

Benefits Online

“Making the benefit application process into a truly transactional and interactive experience between citizens and government”

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Introduction to Benefits Online

- What is Housing/Council Tax Benefit?
- Challenges faced with paper-based application:
 - citizens find the current paper application form daunting and difficult to understand
 - Revenues & Benefits receive a large number of incomplete claim forms each year
 - 3rd party advisors state that 90% of claimants seek assistance with the application form
- Reasons for development
 - the benefits that can be achieved by both citizens and the Council from taking a lengthy paper application to making it available on the Internet
 - innovative use of ICT to empower citizens

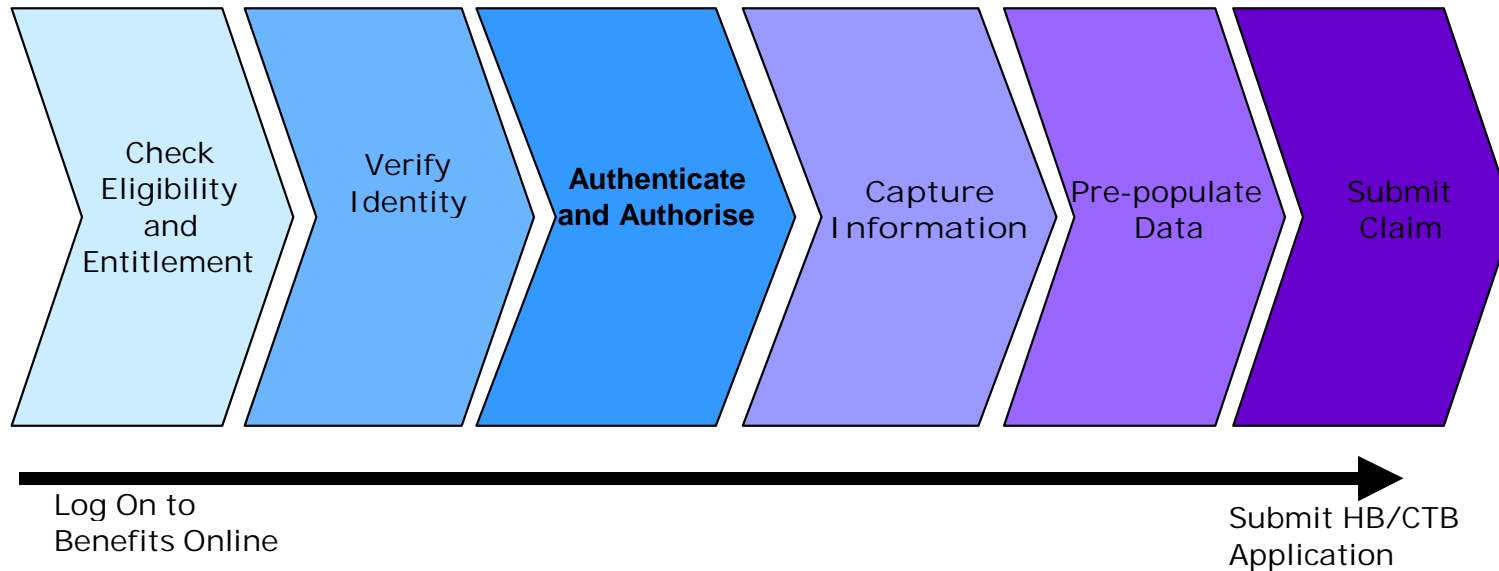


Aims and Objectives

- Main goals:
 - to work closely with suppliers to produce and implement a series of National Product for on line Housing and Council Tax benefit applications that integrates with Comino's EDM system and presents data which is compatible with Northgate's core Local Authority Housing and Council Tax benefit system, iWorld
 - to enable increased uptake of benefits
 - to achieve full automation in certain parts of the new claims process
- Also meets the goals of 4QC:
 - Innovation and modernisation in public administration
 - Transferability and sustainability
 - Delivering strategy
 - Ensuring productivity
 - Fostering responsiveness
 - Managing Knowledge

