# REVENUES AND BENEFITS
# Service Plan 2006/07

# Contents

# 1 SERVICE DESCRIPTION:

## 1.1 Mission Statement:

Copeland Borough Council's Executive and Corporate Team are determined to transform Copeland into a Council where everyone is...

'Confident and proud of our achievements'

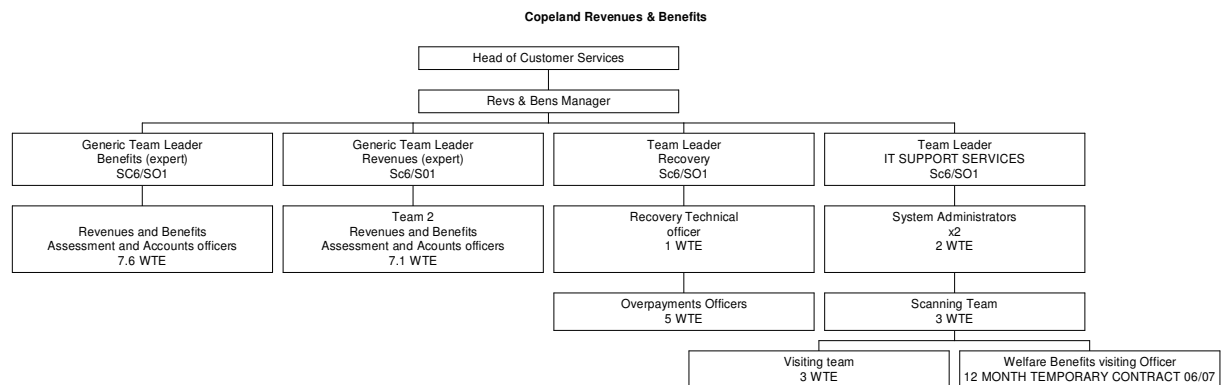Revenues and Benefits services will contribute to this vision by :

Ensuring that the correct HB/CTB is paid to the correct person on time.

Ensuring that Council Tax and NDR Bills are issued on time and appropriate exemptions and Discounts are applied .

Ensuring Overpayments of HB/CTB are correctly calculated,classified and recovered

Maximising the collection of Revenue by ensuring all avenues to recovery monies owed to the Council is pursued.

## 1.2 Organisation:



**Copeland Revenues & Benefits**

- Head of Customer Services
- Revs & Bens Manager

| Generic Team Leader Benefits (expert) Sc6/SO1 | Generic Team Leader Revenues (expert) Sc6/SO1 | Team Leader Recovery Sc6/SO1 | Team Leader IT SUPPORT SERVICES Sc6/SO1 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Revenues and Benefits Assessment and Accounts officers 7.6 WTE | Team 2 Revenues and Benefits Assessment and Acounts officers 7.1 WTE | Recovery Technical officer 1 WTE | System Administrators x2 2 WTE |
| | | Overpayments Officers 5 WTE | Scanning Team 3 WTE |
| | | Visiting team 3 WTE | Welfare Benefits visiting Officer 12 MONTH TEMPORARY CONTRACT 06/07 |

## 1.3 Ambitions for Service Improvement:

In three years' time, users of the service will notice the following improvements:

Claims will be dealt with more promptly as the Service moves towards upper quartile performance against Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) and the DWP Performance Standards.

Generic working between HB/CTB and Council Tax Teams giving a seamless service to customers in this area.

Development of a one-stop shop where a full checking Service for Benefit Claim forms can be provided on the front line.

Reduction in Local Authority errors on overpayments reducing the number of overpayments requiring recovery from individuals, maximising income and producing efficiencies in this area

## 1.4 Budgets

The section for 2006/07 will operate within a total budget of £ comprised of the following delegated budgets: -

### 1.4.1 Revenue                                    2006/07

| | |
|---|---|
| To be confirmed | £ |
| | £ |
| | £ |
| | £ |
| **TOTAL** | **£** |

### 1.4.2 Non-recurring revenue                      2006/07

| | |
|---|---|
| | £ |
| | £ |
| | £ |
| | £ |
| **TOTAL** | **£** |

Detailed budgets for the above activities are appended.

