

Benefits administration

Housing benefit and council tax benefit

1. The gross administration cost per case

What the indicator reports

This indicator shows the average administration cost in each council in dealing with housing benefit and council tax applications. The indicator allows costs to be more directly comparable by weighting the caseload mix using the housing and council tax benefit subsidy distribution formula.

Points to bear in mind

A council may choose to provide a high level of advice and counselling to claimants. The costs of such services will add to the cost to be reported in this indicator.

Benefit claims may be more numerous or more complicated in areas where:

- there is a high proportion of people who live at two or more addresses during the year
- there is a high proportion of applications from people in privately rented accommodation, for which the application process is more complex
- there are more people in shared accommodation, for which the application process is also more complex.

In these cases, the time taken to collect all the information needed to process a claim may be longer. This will be reflected in the costs of providing the service.

2. The time for processing applications from the date of receipt of the application to the posting of the notification of the outcome.

Type of claim	Number of claims	Average time to process
new claims		
notifications of changes of circumstances		
	Number of claims	% processed on time
renewal claims		

What the indicator reports

This indicator shows the average time taken to process applications for different types of benefits. The indicator aims to drive forward improvements in housing and council tax benefit service delivery by encouraging councils to provide a faster, more accurate, more secure service which is better integrated with other benefit providers.

Points to bear in mind

For part a) the time taken to process a case covers the period from when the council has all the information needed to determine the claim, to the date of notifying the applicant.

Benefits administration

Part b) records the period from the council receiving the application to the date a decision is made. All days are counted, not just working days.

3. **a) The percentage of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due was correct on the basis of the information available at the determination, for a sample of cases checked post-determination**
- b) Does the council have a written security strategy for combating fraud and error which is communicated regularly to all staff and the whole of which is demonstrably acted upon by management and staff on a continuous basis**
- c) The percentage of recoverable overpayments (excluding Council Tax Benefit) that were recovered in the year**

What the indicator reports

Checking a percentage of benefit calculations for accuracy is considered to be good benefits practice. The first part of this indicator reports the proportion of benefit cases that were calculated correctly.

Part b) shows whether the council has a written security strategy for combating fraud and error, and part c) reports the percentage of recoverable overpayments that were recovered in the year.

Points to bear in mind

For part a) councils require to sample at least 500 cases through out the year ensuring that different types of claims are selected. A sampling methodology to select cases should also be in place. Councils with very small caseloads should sample 20% of the caseload in order to provide reasonable confidence limits.

Good management practice requires councils to have a written security strategy which will assist in combating fraud and error. The security strategy will commit a council to having at least two of the following sets of activities:

- operate the Department for Work and Pensions verification framework
- operate a policy for prosecution of benefit offenders
- operate at least three of the following: Royal Mail's service to return re-directed benefit mail, the housing benefit matching service; a national service level agreement with the benefit agency; a fraud service level agreement with the benefits agency.

Recoverable overpayments mean a departmental error overpayment, a fraudulent overpayment, an authority error overpayment, or a technical overpayment (each of these are defined in Article 18 of the Income-related Benefits (Subsidy to Authorities) Order 1998).

Overpayment caused by a mistake by the claimant or person acting on their behalf is also included, as well as any other type of overpayment.

Benefits administration

Benefits Administration	Indicator 1			
	Weighted rent rebate caseload	Weighted private rented sector caseload	Weighted registered social landlord caseload	Weighted Council Tax Benefit caseload
	2001/2002	2001/2002	2001/2002	2001/2002
Aberdeen City	12,385	3,021	3,412	18,390
Aberdeenshire	9,505	5,330	4,007	20,330
Angus	4,668	3,294	2,780	9,691
Argyll & Bute	3,609	3,130	2,369	8,765
Clackmannanshire	4,859	3,832	1,264	1,541
Dumfries & Galloway	7,032	5,093	3,069	13,919
Dundee City	12,073	18,834	7,777	23,614
East Ayrshire	9,319	1,817	4,011	15,268
East Dunbartonshire	3,222	1,147	1,009	6,784
East Lothian	4,209	1,547	1,682	7,495
East Renfrewshire	2,397	1,154	1,264	5,358
Edinburgh, City of	19,205	15,592	14,659	43,269
Eilean Siar	1,074	502	91	2,996
Falkirk	14,130	4,215	3,861	22,307
Fife	21,156	7,454	7,885	37,129
Glasgow City	90,536	37,240	68,860	28,393
Highland	9,935	4,911	3,996	19,652
Inverclyde	6,827	2,018	3,241	11,847
Midlothian	3,035	1,128	3,661	7,455
Moray	3,221	2,174	1,081	6,368
North Ayrshire	10,354	3,203	4,456	17,711
North Lanarkshire	28,074	4,059	9,107	44,922
Orkney Islands	451	567	344	1,401
Perth & Kinross	4,564	4,456	2,084	9,492
Renfrewshire	12,920	4,103	7,613	22,103
Scottish Borders	3,310	2,564	5,202	9,152
Shetland Islands	809	99	114	1,297
South Ayrshire	6,560	3,695	1,455	11,960
South Lanarkshire	22,870	4,974	4,760	11,818
Stirling	4,422	1,056	1,195	7,354
West Dunbartonshire	8,413	978	6,198	15,980
West Lothian	8,650	4,186	4,756	16,154
Scotland	352,720	156,871	187,172	476,919

