APPENDIX 1

Rossendalealive
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Benefits Service Operational Plan 2005-06

Original Report: February 2005

Updated: September 2005

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1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Scope

This is the Benefits Service Operational Plan for 2005-06 and is designed to fulfil several objectives:

❖   It sets out the service's strategic, business and operational objectives for the coming year;

❖   Summarises its policy and vision;

❖   Assesses the operational resources required to meet its objectives;

❖   Details performance targets and achievements;

❖   Describes improvement activities that have been identified;

❖   And provides a medium for communicating each of these to executives, managers, members, sponsors and staff.

In addition, there are other challenges facing the service to which it must respond to, these include: -

❖   Major changes to the service over the coming year resulting from its integral role in the roll-out of the Council's Customer Service Strategy. The intention of this is the streamlining of the "front-end" and "back-end" elements of the service in order to provide a better quality, more responsive and effective customer experience.

❖   Ensuring that improvement actions are identified and implemented to respond to the recommendations of Benefit Fraud Inspectorate report.

In particular, the plan will: -

Support the Council's Mission to achieve '8 x 8 x 2008';

❖   underpin Rossendale's Vision for the Benefits Service – '*by 2008 to provide a Benefits Service that meets national standards and provides a high quality customer experience*';

❖   deliver the Corporate Key Improvement Priority for the Benefits Service *'To improve upon the 2003 BFI assessment of Revenues and Benefits';*

❖   be an integral part of Rossendale's 'Golden Thread';

❖   ensure that performance is continuously improved through the effective use of information technology, resources and external partnerships;

This Plan has been produced by the Benefits Service and will be the subject of ratification by Lead Members, the Chief Executive and his Senior Management Team.

The plan will be communicated via briefing sessions, briefing notes, newsletters, and e-mails to the following stakeholders:

- ❖ Council Members

- ❖ All officers and departments working directly or indirectly with the Benefits Service, in particular the revenues service and customer access managers

- ❖ Corporate Complaints

- ❖ News Centre

- ❖ Internal Audit

- ❖ Finance

- ❖ Payroll Dept.

- ❖ Jobcentre Plus

- ❖ Pensions Service

- ❖ Rent Service

- ❖ District Audit

- ❖ CAB / Advice Agencies and other advice providers

1.2   Service Description

The Council is responsible for the administration of Housing and Council Tax Benefits for citizens of RBC.

Administration of the Council's Housing Benefits and Council Tax Benefits is undertaken by the Councils Benefits Service.

The scope of the service includes assessment, verification and payment of all HB/CTB benefit claims received by the Council and involves processing of new claims, changes in circumstances, reviews and interventions.

Customer access to the service is currently achieved by a number of channels: -

- ❖ telephony direct to the back office,

- ❖ 'walk-in' facilities in the Town Hall and Neighbourhood Offices,

- ❖ electronically via the internet or email

- ❖ by the postal service.

2005-06 will see the introduction of One-Stop-Shops and Telephone Contact Centres into Rossendale, and which will provide enhanced front-line services for housing benefit customers.

1.3   Review and Scrutiny

It is recommended that: -

- ❖ the service reports on it's performance to Committee every quarter against its objectives and action plans as set out in it's annual operational service plan.

- ❖ that Committee scrutinise the performance of the service through this quarterly reporting mechanism.

- ❖ that Committee scrutinise the services Operational Plan on an annual basis to verify that its objectives and plans are achieving continuous improvement.

- ❖ that Committee scrutinise the Service's Improvement Plan once complete.

- ❖ that the Service Policy Statement is reviewed annually and approved by Committee.

1.4   IT Systems

The service uses SX3's iWorld system, which is designed specifically of for the support of Local Authority Revenues and Benefits Services.

