

Accuracy Checks in Relation to Housing Benefit Assessments Follow-up following Audit Committee on 21st September 2015

Performance for year

The performance following previous committee is as follows:

- September 14.18%
- October 11.81%
- November (to date) 10.08%

Members requested further information on the financial impact to the customer. We have analysed the errors in September and October and found the following:

Month	Minimum Error	Maximum Error	Avg. Weekly HB	Avg. Weekly CTS
September	1p	£102.58	£38.85	£7.62
October	18p	£89.99	£44.77	£5.17

Actions since last Audit committee

Following the last audit committee we have continued to work with Civica to review results of checks and consider changes that could be made to improve the results of performance.

The issue of performance has been discussed at each monthly operations board with Civica and they have continued to work closely with the client team. Civica acknowledge the performance is low and although this was not included as a KPI in the contract they have been working to improve it.

We are aware that a technical problem between systems has prevented the Risked Based Verification of claims from working. This increases the work load for the assessor and increases the likelihood of errors occurring, due to increased documentation to check. This problem has been resolved in November and we expect to see this have a positive impact on the rate.

Further changes to process have been made; results of the client team checks are now going back to the individual assessors. Previously these were given to the quality officer and only general trends were fed back to the assessors. This change has highlighted the errors to the assessors quickly and they are more engaged in the process and are now having weekly meetings regarding their performance.

It is important to note that following the initial review of the 10% Accuracy QA process within the client team the changes made have allowed the officer to keep up to date with the checks. Although this doesn't alter the accuracy rate, it does mean the errors can more quickly be corrected by the Contractor and a number of errors can now be picked up pre-payment

Benchmarking

Below shows how other Council's are performing.

- Forest of Dean (Civica outsourced) rate is generally around 9% error
- Cheltenham have advised an experienced assessor would achieve around 7% error*
- Stroud have sent stats from April that range from 5%-10% - averaging at 7.5%.
- Bexley Council (outsourced service) averaging around 10%

* Bench marking has shown us that Cheltenham have taken a view that a weekly error of £3 or less (HB&CTS) will not be included as a Financial error (it is still shown as an error).

We have analysed the result of September and October to apply the Cheltenham method and our accuracy would improve by:

- September 3.49%
- October 2.39%

Next Steps

We will continue to monitor the rate carefully to ensure improvement is achieved. We will achieve this by, having a rolling item for the agenda at the Operations board so that everyone is aware of the rate. Ensure the client team remains up to date. Civica will issue guidance to assessors with regard to errors and continue with working with each assessor on training and performance monitoring.