## 1.5 Resources

For 2006/07 we plan that the Revenues and Benefits section will employ 33.6 Full-time equivalent employees.

## 1.6 Training

During 2006/07 the following training will be required for staff:

- **Training HB/CTB staff in Council Tax area of work**
- **Training Council Tax staff on HB/CTB area of Work**
- **Training for each member of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service staff in order to implement the Verification Framework procedures by 30/09/2006**
- **0.5 days training for each member of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Staff in order to implement the Remote Access Terminal replacement system by 28/05/2006**
- **Data Protection training for all staff**
- **Fraud Awareness refresher training for all staff**
- **Overpayments Section to receive Benefit Awareness training and training in Overpayments classifications**
- **Overpayment awareness training for HB/CTB staff**
- **Institute of Line Managers training for new and existing team leaders**
- **Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation training for Subsidy Manager**
- 

## 2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 2.1 Achievements in 2005/06

a) Clearance of Backlog of HB/CTB work, which accrued due to conversion onto Academy system.

b) Introduction of Management Information tools to monitor HB/CTB performance.

c) Redesign of Benefit processing procedures, supported by BFI, which now ensures new post, is actioned within 7 days of receipt and reminders are issued on time and decisions on claims given promptly.
This has resulted in an underlying performance achievement since 31/10/2005 for new claims being cleared in 30 days against a target of 35 and changes being cleared within 14 days against a target of 9 days

d)      Introduction of Accuracy Forum to look at errors and areas for improvement identifying training needs. Improvement in quarter 3 accuracy of 4% against quarter 2 accuracy figures.

e)      Training of 2 permanent CT staff on CTB/HB using a structured tutor lead training course to move forward the generic working ethos

f)      Introduction of the new Benefits claim form, which is up to BFI standards. Consultation on the new design has been undertaken with RSL and Welfare organisations, CAB, Age Concern

e)      Successful end of year action completed by internal staff who had not undertaken the process before. Benefits updated and Council Tax Bills despatched on time.

f)      Recruitment of Permanent Revenues and Benefits Manger from 31/10/2006 providing stability within the team.

g)      In year Council Tax collection of 97.8% and Business Rates collection achievement of 98.6%


## 2.2      Challenges for 2006/07

a)      Achievement of BVPI targets and sustaining performance

b)      Recruitment of experienced Team leaders to promote continual improvement within the teams and move the business forward. Team Leaders to be supported in their development by undergoing Institute of Line Managers training

c)      Retention of qualified processors in all areas of Revenues and Benefits

d)      Verification Framework Compliance by 30/09/2006

e)      Implementation of the RAT project by 28th May 2006

e)      Self-assessment against DWP Performance Standards by end October 2006providing evidence to support all elements and developing an action plan following assessment to ensure improvement in 06/07 performance

f)      Training all staff on HB/CTB and Revenues to be generic workers by March 2007 and fully integrating the work processes

g) Improving collection rates on all debts owed to the Council and improving the recovery rate of HB/CTB debt.

h) Improving the use of the Academy system in relation to HB/CTB overpayments and revising work processes to ensure overpayments are dealt with in the most effective manner.

h) Improving Staff Morale and working conditions within the Atrium

I) Monitoring of any issues remaining outstanding on the action plan developed following the BFI inspection – these issues have been incorporated into this plan and highlight in blue

j) Implementation of changes to organisational structure – to bring training, subsidy and quality checking under the direct control of the Revenues and Benefits Manager