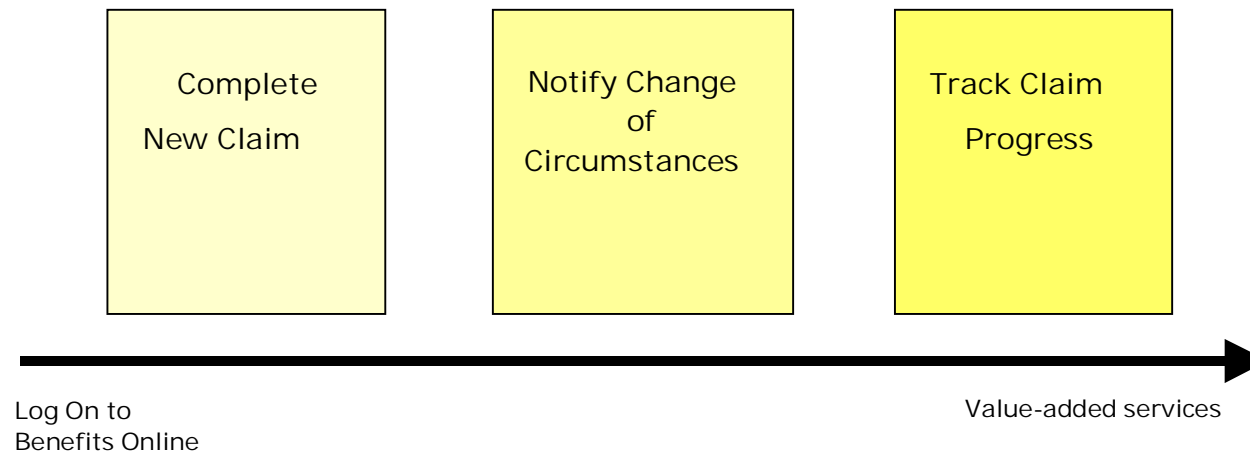


How does Benefits Online work?



- Eligibility and Entitlement - standalone, anonymous interactive benefits calculator will provide an immediate indication of eligibility and a provisional entitlement amount
- Verification of Identity - Revenues and Benefits Officers will carry out offline verification of documentation
- Authentication and Authorisation - Citizen authentication by manual checks. Citizens will be given a PIN number when they start a claim and asked to provide a 'known fact' to enable them to resume a part-completed claim.
- Information Capture - interactive, online "smart" form that will facilitate once only data entry and apply prompts and checks to validate form as it is completed
- Data Pre-population - elective pre-population of data from benefits calculator
- Claim submission - electronic applications will be indexed by EDM system as they are received to feed into workflow system.

What does Benefits Online do?



- Completion of Claim - users will be able to complete an application and submit it electronically either at the time or can retrieve application at later date and continue from point of interruption
- Change of Circumstances - electronic notification of change of circumstances submitted to Electronic Document Management system for evaluation by Revenue and Benefits Officer
- Claim Tracking - citizens able to track progress of a claim and receive details of its status

Benefits Online - Welcome page



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Edinburgh Council website, featuring the council's logo and a 'Home | Help' link. Below the navigation bar, the page title 'Housing and Council Tax Benefits Online' is displayed. The main content area is titled 'Welcome' and contains a message from the City of Edinburgh regarding the Housing and Council Tax Benefits Online service. It includes three links for users to check their eligibility, start a claim, or report a change in circumstances. An important security notice is also present, advising users to keep their login details private and to log out when finished. The page is part of a 'smart city' initiative, as indicated by the header on the right.

EDINBURGH
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

Home | Help

Housing and Council Tax Benefits Online

Welcome

Welcome to the City of Edinburgh [Housing and Council Tax Benefits](#) Online service.

Are you on a low income or claiming state benefits? If you are, this service will allow you to send an electronic claim for Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit.

Use one of the links below to continue:

- [Am I entitled to Housing Benefit and / or Council Tax Benefit?](#)
Quickly see if you may qualify for these benefits and get an example of how much benefit you could get.
- [Start, continue or check the status of a claim for Housing Benefit and / or Council Tax Benefit](#)
You may be entitled to these benefits if you are on a low income.
- [Start, check the status of or continue to tell us about a change of circumstances](#)
For example, if you have moved address or changed jobs etc...

IMPORTANT: For your added security, please do not let anyone know the details you use to access the City of Edinburgh Housing and Council Tax Benefits Online service. When you've finished, always [exit the service](#) and [close your browser](#).

This website is covered by a [Privacy Policy](#), which explains how we collect and use information about your claim. If you want to know more about this service, or you need help to use this service, select



Comino Screenshot

The screenshot displays the Edinburgh Council Comino interface. At the top, the logo for Edinburgh Council is visible, along with navigation links for 'Home' and 'Help'. Below this, there are two main sections: 'Printer' and 'Claim Details'. The 'Printer' section shows the status 'Able to print' with a 'Yes' button. The 'Claim Details' section contains a list of questions with corresponding 'No' buttons.