There is no Document Imaging System (DIP) available within RBC. Lack of DIP facilities is limiting workflow and work throughput performance reporting, planning and improvement management.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE

2.1 HB/CTB Policy Statement

Rossendale Borough Council's policy for HB/CTB vision, objectives and Performance Standards is set out in its document entitled ***Policy Statement for Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit*** which contains a clear statement of intent. (See Appendix 9.1)

2.2 Declaration and Vision

The RBC Benefits Service vision is

'by 2008 to provide a Benefits Service that meets national standards and provides a high quality customer experience'

2.3 Service Objectives

Objective 1

Achieve Service Vision

The Service Vision reflects Rossendale Borough Council's Corporate Objective (Quality Services for Local People) to *' improve the service from poor to fair to good in 12 months'*.

The Council's Housing and Council Tax Benefit policy sets out how the service aims to be: -

- ❖ Customer Focussed and accessible to everyone in the community

- ❖ Modern and efficient

- ❖ Speedy and accurate

- ❖ Effective in reducing the risk and level of errors

- ❖ Effective in reducing the risk and level of fraud in order to safeguard public funds

- ❖ Proactive in ensuring claimants receive the benefits to which they are entitled

- ❖ Positive in minimising the barriers to work

- ❖ Effective in supporting claimants to live in decent housing

- ❖ Determined that the occurrence of overpayments is minimised

- ❖ Effective in recovering overpayments

- ❖ Diligent in investigating and punishing fraud

❖ Strong in encouraging a positive culture of good performance and staff development within the Service

The ultimate objective of achieving all of these aims and objectives is that the Benefits Service will be recognised as one of best in country, and will be able to demonstrate clear evidence to support this..

Objective 2

Achieve Best Value Performance Targets

In 2003, the service achieved a 'poor' rating in its Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of 2003. The service is aiming to achieve a 'fair to good' ranking in the CPA Assessment in 2005. To do this, the Benefits Service KPI targets will reflect those specified in the Performance Standards and these will be set out in the plans and stepped improvement targets

Objective 3

Support the Corporate Customer Services Strategy

Current evidence shows that the Benefits Service BVPI performance in processing speeds meet standards and this is a central element of the customer experience. However, existing facilities for customers to access the service whether by walk-up, telephony, postal or web based are limited and in need of improvement in line with Rossendale's corporate customer access strategy.

The service will be re-organised around the needs of the customer and be accessible to everyone in the community in accordance with the Council's Customer Service Strategy.

The Service objectives fully supports RBC's corporate "8 x 8 vision" and it's Customer Services Strategy which is planned to be implemented during 2005-06. The intentions of this strategy include: -

❖ To provide excellent customer service to **all** customers

❖ Putting customers **first** at every point of contact and increasing first point of contact resolution

❖ Services designed for customers and not for convenience of service providers

❖ To help facilitate a cultural change within the organisation to become more customer focused

❖ These aims are underpinned by basic principles which are that: -

❖ we will treat every customer equally, whatever their age, ethnic origin, colour, creed, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation;

❖ we recognise that our customers cannot go elsewhere for most of our services;

❖ we will take responsibility for meeting needs;

❖ we will offer choice wherever possible;

❖ we will be efficient and effective providing value for money services;

❖ feedback provides the opportunity for review and improvement;

❖ every employee has a part to play.

Objective 4

Improving Financial Efficiency

The Benefits Service Administers approximately £16mm of Housing and Council Tax Benefit per year. Rossendale Borough Council takes the security of its Benefit Administration very seriously and is committed to paying people accurately and on-time whilst preventing fraud and error at each stage of the process.

At present, Council expenditure on administrative costs across the Revenues and Benefits service is £1.76 million. Current salary overheads including agency fees account for £1.0 million. The services are supported by grant income of over £0.57 million which reduces the net expenditure to £1.19 million. Clearly, this leaves the Council vulnerable to a sharp increase in costs if the grant funding finishes or is withdrawn.

In line with Gershon principals, the Council has been investigating the development of a public / public partnership in order to gain advantage from the strategic investments, business transformation expertise and existing infrastructure of a larger partner in order to affect a fast track, cost-effective transformation programme.