# 3 SERVICE OBJECTIVES 2006/07

In 2006/07 the service has the following key objectives, which are listed in priority order:

| 3.1 | |
|---|---|
| **What are we trying to achieve?** | KEY OBJECTIVES FOR REVENUES AND BENEFITS<br>-Improve customer satisfaction by:<br>     - Improving performance against BVPIs to top quartile<br>     - Meeting revised DWP Performance Measures and Enablers for HB/CTB<br>-Improve the Council's financial position by:<br>     - Maintaining BVPI's for collection of Council Tax and Business rates<br>     - Reducing the level of local authority error overpayments to within the threshold to avoid subsidy loss<br>     - Increasing the rate of overpayment recovery<br><br>Actions that will support the achievement of Key work objectives (Not in priority order)<br><br>• To ensure that we operate a cost effective service in line with the principles of Gershon<br><br>• To ensure key statistical returns are completed within set deadlines<br><br>• To ensure replacement Revenues & Benefits system is operationally effective<br><br>• Achieve generic working in RBS<br><br>• Participate in benefit take-up campaign<br><br>• Undertake regular stakeholder liaison meetings<br><br>• Develop local key PI<br><br>• Assist towards corporate electronic service strategy<br><br>• Introduce training strategy & plan<br><br>• Improve referrals to fraud in number &quality<br><br>• Draw up SLA between RBS and Fraud<br><br>• Improve customer access through the website and review all communication channels<br><br>• Contribute to extending the services provided by Customer Services<br><br>• Development of a more risk based approach to interventions to allow more targeted use of visiting resources |