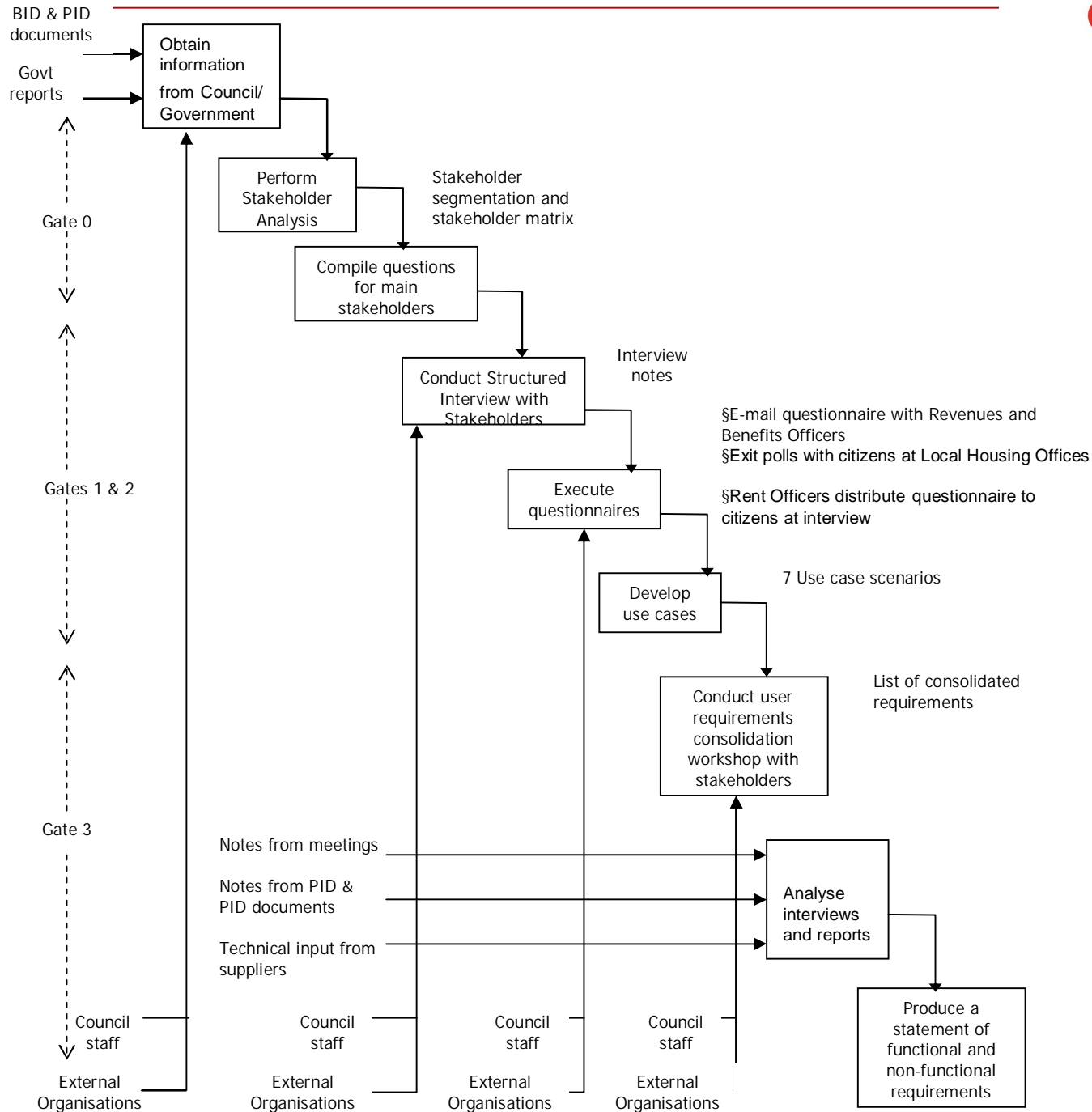
Section	Field	Value
Printer	Able to print	Yes
	Claim Details	
Claim Details	Claiming Second Adult Rebate	No
	Has a partner	No
	Lives with other people	No
	Children in household	No
	Pay rent for home	No
	Pay rent to Council	No



Joined-Up Service Delivery

- Partnership working
 - City of Edinburgh Council
 - BT
 - EzGov Europe
 - Comino
 - Third Parties involved in the benefits application process
- Project Methodologies:
 - PRINCE2 for project management
 - Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Successful Delivery Toolkit for user requirements process
 - IBM Rational Unified Process (RUP) for software development
- Critical project factors:
 - Senior management support from outset
 - Extensive user requirements capture process
 - Thorough testing and documentation
 - Awareness and training days for internal staff and third parties





Obstacles

- Main Obstacles:
 - DWP requirement for physical signature from the claimant
 - Developing an acceptable output from Benefits Online for Revenues and Benefits Officers to evaluate within Comino EDM system
- Overcoming obstacles:
 - Building an accessible solution with extensive online help
 - Finding a solution for physical signature requirements
 - Design of output in Comino that is designed for and by employees



Conclusion

- Results so far:
 - Better quality of information due to online validation - less need for re-work
 - Time saved in processing information
 - High hit rate for entitlement calculator
 - Quicker turn around of claims, claimant receives benefit sooner
 - Assists disadvantaged claimants
 - Strengthened relationships with suppliers
 - Staff acceptance exceeds expectations
 - COSLA Excellence Award for Innovative use of technology
- Most important lessons learned:
 - keep citizen experience at the centre of development
 - utilise the knowledge and experience of your expert users
- Next steps
 - further development
 - promotion to other Local Authorities



Thank you for your time

For more information please visit
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