Objective 5

Compliance with Central Government Performance Standards

The service is provided in accordance with the Performance Standards set out by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

The quality and performance of the Councils HB/CTB services are monitored by central government through: -

❖ Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

❖ Benefits Fraud Inspectorate (BFI)

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate is responsible for reporting on the performance of Local Authority Benefits Services across the country. BFI measure and report on performance every year as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

Although the Best Value Performance Indicators provide a regular measurement of Performance, it is the Performance Standards that are the benchmark with which the BFI undertake their inspections. As a consequence, compliance with Performance Standards is a key business priority for the Benefits Service.

The Benefits Service completed its first full self-assessment of Performance Standards as part of the recent BFI Inspection in September 2004. The outcome of the self assessment was that the service only meets 46% of National Standards against. A score of 80% is necessary to achieve "fair to good" CPA rating.

The table below shows the self-assessment scoring of each of the different modules:

	Standard Score	LA Standard self-assessment score	Percentage
Strategic Management	178	51	29%
Customer Services	74	33	45%
Processing of Claims	91	33	36%
Working with Landlords	24	8	33%
Internal Security	31	21	68%
Counter-Fraud	89	60	67%
Overpayments	56	42	75%
Total	543	248	46%

The HB/CTB Performance Standards were first published by DWP in April 2003. They are revised in consultation with the local government associations on an on-going basis. The standards at that time covered the seven key areas of benefits administration:

- ❖ Claim Processing
- ❖ Customer Standards
- ❖ Strategic Management
- ❖ Working with Landlords
- ❖ Internal Security
- ❖ Counter Fraud
- ❖ Overpayments

The standards provide a self-assessment tool against which authorities can measure their service and also provide a tool by which BFI can make a judgement by any local authority at a point in time.

Objective 6

Forward Planning

This Operational Plan is part of a suite of plans which are already in place or being developed to deliver a more effective; customer focused Benefits Service operated by highly skilled, knowledgeable staff using state of the art information technology.

The Benefits Service Improvement Plan is the cornerstone for driving through long term sustainable improvements and was initiated in February 2005. The objectives of this plan are drive forward improvements: -

❖ against the gaps identified in the 2004 BFI self assessment

❖ in response to the CPA

❖ against internal audit recommendations

The plan will be reviewed against the new set of National Standards which were recently published.

This Improvement Plan will ultimately underpin all of the service improvements and objectives identified in this document. It covers all aspects of National Standards and hence includes, among others, improvement actions against: -

❖ Strategic management

❖ Training and Development Plan

❖ Operational Procedures Improvement Action Plan

❖ Overpayment Improvement Action Plan

❖ Stakeholder Communications Plan

❖ Landlord Communication Strategy

The Service will be kept under review so that continuous improvement becomes a reality.

Objective 7

Security and prevention of fraud and error

Benefit Fraud is estimated to cost the country in excess of £4 billion per year. Rossendale Borough Council fully supports the Government's Strategy to reduce the levels of fraud in the system.

The Benefits Service will continue to prevent fraud from entering the system. This will be facilitated by the implementation of the Verification Framework in 2005. Although the Verification Framework is likely to affect service delivery by slowing processing time, it will be an integral part of the Council's Counter Fraud effort. The Verification Framework will significantly reduce the number of fraudulent claims entering the system and the Benefits Counter Fraud Operational Plan will provide the detail of how the fraud will be dealt with.

Rossendale Borough Council considers Benefit Fraud to be very serious and to this end the Council will seek maximum punishment against those it finds committing benefit fraud.

The Council also has a responsibility to reduce the levels of error in the system and this will be done by improving the level of checking currently undertaken. More effective checking will provide the basis for a detailed Training and Development Plan on a group and individual basis.

By improving the levels of accuracy in its assessments, the Benefits Service will continue to reduce its costs by avoiding the need to do things twice.

Objective 8

Staff development

The development and improvement of the Benefits Service is influenced by the resources it has available and none are as important as the staff delivering the service. Rossendale Benefits Service has a committed, dedicated and knowledgeable work force providing fast, accurate and effective benefits service delivery. The development of these officers will guarantee that the performance remains at the level it does now.