| Corporate objective supported &/or ref. Corporate Plan number | 3.1 Corporate plan L7 01 -Improve BVPI's performance to meet DWP standards | |
|---|---|---|
| **Financial implications** <br> 1. Is the objective covered from existing budgets? <br> 2. Implication for Future budgets e.g. capital, staffing, IT requirements, partnership working etc | Commission Further Structured Training programme for new and existing staff to process HB/CTB in 06/07. Cost £18K. (£9K to be secured from the corporate training plan. Performance standards bid to be submitted for a further £9k) <br><br> Implementation of RATS replacement system, which will provide a more efficient process, Training costs to be from existing budgets. <br><br> Self-Assessment against DWP performance Standards and development of an action plan to improve services. <br><br> Training of Overpayment staff to have awareness of benefit overpayments and classification. Costs to be met from within existing budgets | |
| **Risks likely to affect this or the ref no from the operational risk register** | Loss of qualified staff and the inability to recruit trained staff. Funding not available for further structured training Course In the short-term training will reduce the actual amount of processing time available and will have an impact on productivity Insufficient trained resources to sustain business and undertake actions identified within the Action Plan following self assessment against DWP standards Dependency on other departments to review services with the CPA requirements and buy in to action plan | |
| **Support needed from other Corporate Services to achieve this objective e.g. HR, Communications** | HR for recruitment Fraud Training Accuracy checking Customer Survey? | |
| What key actions will be undertaken | Who is responsible for delivering the action | When should the action be completed? |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| CAPACITY BUILDING | | |
| TRAINING OF OVERPAYMENT STAFF TNA to be conducted Training to be devised and delivered | Theresa Carr to undertake TNA Julie Friend to drawn up a training program | Training to be completed by 30/05/2006 |
| WORK FORCE PLANNING 3 Month projection to be completed and reviewed on a rolling Month Basis to inform recruitment and training programme | Karen Corby Benefit Team Leaders | On going basis-update monthly |
| TRAINING PLAN Development of overarching training plan for the service | Karen Corby, Julie Friend And Team leaders | Plan to be developed by by 30/05/2006 and reviewed 6 weekly |
| IMPLEMENT REVISED STRUCTURE including recruitment to vacant posts | Sponsor Terry Chilcott Jane Salt | |
| GENERIC WORKING All staff to be trained to undertake all elements of HB/CTB and Council Tax areas of work to provide flexibility within RBS and to give sufficient trained staff to sustain the service | Karen Corby | March 2007 |
| IMPROVING PERFORMANCE | | |
| ACCURACY FORUM Maintain monthly accuracy Forum identifying top 10 issues and providing remedial training and desk aides as required. Use forum to highlight forthcoming changes ensuring all staff are aware of the impact on processing claims | Julie Friend | On going on a monthly Basis |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| REVIEW WORKING PRACTICES AND PROCESSES WITHIN ALL AREAS OF RBS<br>To ensure all resources are Effectively used | Karen Corby<br>Revenues and Benefits Manager and Team leaders | |
| Self assessment against DWP Performance Standards by 31 October 2006 with supporting evidence marking against performance in 05/06 | Steps 1 to 5 inclusive | |
| Steps to be undertaken<br>1) Self Assessment | Main Sponsor; Karen Corby Revenues and Benefits manager | |
| 2) Identification for Areas of Improvement | Fraud Manager | 31/07/2006<br><br>30/08/2006 |
| 3) Drawing together Action Plan to improve service 06/07 | Subsidy Manager<br><br>HR Manager | |
| 4) Implementation of Action plan | | 30/08/2006-30/09/2006 |
| 5) Review of performance | | 1/10/2006– 28/2/07 |
| (points 6 to 10 to be included in action plan as outstanding from BFI Report) | | 31/3/07 |
| 6) HB/CTB Procedural guidance | Julie Friend | 31/03/2007 |
| 7) SLA's Drawing up and monitoring | Karen Corby | Drawn up by 30/06/2006.Monitor quarterly |
| 8)Analysis of incomplete claim forms | Susan Spedding | 01/07/2006-30/07/2006-during accuracy checking |
| 9) Customer satisfaction survey | Karen Corby and? | ? |
| 10) Pre appointment checks | Karen Corby and HR | By 31/07/2006 |
| 11) Use of laser cheques | IT SUPPORT | By 30/06/2006 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| MAINTAIN BFI MODEL FOR PROCESSING OF CLAIMS<br>Monitor daily work flows ensuring new items are cleared within the 7/14/14 Regime and that pending and Expired pending is actioned promptly | Clare Messenger<br>Anne Spedding | On going on a daily basis |
| EXTERNAL DRIVERS | | |
| RATS PROJECT<br>Project plan drawn up identifying Key mile stones for implementation of the Scheme | Sponsor Karen Corby<br>Project co-ordinator Jackie Lawson | Project implemented by 29/05/2006 |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Corporate objective supported &/or ref. Corporate Plan number** | 3.2<br>Improve Customer Satisfaction |
| <u>**Financial implications**</u><br>   3.  Is the objective covered from existing budgets?<br>   4.  Implication for Future budgets e.g. capital, staffing, IT requirements, partnership working etc | VF funding of £21k secured-will meet VF Training and IT costs.<br><br>Costs associated with Introduction of BACS-Funding?<br><br>VF Framework training costs<br><br>IT/Academy costs associated with VF compliance |
| **Risks likely to affect this or the ref no from the operational risk register** | Lack of sufficient trained staff to sustain the business during period of training and Implementation |
| **Support needed from other Corporate Services to achieve this objective e.g. HR, Communications** | IT Support<br><br>IT Manager<br>Additional Training on PARIS |
| What key actions will be undertaken | Who is responsible for delivering the action | When should the action be completed by |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Introduction of BACS | IT Manager<br>Lead in Revenues and<br>Benefits –Anne Spedding | March 2007 |
| Introduction of<br>Verification Framework-<br>Training Of Registered Social<br>Landlords to be able to verify<br>documents on behalf of the<br>Local Authority. | Project Sponsor Karen Corby<br>Project Manger Jem Pier | September 2006 |
| Review of Benefit, Council Tax<br>and Overpayment notifications<br>produced by Academy/PARIS<br>to ensure they are fit for<br>purpose | IT support Team leader and<br>Revenues and Benefits team<br>leaders | March 2007 |
| Introduction of Quality Checks<br>on Council Tax Area of work | Anne Spedding | March 2007-To be incorporated<br>into the Generic working checking |
| **Corporate objective<br>supported &/or ref.<br>Corporate Plan number** | Maintain BVPI's for collection of Council Tax and Business Rates | |
| **<u>Financial implications</u>**<br>    5.  Is the objective<br>         covered from existing<br>         budgets?<br>    6.  Implication for<br>         Future budgets<br>         e.g. capital, staffing, IT<br>         requirements,<br>         partnership working<br>         etc | Introduction of automated process to review Single persons<br>Discount -IT Costs and Training commitment | |
| **Risks likely to affect this or<br>the ref no from the<br>operational risk register** | Lack of trained staff to undertake this role.<br><br>Generic working takes away the focus from Council Tax Work | |
| **Support needed from other<br>Corporate Services to achieve<br>this objective e.g. HR,<br>Communications** | | |
| | Who is responsible for<br>delivering the action | When should the action be<br>completed |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Draw up and implement a programme to review Council Tax Discounts and exemptions to ensure maximum Revenue is collected. | Anne Spedding | 31/05/2006 |
| Overpayment and recoveries team to maximise recovery of council tax and NNDR by introducing action via the County court and by securing bankruptcy notices in appropriate cases | Theresa Carr | 31/05/2006 |