Benefits administration

Benefits Administration	Indicator 1	Indicator 2		
	Gross administration cost per case	Average time to process new claims	Average time to process changes of circumstances	Percentage of renewal claims processed on time
	2001/2002	2001/2002	2001/2002	2001/2002
Aberdeen City	£48.82	48.3 days	19.3 days	75.5%
Aberdeenshire	£29.11	63.7 days	10.5 days	81.2%
Angus	£53.02	45.9 days	14.7 days	69.5%
Argyll & Bute	£37.68	41.5 days	9.4 days	48.1%
Clackmannanshire	£35.15	33.0 days	19.8 days	99.3%
Dumfries & Galloway	£37.71	48.0 days	14.0 days	72.0%
Dundee City	£57.63	55.3 days	15.5 days	71.9%
East Ayrshire	£47.11	71.1 days	49.1 days	93.6%
East Dunbartonshire	£39.33	49.1 days	12.0 days	76.9%
East Lothian	£57.56	80.1 days	12.6 days	36.1%
East Renfrewshire	£48.10	26.3 days	9.2 days	99.4%
Edinburgh, City of	£61.47	67.6 days	22.3 days	52.8%
Eilean Siar	£53.68	80.2 days	32.9 days	25.9%
Falkirk	£19.13	41.9 days	14.6 days	75.2%
Fife	£43.05	52.1 days	18.2 days	99.1%
Glasgow City	£36.60	36.0 days	21.4 days	80.3%
Highland	£57.44	37.2 days	5.8 days	68.7%
Inverclyde	£37.90	69.2 days	10.2 days	69.6%
Midlothian	£61.37	71.1 days	32.6 days	45.2%
Moray	£62.00	75.6 days	21.2 days	40.4%
North Ayrshire	£32.56	92.7 days	19.5 days	60.5%
North Lanarkshire	£31.14	44.0 days	10.8 days	67.2%
Orkney Islands	£37.79	16.6 days	3.1 days	91.5%
Perth & Kinross	£46.46	18.0 days	19.1 days	99.5%
Renfrewshire	£37.47	28.6 days	18.5 days	77.1%
Scottish Borders	£52.83	27.6 days	10.3 days	80.8%
Shetland Islands	£101.55	23.1 days	3.2 days	98.0%
South Ayrshire	£41.94	61.3 days	11.1 days	79.6%
South Lanarkshire	£27.43	25.4 days	9.0 days	99.3%
Stirling	£57.85	26.0 days	9.7 days	67.2%
West Dunbartonshire	£34.55	105.9 days	13.8 days	71.6%
West Lothian	£35.84	31.2 days	11.0 days	84.7%
Scotland	£41.89	51.0 days	15.6 days	73.1%

Benefits administration

Benefits Administration	Indicator 3					
	Percentage of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due was correct		Does the council have a written security strategy for combating fraud and error which is communicated regularly to all staff.		Percentage of recoverable overpayments (excluding Council Tax Benefit) that were recovered in the year.	
	2000/2001	2001/2002	2000/2001	2001/2002	2000/2001	2001/2002
Aberdeen City	99.0%	99.2%	Yes	Yes	30.4%	59.6%
Aberdeenshire	--Not Reported--	91.2%	--Not Reported--	Yes	--Not Reported--	--Not Reported--
Angus	97.0%	97.6%	Yes	Yes	77.0%	55.7%
Argyll & Bute	91.1%	96.6%	No	Yes	95.9%	62.3%
Clackmannanshire	--Not Reported--	98.6%	No	Yes	--Not Reported--	47.0%
Dumfries & Galloway	99.0%	98.2%	Yes	Yes	52.0%	64.0%
Dundee City	--Not Reported--	--Not Reported--	No	Yes	--Not Reported--	--Not Reported--
East Ayrshire	91.2%	96.0%	Yes	Yes	36.0%	41.7%
East Dunbartonshire	97.0%	87.4%	Yes	No	54.2%	57.9%
East Lothian	--Not Reported--	95.3%	Yes	Yes	--Not Reported--	43.7%
East Renfrewshire	97.6%	99.8%	Yes	Yes	25.4%	38.4%
Edinburgh, City of	94.7%	98.2%	Yes	Yes	65.2%	34.7%
Eilean Siar	--Not Reported--	97.0%	--Not Reported--	Yes	--Not Reported--	89.0%
Falkirk	95.8%	95.1%	Yes	Yes	48.7%	39.6%
Fife	92.3%	97.3%	Yes	No	49.2%	--Not Reported--
Glasgow City	96.7%	90.4%	Yes	Yes	66.5%	73.3%
Highland	97.0%	95.6%	Yes	Yes	69.6%	86.0%
Inverclyde	92.1%	92.7%	Yes	Yes	24.6%	32.7%
Midlothian	91.7%	93.4%	Yes	Yes	66.4%	50.2%
Moray	--Not Reported--	93.4%	No	Yes	--Not Reported--	--Not Reported--
North Ayrshire	97.0%	95.9%	No	Yes	57.0%	42.2%
North Lanarkshire	94.6%	96.3%	Yes	Yes	13.6%	21.3%
Orkney Islands	98.7%	98.5%	Yes	Yes	76.1%	56.7%
Perth & Kinross	90.0%	93.6%	No	Yes	49.4%	51.6%
Renfrewshire	94.5%	96.0%	Yes	Yes	52.3%	39.2%
Scottish Borders	96.8%	99.0%	Yes	Yes	--Not Reported--	--Not Reported--
Shetland Islands	99.8%	99.8%	No	No	--Not Reported--	50.7%
South Ayrshire	91.4%	90.2%	Yes	Yes	21.3%	29.1%
South Lanarkshire	99.7%	98.3%	Yes	Yes	37.0%	56.3%
Stirling	94.7%	96.8%	Yes	Yes	49.2%	52.2%
West Dunbartonshire	98.0%	97.4%	No	No	38.6%	21.0%
West Lothian	82.1%	90.9%	No	Yes	41.5%	22.3%
Scotland	95.8%	95.5%			50.3%	45.6%