All officers will be provided with S.M.A.R.T key work objectives so they understand what is required of them and how their work and performance fits in with the service and corporate objectives. As part of the 'Golden Thread' principle, all staff will have an individual development plan which will highlight these key work objectives. This development plan will also provide each officer with an opportunity to record requests for additional skills or training as well as highlighting issues or concerns.

On a service-wide basis, a number of improved disciplines will be adopted and these will underpin and support the delivery of key work objectives. These initiatives will include:

Initiative	Detail
Regular Management Meetings	These will take place once a week and will cover specific issues including performance against targets set in this plan, work in progress, resources and sickness
Regular Team Meetings	Team Meetings will take place at least once a month. The meetings will have a standing agenda to cover specific issues including performance, work in progress and sickness
Annual Appraisals	This will take place once a year and will review performance, issues and concerns. It will also provide details of training required and set the key work objectives for the forthcoming year
Regular One-to-Ones	One-to-Ones will take place at least once a quarter and should be complimentary to an annual appraisal
Communication	There are a number of mechanisms already in

	place that facilitate good communication but these need to be improved. Team Meetings, One-to-Ones and Appraisals will be used to communicate key performance related issues. There will also be regular news items in the corporate newsletters reporting on topical issues and light hearted subjects including social events
Away Days	Team Leaders and Teams will be given the opportunity to spend half a day away from the work-place to discuss work related issues, ideas etc. These will engender a team ethic in all officers and help improve co-operation and support.
Team Building	Team Building is an important element in maintaining good staff morale. Ideas will be considered for team Building initiatives both inside and outside the work place.

Objective 9

Managing Performance

It is essential that a Performance Management Framework is designed and implemented for the Benefits Service.

A suggested framework is defined within the Benefits Service improvement Plan.

In summary it should consist of cyclical

- ❖ Performance measurement
- ❖ Performance Review
- ❖ Improvement planning
- ❖ Actions

Measurements should include: -

- ❖ Work throughput
- ❖ Backlogs
- ❖ Speed of processing
- ❖ Quality of work
- ❖ Resource costs

Reviews and action planning should take place at: -

- ❖ Service level (management meeting)
- ❖ Team level (team meetings)
- ❖ Individual (one-to-ones and appraisals)

Communication and feedback should be both upwards and downwards between management and individual staff members.

Objective 10

Service Transformation

Many Councils now use Document Image Processing (DIP) as a tool to improve service effectiveness and efficiency.

Many of the actions required by RBC to achieve compliance to National Standards require DIP.

The proposed partnership should provide DIP facilities as an integral part of the contract which will enable many of the gaps highlighted in the BFI assessment to be closed as a matter of course.

If the partnership does not go ahead then RBC need to re-evaluate how they can achieve the improvement actions that are dependent on DIP facilities within RBC.

The areas that DIP provides solutions are: -

❖ Performance management, specifically around work throughput and backlog management

❖ Process optimisation and workflow management

❖ Organisational design and development, specifically around BPR.

Objective 11

Performance targets for 2005-06

The key objectives of the service are: -

❖ Achieve and maintain a level 4 score from its Comprehensive performance assessment by 2008

❖ To attain and maintain top quartile BVPIs from 2005-06 onwards.

The following table shows the key performance indicators targets for 2005-06. Further details can be found on the Council's Best Value pages of the intranet.

The objective is to reach top quartile performance by the end of 2005-06.

BVPI	Indicator	04/05
BVPI78a	Average # of days to process new benefit claims from receipt	30
BVPI78b	Average # of days to process a change in circumstance	7
BVPI79a	% Correct	99+
BVPI79b*	% of overpayments recovered in the year	55+

3.   OPERATIONAL REVIEW OF 2004-05

3.1   Background

Running into 2004-05, the Benefits Service faced a very difficult and challenging year.

The service was failing and staff were faced with trying to improve performance against a back-drop of low morale, poor infrastructure and little investment. The performance and strategic position of the benefits Service was crystallised in the poor CPA assessment of 2003. This was a defining moment and provided a major impetus for improvement in the performance of the Benefits Service. This improvement is ongoing and a lot more work is required. However, the Council is now confident of its ability to plan, implement and deliver a modern, customer focused, and cost-effective Benefits Service.

