	79.25
2003/04	70.31	60.11	47.13	42.06	54.52
2004/05	50.16	51.9	47.72	43.7	48.56
2005/06	47.25	45.42	32.87	33.52	39.59
2006/07	40.33	72.69	69.03	55.94	58.35
2007/08	48.69				



Appendix 3

BVPI78b Average time to process changes of circumstances

Comparative Data	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-End
2002/03	23.26	14.92	25.67	25.36	21.23
2003/04	21.9	12.36	15.37	9.32	14.12
2004/05	11.31	7.7	11.99	12.23	10.2
2005/06	17.96	16.34	13.58	11	14.6
2006/07	13.62	22.95	22.83	15.31	18.28
2007/08	18.42				

