

Service Report Card 2016-2017

Housing Benefits / CTRS / Financial Assessments Service

Section 1: Brief description of the service

The Housing Benefits / Council Tax Support (CTRS) / Financial Assessments Section is responsible for the “means testing” of entitlement to financial support in respect of liability for Rent, Council Tax and Community Care charges.

It is also responsible for payments to providers in respect of support services.

Annually:-

The section is responsible for the assessment and payment of approximately £54 million in housing benefit to 13,000 tenants.

It awards approximately £17 million in council tax support to 18,000 council tax payers.

It is responsible for the payment of approximately £26 million in respect of approximately 900 people in residential care.

Approximately £7 million is assessed as being due for payment by the individuals in residential care.

Approximately £6 million is paid to support providers for the provision of home care etc.

Approximately £2 million is paid directly to 215 individuals receiving care to arrange their own care provision in the form of “direct payments”.

It also has a role in the recovery of sums due to the authority in respect of overpaid benefit and community care charges.

Approximately £1.3 million overpaid housing benefit is recovered from claimants.

Approximately £1.4m is recovered from those who are assessed to pay towards their home care and £0.7 million from those assessed to pay towards their residential care.

Section 2: Overall Summary of Performance for 2015-16 Financial Year

The teams' focus continues to be upon the prompt and accurate assessment of entitlements to benefit and the collection of liabilities where appropriate.

The teams continue to provide a quality and where possible personal service to its customers. Waiting times, turnaround times, complaints etc. are low level particularly in consideration of the level of assessments carried out.

In 2015/16, 102,000 new claims or adjustments to existing housing benefit and council tax support claims

were actioned. There were a total of 21 local authority errors resulting in an overpayment where the claimant wasn't a contributor. As a result of these errors the amount overpaid (and hence not recoverable) was only 0.01% of the total money paid out.

The financial assessments team has undergone a substantial review following a restructure and the loss of several senior staff but continues to provide a quality service.

**Section 3:
Service Priorities 2016-17**

Priority	Actions to deliver priority	Officer Responsible	Timescale	What will be different? Measures and/or Outcomes
<p>1:- To continue to ensure entitlements are calculated and awarded in a timely and accurate manner in accordance with current legislation.</p> <p>To minimise the risk of fraud and error with the benefits / assessments systems.</p> <p>- To manage the revised approach of the Financial Assessment Team and maintain a high level of service following major administrative changes.</p> <p>- To provide more and better information this will be accessible via the internet.</p>	<p>To apply existing policies and procedures. To monitor and manage performance.</p> <p>To verify all relevant information as determined by a risk assessment process.</p> <p>Monitor outcomes following the revision of working practices.</p> <p>Continue to review provision.</p>	<p>Kevin Davies</p> <p>Kevin Davies</p> <p>Kevin Davies</p> <p>Kevin Davies</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Turnaround times and accuracy / error rates.</p> <p>Error / overpayment rates</p> <p>Monitor turnaround times and accuracy rates.</p> <p>Continuous review of provisions / usage / form availability etc.</p>

2:- Maximise benefit overpayment recovery rates on a regular basis to ensure prompt and efficient recovery of debts.	Monthly performance monitoring. Application of recovery policies and procedures.	Kevin Davies	Ongoing	Monitor recovery rates.
3: To ensure the effective and efficient introduction of Universal Credit from the authority`s perspective and help those entitled to Universal Credit to make claims and manage their budget effectively.	Administer Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with DWP for the provision of Digital Support and Budget advice for Universal Credit claimants.	Kevin Davies	Annually, to be reviewed for 2017/18.	Utilise the monitoring arrangements within the MoU.
4: To provide support and advice on changes as a result of welfare reform.	To act as a conduit for information both for internal and external partners.	Kevin Davies	Ongoing	User feedback

Section 4: Service Performance Quadrant 2016-17

Progress on Service Priorities:

Accuracy rates are now actual figures (previously they were based on sample testing) Error rates are minimal taking into account the large number of assessments made.

Processing times remain good, with approximately a 5 day turnaround (which includes weekends so is actually less in real terms)

The 8.4 and 8.7 figures for quarter two will reduce towards the end of the year when “uprating” changes are done which generally have a one day turnaround time.