3.2   Performance Improvements

Despite the fact that the service began the year weak in terms of compliance with Performance Standards, the outturn of the Best Value Performance Indicators has improved dramatically over the past year. This is even more remarkable given that 50% of assessment staff are new and have only been recruited since April 2004.

A backlog of correspondence and claims had built up and the use of a performance management model provided by the DWP Help Team assisted in isolating this backlog ready for clearance. This model allowed for resource constraints to be factored in to the planning process and provided predictions on the likely clearance time. The table below demonstrates the week-on-week improvement in this area.

3.2.1   New Claims

The processing of new claims has improved steadily throughout the year. The average time to process new claims has decreased significantly and the percentage of new claims processed within 14 days has increased dramatically.

Analytical work was being undertaken during the year on system reports to seek to evidence that the number of days taken to process claims was actually lower again than was being reported. The discrepancy was due to staff misclassifying claims and entering erroneous dates on iWorld. This was rectified during the year.

This table shows the improvement in new claims processing performance throughout the year.

BVPI 78a New Claims	Outturn 2003-04	Outturn 2004-05
Average Time for processing New Claims	62 days	43 days

New Claims	Outturn 2003-04	Outturn 2004-05
Percentage of claims processed within 14 Days of receipt of all information	59%	82%

3.2.2   *Changes in Circumstances*

The time taken to process changes in circumstances has halved in the past year and the performance is now upper quartile and within the target set in Performance Standards. This figure performance is despite the fact that Rossendale's Benefits Service received a large volume of changes in circumstances in the lead up to the start of the year related to Pension Credits. This large volume of changes was never planned to be sent by the Pensions Service and was not anticipated by Rossendale.

BVPI 78b Changes in Circumstances	Outturn 2003-04	Outturn 2004-05
Average Time for processing changes in Circumstances	15 days	7 days

3.2.3   *Accuracy*

This Performance Indicator has remained constant. At the beginning of 2004-05 most effort was being concentrated on clearing the backlog of outstanding work and this was completed when new staff were recruited. Unfortunately, the corresponding level of management checks could not be maintained. Management checks are now back up to the Pre-April 2004 levels and we expect this performance indicator to improve over the next 12 months.

Percentage of Accuracy Calculation	Outturn 2003-04	Outturn 2004-05
Percentage of Accuracy Calculation	98%	98%

3.2.4 Overpayments

The performance for Overpayment Recovery for 2003-04 was bottom quartile. The main reason for this was due to insufficient resources on the team responsible. Although still under resourced the new Team Leader has introduced other methods of benefit recovery, which is hoped will bare fruition over the next 12 months. The authority has recently been made aware that our software used to provide the overpayment figures has been reporting wrongly. It had previously been reporting overpayments written off as recovered and so the percentage of benefit recovered was showing at a reasonable figure. The software company have now fixed this problem and we along with all the other authorities using SX3 have had to amend our figures, hence the dramatic drop in recovery for 2004/04. It is expected that now reporting correctly we will be able to monitor and improve this figure.

BVPI 79b	Outturn 2003-04	Outturn 2004-05
Percentage of Recoverable Overpayments	46%	29%

3.3 Operational initiatives

3.3.1 Management and Staff consolidation

There have been many changes during the past year. As well as having to report to the ODPM Improvement Board, the Benefits Service has had to withstand a number of personnel changes including recruiting a temporary Benefits Manager and a Lead Training Officer. In addition some experienced assessment officers have moved from the Authority and these have been replaced since April 2004. All of the current assessment staff have been employed by Rossendale's Benefits Service for less than two years. As a consequence, the past twelve months have been used to consolidate on existing strengths including day-to-day performance.

3.3.2 Service Improvement Plan

A Service Improvement Plan has been produced which will eliminate the gaps and respond to recommendations contained in: -

- o BFI recommendations (May 2005)

- o CPA report (2003)

- o Internal Audit

❖ **Performance Standards**

This Service Improvement Plan will ensure that RBC meet the minimum Performance Standards of 80% by end 2004-05.