## 4.    Workforce Planning

### 4.1 What workforce changes do you foresee for this service?

Review of current organisation within Revenues and Benefits with the potential to recruit an admin support post for the interventions team funded by the re-organisation proposals

Recruitment of approved post to provide a Welfare and debt advisor

Retention of current temporary staff for the agreed period to support the generic training programme and replacement of temporary staff if they leave before the end of their contract.

Recruitment of New team leader and reversion of 2 staff from team leader to assessor grade

### 4.2   What changes are required to get the service to where we want it? (Solving Skill shortages? New technology? Training and Development Needs?)

Implementation of verification Framework process

Training of 3 Council tax staff on Benefits processing

Training of HB/CTB staff on Council Tax and NNDR

Updating Academy to switch on the Verification framework compliance module

ILM Training for New Team Leaders

Overpayments training for staff

Do we have specific recruitment and retention problems in the service? If so, what are we going to do about it?
Have experienced a high turnover of staff in the past. This will be addressed by the following actions:
Improvement in BVPI performance –Clearance of backlog and anticipated improve morale as a consequence
Better Management information to control workload allocation
Structured training for new and existing staff
Recruitment of Team leaders
Improvement in working conditions in the Atrium

4.3 Is there going to be significant "service re-engineering"? If so, what are the impacts on job design, training etc.? (For example, can we overcome capacity problems by training non-professional support staff to do technical work, which doesn't have to be done by professionally qualified staff?)

Do not envisage further significant service re engineering. Actions will be taken to execute the design agreed following the previous restructure
Business processes for Overpayments and Interventions to be reviewed, in partnership with BFI

4.4 What is our staff age profile like? Is it healthily balanced?

No imminent retirements.
Work force age group is reasonably balanced

4.5 Do we have career paths for trainees to make our service attractive to young people?

IRRV qualifications can be obtained via a distant learning route.
NVQ's are not at present available in Cumbria, in the Revenues and benefits and travel out side the County is a barrier.
ILM qualifications are available to team leaders and conducted locally

## 5  MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

Monitoring arrangements will be between Service Managers and the Head of Service in the first instant as part of the quarterly performance monitoring.

Issues and Risks will be managed through this monitoring process.  Where issues and risks require escalation, this will be routed to Corporate Team in the first instance.

