

## Performance Surgery Update Template

### PART A – OVERVIEW

**Title of Indicator: BV79a** - Percentage of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due was correct.

**Portfolio:** Neighbourhood, Social Cohesion & Housing Strategy (Cllr Nath)

**Scrutiny Commission:** Community Commission

**Accountable Officer:** Maurice Curtin

**Assistant Director:** Kath Kennedy

### PART B – PERFORMANCE LEVELS SINCE LAST SURGERY

**1. Has quarterly performance improved, stabilised or worsened since the last Surgery (where applicable)?**

Performance has worsened in Quarter 3. We identified 8 errors in the 125 cases checked. As a result of this the target for 2007-08 has been amended to 96%.

**2. What is the forecast year-end position compared to target and quartile?**

- Target for 2007-08 was 97.5%
- Quartile 3 performance is 93.6%
- Revised end of year forecast is 96%

The target for 2007/08 was set on the assumption that performance would improve as staff became familiar with the new processing software. The target of 97.5% was set to incorporate an element of 'stretch' and was considered achievable

**3. What factors have contributed to these results?**

We are required to check 125 claims per quarter. Each quarter we deal with over 10,000 new claims and changes of circumstance, so the sample is only a small percentage of the work processed.

The benefit scheme is very complex with a high scope for error. There are also interdependencies with Council Tax and discrepancies between the two systems also count as errors. Benefit legislation is regularly changed and there is often little time for training and consolidation.

Although 8 cases were identified as error, in some of the cases the financial impact was very low. The following issues were identified:

- In two of the cases benefit started from the wrong date but the rate of Housing Benefit was correct.

- In two cases the Council Tax Benefit was correct but was not consistent with the Council Tax records. For the purpose of this indicator these must be classed as errors.
- In one case income was calculated over 364 days instead of 365 days for a self-employed claim
- Two cases were non-dependent deductions that were incorrectly calculated
- In one case tax credits were not used to calculate the claim - although they were not declared on the application form, a bank statement with the claim revealed they were in payment, so this classed as error

## **PART C – UPDATE ON ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE LAST SURGERY**

(Please attach updated action plan where relevant.)

### **4. How have actions taken impacted on performance levels?**

We continue to monitor the quality of our work closely and will be working with staff to improve the accuracy rate.

We check between 4% and 10% of all Housing and Council Tax Benefit assessments daily. These checks are carried out before the notification letters are issued to the customers. All payments and letters due are stopped and the claim is corrected. This means that the customer is not aware that an error has been made.

All quality checks where errors are found are passed back through the team leader to the member of staff who made the error. The team leader will go through the error with the member of staff who will correct the error themselves.

We keep records of the types of errors made. We use these records to help monitor trends and provide data to help with training and guidance to staff.

### **5. Do any other actions need to be taken to improve performance?**

Accuracy of benefit claims will be incorporated into the 'getting it right first time' project in benefits. Part of the scope of this project is to improve accuracy levels within benefit processing.

Another project under the heading 'Developing Employees' will look into how we can get the best from our staff and improve the quality of our work.

We need to continue to give support and training to our staff. The information gained from our quality checks is crucial to this. We are currently undertaking training needs assessments and from this will be developing individual training plans. Once the major changes being introduced to Housing Benefit next year have been implemented we will introduce 1 to 1 training sessions, which we have found to be effective

### **6. Any other comments?**

BVPI 79a will not be part of the BVPI suite of indicators in 2008/09.