

Housing Benefit Performance Audit Local Authority Self-assessment Guidance

Background

Audit Scotland carries out risk assessments of the benefit services of all 32 Scottish councils. Our housing benefit (HB) performance audit work is carried out as part of the annual audit of local government. It complies with the principles of the Shared Risk Assessment arrangements, in that it is risk based and proportionate. To that end, we have developed risk based selection criteria to identify those councils where our scrutiny should be directed.

It is expected that authorities will complete their self-assessment largely using information they already use to monitor performance and deliver continuous improvement, and as such, a minimum of two weeks will be given for completion.

Purpose of the self assessment

The HB performance audit work continues to consider the extent to which Scottish local authorities are complying with their statutory responsibility to secure continuous performance improvement, having regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equality. The self assessment provides an opportunity to put the benefit service into a local and national context, and for the authority to demonstrate its strengths and areas for improvement. Your completed self-assessment will be used as evidence of the authority's understanding of the local and national context and to inform the risk assessment process.

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Supporting evidence

For guidance we have listed those aspects you should aim to cover and the type and level of evidence we wish to see for the purpose of the risk assessment. Space is provided for you to list any additional evidence you wish to present. Please ensure that all evidence is numbered, indexed, and cross-referenced where appropriate.

We aim to minimise the burden of information requests, so if any information is available on your website, please provide the link and we will access it accordingly.

We would prefer if you could send your self-assessment and supporting evidence by e-mail to HBAudit@audit-scotland.gov.uk. However, please note that due to a **10mb restriction** on the size of e-mails that can be received by Audit Scotland it would be helpful if you could send separate e-mails with your evidence under the following headings:

1. Action Plan Update
2. Background
3. Business planning & reporting
4. Speed of processing
5. Accuracy
6. Interventions
7. Overpayments
8. Counter-fraud

Note: It would be helpful when preparing your submission, if your evidence could be numbered as above and referenced to the narrative where appropriate. For example, 1.1 action plan update, 1.2 minutes of meeting to discuss action plan etc.

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Current Performance Information

It is important that our risk-assessment takes account of your most up-to-date performance information. To ensure that we use all the available information, please populate, as far as possible, the attached excel spreadsheet. Please note that there are separate workbooks for each of the key benefit service areas. If you use a different approach to measure performance, please provide this information along with an explanation on how it is used.

Freedom of Information

Information that you supply to us will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (Scotland) 2002. Completed self-assessments are likely to have to be disclosed if requests are received under the Act. We will consult with you before disclosing all or part of the information. By marking any documentation as sensitive you will help inform our decision about whether disclosure under FOIA Scotland is appropriate.

Sign off

The self-assessment should be approved and signed off by the Director responsible for the benefit service.