

NEWS RELEASE

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Northgate partners are top for benefit processing

The top five performing local authorities for benefit processing are all partners of Northgate Public Services, according to research based on statistics published by the Department of Work and Pensions.

West Oxfordshire District Council, North Hertfordshire District Council, Mid Devon District Council, Rushmoor Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council have all achieved an average processing time of four days. This compares with the national average of 11 days. All five authorities use the Northgate Benefits application.

The research also shows that 10 of the 14 authorities which managed to process claims in an average of five days and 11 of the 20 authorities who processed claims in six days were also Northgate partners. The research is based on Right Time Indicator (RTI) statistics for the third quarter of 2009/10 published earlier this month by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Northgate is committed to delivering innovation and improvement in processing benefit claims. Last year its user-focused revenue and benefits training programme became the first of its kind to be accredited by the IRRV. The programme focuses on achieving best practice by working with and assessing staff on the systems that they use in their workplaces. Northgate is now calling on all local authorities to raise standards in benefit processing by focussing on staff development and training which in turn will deliver increased customer satisfaction and efficiencies.

Howard Crompton, Head of Revenues and Benefits at North Hertfordshire District

Council said: "We are delighted that the investment in Northgate's eBenefits New Claims, Change in Circumstances, eMobile and Self-Serve has allowed us to improve performance and make efficiencies. We are also working with our Registered Social Landlords to enable them to capture data on our behalf, thereby providing more efficiencies and giving customers a more joined up service".

Jon Dearing, Head of Revenues and Benefits for West Oxfordshire and Cotswold

District Councils said: "West Oxfordshire District Council has seen continuous improvement against all of its Revenues and Benefits performance indicators over the last 3 years. While this is the result of several factors, not least the hard work and dedication of the team members, we are confident that our closer working relationship with Northgate has made a significant contribution to our success. We have used Northgate's processing, document imaging and workflow systems for several years and have more recently worked closely with Northgate on the development of their User Accreditation Scheme. This recent collaboration has enabled our teams to use the Northgate systems in much more effective and efficient ways - to the benefit of the customer".

Joe Bradley, Managing Director of Citizen Services for Northgate Public Services,

said today: "We are delighted that our partners have achieved such great results. However, we recognise that there are still further improvements which need to be made. With the level of claimants expected to rise over coming years, it is essential that councils are dealing with claims in the most efficient way possible. We are committed to working with local authorities to deliver better for less and to continue improving standards and delivering improvements for both the council and the claimant."

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Notes to editors

1. Northgate Public Services is an innovative provider of transformation and improvement services to the public sector. It is committed to high quality public services that place individuals and their communities at their heart. Its knowledge and understanding of people's needs are core to its business, as too, is its depth and breadth across public services.
2. Northgate's task is to enhance public value through the intelligent use of people and technology; to understand why and what change is necessary; to provide new thinking leading to improved performance; and to link company rewards with positive outcomes for the communities for whom it works. It supports transformation through sustainable performance partnerships.
3. In the UK, Northgate works with ninety five per cent of local authorities, every police force, and a large number of health organisations, housing associations, utilities and transport companies. Founded in 1969, the company has more than 12,000 employees.
4. These statistics cover the first quarter since all of Northgate's customers moved onto Version 6 of its Revenues and Benefits application. This is the only system of its kind which runs on a web browser and has been rewritten in conjunction with its partners to deliver improved performance and better customer delivery.