## 6  PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

### 6.1 Statutory Performance Indicators

| Performance Indicator | 2004/05 | | | | | 2005/06 | | 2006/07 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | District Quartiles | | | | | |
| | Target | Actual | Top | Middle | Bottom | Target | Actual | Target |
| 78Av<br><br>Average time to process a new claim | 42 days | 66.79 | | | X | 35 days | 91.45 | 35 Days |
| 78b<br><br>Average time to process notifications of change of circumstances | 20 days | 15.15 | | | X | 9 days | 47.76 | 9 Days |
| 79a<br><br>Cases processed correctly | 95% | 90.60 | | | X | 98% | 91.20% | 98% |
| 79b (1)<br><br>Total debt raised in a year against total debt collected | 85% | 76.48% | X | | | 85% | 77.90% | 85% |
| 79 (b)(ii)<br><br>Total debt outstanding carried forward at the start of the year plus debt raised in the year and total debt collected within the year | | | | | | | 51.80% | 55% |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 79(b)iii<br>Total HB overpayment debt written off as a percentage of HB overpayment debt | | | | | | 4.46% | 4% |
| Interventions | | | | | 3190 | 1662 | 3430 |
| Bv76a-Number of claimants visited per 1000 caseload | 400 | 128.8 | | X | 202 | 156.65 | 207 |
| BVPI (9) Council Tax Collection Rate | 98% | 98.10 | X | | 98% | 97.8% | 98% |
| BVPI (10) NDR Collection Rates | 99% | 99.4% | X | | 99% | 98.6% | 99% |

==Definition of BVPIs for Overpayments changed with effect from 1 April 2005.==

**Interventions 3190 05/06 MINIMUM 260 PER MONTH WITH 1280 BEING VISITED**
**Interventions 3430 06/07 MINIMUM 285 PER MONTH WITH 1370 BEING VISITED**

## 6.2 Local Performance Indicators

| Local Performance Indicator | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Actual | Target | Target | Target |
| Customer correspondence via e mail to be acknowledged within 1 day | | | | |
| Customer complaints acknowledged within 3 days | | | | |
| Customer complaints responded to in 10 days | | | | |
| Debtors;<br>X% of reminders issued<br>X% of debt referred to debt collectors<br>X% of cases referred for court action | | | | |
| Revenues<br>X% of single persons discount cases reviewed<br>X% of exemptions reviewed | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

## 6.3 Analysis of performance and targets for 2005/06

The provision of a new computer system, the re-organisation of sections and teams and allocation of new areas of work to the teams have affected all areas of performance.

Benefit Processing
To address the issues in this area of work a Benefits recovery action plan was drawn up. Working in partnership with BFI PDT our underlying performance from 1/11/2005 to 31/03/2006 shows an AACT of 32.4 days for new claims against a target of 35 days and an AACT of 17.78 days against a target of 9 days. New work processes have been introduced to ensure performance is sustained and improved in the 06/07 financial year.

Accuracy
The Accuracy figures for Q1 to Q3 are only available. Stats128 for Quarter 4 is currently being completed. Q3 accuracy rate was 91.2%. A 4 weekly accuracy forum has been set up to analyse errors and provide remedial training as required.

Interventions
Intervention targets have not been met. This team was re-located from Fraud mid year and has suffered from a sense of no clear direction or remit. In order to address this 2 workshops have been arranged to give clear direction and bench marks activity and gives individuals clear targets to meet. There has been a need identified for Admin support in this area, which is currently being considered.

Overpayments
Again this team has been given new areas of responsibility. Problems have been identified with the recording of statistical data and BFI PDT are to focus on this area of work on their next visit. Training needs have also been identified and a workshop is being arranged to look at the handover of recovery between the benefits section and overpayment section.

Revenues
This team was reduced by 1 WTE on the restructure. There remains an issue relating to the grading and allocation of responsibilities. The team has lost experienced staff to Benefit training and currently has 2 temporary staff out of an allocation of 5. The focus for this team in 06/07 is to ensure reviews are commenced, to train all staff on benefits and to work with overpayments to maximise in year collection rates as well as looking at historical debt.


BVPI 78a– New Claims

BVPI 78b – Changes

BVPI79a –Accuracy

BVPI 79B(i), (ii), (iii) - Overpayments

BVPI76 (a)- Interventions

BVPI 9–Council Tax Collection Rates

BVPI 10– NDR Collection rates

## APPENDIX 1 – DETAILED BUDGET

To be confirmed