Overpayment recovery rates appear low, but it must be noted that much recovery is done by deduction from ongoing benefits. Therefore the weekly amounts which can be recovered are low and take time for repayments to be made.

An example of this would be an overpayment of £1,000 recovered by a deduction of £5 per week would be recovered in full in four years (so a recovery rate of 100%), but the in-year recovery rate (which is the measure here) would be 25%.

For information, measures for the Financial assessment service are currently under consideration.

Measure	2014-15 Actual (Full Year)	2015-16 Actual (Full Year)	Comparative Performance	2015-16 Qtr. 2 (cumulative)	2016-17 Qtr. 2 (cumulative)
Service Measure 1: Benefits accuracy rate % (Priority 1 and 2)	99.92%	99.95%	N/A	99.95%	99.90%
Service Measure 2: Speed of processing times (Priority 1)	5.5	4.8	N/A	8.4	8.7
Service measure 3: Benefits overpayments recovery rate (Priority 2)	35%	35%	N/A	21%	23%
Corporate measure (CM01): a) Number of transactional services fully web enabled b) Number of transactional services partially web enabled			If available		

**Section 5:
Financial Quadrant 2016-17:**

Summary of financial performance:

Benefit costs are underspent due mainly to additional “new burdens” funding from the DWP. These funds are paid to address additional work caused by changes to the Housing Benefit regulations. These funds are not built into the budget due to their “unpredictable” nature. Generally changes can be dealt with without substantial additional resources being required despite the additional funding.

Financial Assessment costs are over budget mainly due the additional cost of a visiting officer taken on to improve efficiency in acquiring the information required to determine financial assessments. The cost of this person was shared with the Social Services department. It should also be noted that staffing levels were cut drastically last year so some revisiting of staffing levels was inevitable.

Measure	2014-15 Actual (Full Year)	2015-16 Actual (Full Year)	2016-17 Qtr. 1 (projected to year end)
Corporate Measure (CM02): % revenue expenditure within budget - Benefits	13% underspend	11% underspend	16% underspend
Revenue Budget £434,588	£373,569	£384,614	£366,758
	n/a		£NIL

Corporate Measure (CM03): Amount of FFP savings at risk		£NIL	
Measure	2014-15 Actual (Full Year)	2015-16 Actual (Full Year)	2016-17 Qtr. 1 (projected to year end)
Corporate Measure (CM02): % revenue expenditure within budget-Financial assessments Revenue Budget £321,317	6% underspend £419,504	3% overspend £330,476	8% overspend £347,097
Corporate Measure (CM03): Amount of FFP savings at risk	n/a	£NIL	£NIL

**Section 6:
Employee Quadrant 2016-17**

Corporate Measure (CM04): Average FTE (full time equivalent) working days lost due to sickness absence

Measure	2014-15 Actual (Full Year)	2015-16 Actual (Full Year)	2015-16 Qtr. 1 (cumulative)	2016-17 Qtr. 1 (cumulative)
Service: Benefits/Financial Assessments	5.5 days	5.0 days	0.3 days	2.1 days
Total Service FTE days lost in the period	301	252	14	103
Directorate: Corporate Services	8.0 days	6.0 days	1.3 days	2.1 days
Council	9.4 days	9.7 days	2.2 days	2.4 days

	2015-16 Actual (Full Year)	2015-16 Qtr. 1 (cumulative)	2016-17 Qtr. 1 (cumulative)
Corporate Measure (CM11): Staff engagement Measure	New	New	0
Corporate Measure (CM05): % of staff who have received a performance appraisal during 2016-17 (Target 100%) Number of staff who have received a performance appraisal during 2016-17	0	0	0
Corporate Measure (CM06): Number of employees left due to unplanned departures	2	0	0

Section 7: Customer

Summary of customer performance:

Customer satisfaction is not formally measured, however during 2015/16/ there were only 2 complaints. This small number of complaints as a proportion of the number of claimants / transactions is an indication of customer satisfaction.

Measure	2015-16 Actual (Full Year)	2015-16 Qtr. 2 (cumulative)	2016-17 Qtr. 2 (cumulative)
Corporate Measure (CM07): Total number of complaints			
Internal	2	1	0
External (from the public)			
Corporate Measure (CM08): Total number of compliments			
Internal	6	2	1
External (members of the public)			
Corporate Measure (CM09): customer satisfaction measure/s	0	0	