❖ **VF compliance planning**

A Verification Framework specialist has supported Rossendale Borough Council in developing a VF compliance and implementation plan.

❖ **Resource planning**

Resource planning has been initiated based on work throughput modelling which will enable management of peaks and troughs at both front-office and back-office levels.

❖ **Customer Services strategy and planning**

The Head of e-Government and Customer Services has designed and is in process of driving through a new customer services strategy, model and organisational structure.

3.3.3 Partnership working

Rossendale Borough Council has recognised that it needs to rapidly improve its Benefits Service. This will be done by delivering a number of Key Objectives. One of the key objectives is the commitment to work with a partner organisation. This partner organisation will provide the skills, resources and infrastructure to bring about the required improvement.

4. FUTURE CHALLENGES

4.1 Operational initiatives

In addition to the objectives discussed in the earlier section of this document, there a number of additional challenges facing the Benefits Service. This includes: -

4.1.1 Changing Legislative and Regulatory requirements

The Service will have to meet changing central government dictates: -

❖ Modified National Standards from May 2005

❖ Stricter Reviews and Interventions targets from April 2005

❖ Potential revised BVPIs

4.1.2 Supporting Rossendale Borough Councils' Customer Services Strategy

This will result in: -

❖ Business Process Reengineering of front-office and back-office delineation.

❖ Staff support and communication through this transition.

❖ New Contact Centre and One-Stop-Shop technology

❖ Developing improved and consistent customer facing skills

4.1.3 Proposed Housing Stock Transfer

RBC is planning a Stock Transfer of a large part of its housing stock. This will have a direct impact on the processing of Housing Benefit Claims as the processing of private landlord tenant claims are significantly more complex than Council tenant claims.

This is due to be effective in April 2006 and will result in the need to review resources required by the service.

5.   BENEFIT SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Benefit Service Improvement Plan has been developed to meet the gaps identified between the service and the Performance Standards. It also incorporates CPA 2003, Internal Audit 2004 and BFI 2004 recommendations. (See appendix 9.2)

6.   WORK PLANNING

6.1   Resource planning

The resource plan will be completed that includes an assessment of resource requirements for: -

❖ New claims

❖ Changes in circumstances

❖ Reviews and Interventions

❖ Enquiries (OSS, LD, RSL, etc)

❖ Liaison

❖ On-going validation and integrity of the database through thorough scrutiny of system reports to ensure that the following are effectively managed:

   o Regulation 91 cases

   o Suspended cases

   o Incomplete claims

   o Overpayment classification

   o Defective cases

   o Exception reports including for BVPIs

   o Pending cases

   o Significant age reports (reviews of dependent status)

      o   Rent Officer decisions approaching 52 weeks old

      o   Cases where HB is in payment but CTB is not

❖ Checking

❖ Appeals and Complaints

❖ Visiting teams

6.3	Performance Management

Performance Management is important to support continued service performance, staff development and the Departments drive to achieve Investor in People (IiP) status.

A structured series of meetings occur each week at prescribed intervals. Information from these is fed into the weekly Benefits Management Team meeting, which in turn is cascaded down to staff. A monthly staff meeting is held where staff are informed of, and can raise any, issues which need to be discussed. Staff are regularly kept up to date on all Corporate issues via a news sheet (grapevine) and a daily e-mail (e-vine), sent by the councils communications office.

Staff receive a one-to-one session with their manager at least once a quarter and discuss progress of their Personal Development Plan that is reviewed annually, in conjunction with their appraisal. Each member of staff is focused on their role while understanding how their role contributes to the overall service objectives. The overall requirements of staff are reflected in the agreed Training Plan.

Unsatisfactory performance is tackled through the one-to-one process, increased monitoring of individuals, staff training and development. If performance does not improve further action is taken in accordance with disciplinary procedures.

