

## SERVICE DESCRIPTION FORM

<b>Department: Corporate Services Department</b>	
<b>Service: Benefit Service</b>	
<b>Income</b>	<b>(£000s)</b>
Grants	592
HB Subsidy	16,825
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,417</b>

**Description:** The function of the Benefit Service is to administer Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit for Moray on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions. The average case load for last year was as follows:

- 2,982 Housing Benefit claims by council tenants
- 1,145 Housing Benefit claims by tenants of private landlords
- 1,210 Housing Benefit claims by tenants of registered social landlords
- 6,906 Council Tax Benefit claimants.

This is a statutory service that is part of the council's Revenues Section. The section is also responsible for:

- Benefit claim assessment, review and payments
- Benefit overpayment recovery
- Reconsiderations and appeals on decisions
- Benefit fraud deterrent, detection, investigation and sanctions
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Provision of performance management and subsidy data to Department for Work and Pensions and external auditors.
- Front line customer service points at Elgin, Buckie, Forres and Keith, offering advice and assistance to benefit claimants.
- Visiting officers who provide additional support for vulnerable customers in their homes.

**Outcomes / impacts:**

- We provide financial assistance for people with low incomes as payment towards their rent and council tax. Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit payments of £21million are made every year. This is in addition to Discretionary Housing Payments of £9,000.
- Last year 3,093 new claims for benefits were received and 15,726 changes of circumstances were reported.
- 12,164 customers attended our front line offices with benefit enquiries, and 699 home visits were also carried out in respect of benefits and taxation matters.

The service is required to meet the challenges of the UK Governments welfare reforms agenda, which relate to:

- The administration of changes to the government's existing Housing Benefit scheme
- Implementation of the new localised council tax support scheme which replaces Council Tax Benefit
- Supporting the Department for Work and Pensions with the implementation of the new Universal Credit scheme.
- Advising and helping customers through the transitional process.
- Implementing new policies and procedures of the Single Fraud Investigation Service.