The City Council's performance management framework ensures that the Service Action Plans for each service area conform to requirements and are explicit in how each service is contributing to the corporate strategy of the Borough Council.

6.4	Backlog Management

In dealing with any backlogs of work in the future the service will operate the following principles:

❖ We will retain sufficient resources to maintain incoming work

❖ We will ring fence the backlog

❖ We will assign specific management responsibility for the clearance of the backlog

❖ We will assign specific management responsibility for the monitoring of pending

❖ We will assign specific resources to working on the backlog (this will include use of additional resources where appropriate)

❖ The oldest items in the backlog will be cleared first

❖ We will agree a maximum volume of urgent customer contacts, which will be prioritised

❖ We will set SMART weekly targets for the reduction of the backlog

❖ We will review progress against targets weekly

❖ We will communicate progress against targets to all staff and key stakeholders

6.5 Performance Objectives

The objective is to at least maintain present performance levels while looking at partnership working.   As staff resources are low ensure staff are utilised to gain greatest benefit.

The objective will be to improve work throughput performance and processing quality. The Authority is looking at Partnership working as a way of achieving this.

A service improvement plan has already been developed which encompasses improvements to all aspects of the service. Resources permitting, the actions within this report will be prioritised and actioned accordingly.

6.6 Management Controls

There are a number of control mechanisms in place that will provide management assurance that key work objectives are being met. These include:

❖ Weekly monitoring of the throughput of work against the targets set out in this plan.

❖ Individual and Group monitoring and reporting

❖ Identification of errors and corrective action where appropriate through improved management checks

❖ Communication of throughput and error analysis to staff, team managers and senior managers

❖ Action Plans to be implemented where appropriate

❖ Review and Evaluation of all control mechanisms

6.7   Peaks and Trough Management

The Benefits Service has recognised that work throughput projections and operational resource planning must account for peaks and troughs of incoming work and staff availability. The existing operational plan accounts for planned leave during school holidays, the impact of year-end processes, RSL rent increases at year -start and the phasing out of renewal claims.

We will improve this work throughput modeling to better take account of predictable changes affecting:

❖ public sector occupational pensions

❖ taxable income

❖ pension and family tax credit up-rating

❖ predictive data on how significant ages will affect processing from dependent to non-dependent status and the impact of school leavers

❖ established patterns of turnover in the local housing market

❖ the likely impact of stock transfer in the year ahead.

7. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

The indicators below represent the key indicators which are reviewed on a monthly basis. Movement in these indicators will give an indication of overall performance and whether remedial action is required.

DESCRIPTION	PERFORMANCE			TARGET 2005/06	TARGET 2006/07	TARGET 2007/08
	2002/03	2003/04	Target 2004/05			
BVPI 78a – Average time to process new claims (days)	Actual 88.53	Actual 61.47	Actual 43.49	39	36	33
BVPI 78b – Average time to process change in circumstances 9days)	Actual 23.14	Actual 14.93	Actual 7.44	9	9	8.5
BVPI 79a – Cases processed correctly	Actual 98.20%	Actual 98%	Actual 98%	99%	99%	99%
BVPI 79b – Recovery of overpaid benefit	Actual 49.76%	Actual 45.85%	Actual 29%	35%	40%	45%
New Overpayment BVPI's from April 2005 BVPI 79b (i) - The amount of Housing Benefit overpayments (HB) recovered during the period being reported on as a percentage of HB deemed recoverable overpayments during that period.				There is no historical data for these new performance indicators.		
BVPI 79b (ii) – HB overpayments recovered during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the period plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the period.				It is therefore proposed to review these in October 2005 allowing six month's data		
BVPI 79b(iii) – Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments written off during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the period, plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the period.				to be analysed. At this point targets will be set.		

9.   KEY CONTACTS

SERVICE MANAGEMENT TEAM		TELEPHONE	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Head of e-Government and Customer Services	Helen Lockwood	01706 044799	helenlockwood@rossendalebc.gov.uk
Benefits Service Manager	Anita Tittensor	01706 244 639	anitatittensor@rossendalebc.gov.uk