BENEFITS PROCESSING ANALYSIS
Quarter 2 (April to June 2014-2015)

The attached spreadsheets, 'RSN Benefits Processing' set out our latest analysis of benefit processing statistics for local district and unitary authorities across England.

What's special about this analysis?
This analysis compares your authority to other rural authorities. All information is taken from the Department for Work and Pensions at www.gov.uk.

What does it show?
By selecting your authority in the top left yellow box, you can see your performance in relation to two indicators, Speed of Processing New Claims and Speed of Processing Change in Circumstances. This is available for the two quarters of the year 2014-2015 and you can select each quarter to view the data individually in addition to the overall year figure.

The top 10 district authorities are all processing new claims in 11 days and under, and the top 10 unitary authorities in under 16 days.

Universal Credit aims to 'introduce greater fairness to the welfare system by making work pay' and as it is rolled out across the country over the next couple of years, there will be significant implications for applicants, local authorities and Housing Associations and in particular rural communities. The suggestion that Universal Credit is destined to be applied for online could result in difficulties for rural areas with no or limited broadband access. The aging population in rural areas could also struggle with this concept. Certain claimants may have to sign a 'Claimant Commitment' with their Job Centre Advisor or workcoach. Some rural local authorities have no Job Centres within their borders, resulting in applicants having to travel significant distances, potentially on inadequate or non existent public transport to meet their commitments.

There may also be implications on turnaround times for dealing with applications as new software and systems are rolled out. It will be interesting to see the results of the case studies and how well the system works over the next year of testing and rollout.

Who is doing well for their residents?

In order to currently measure the success of the benefits processing system, ideally you could consider a holistic picture involving speed of processing, accuracy of decision making, accuracy of payment system level of fraud within the system and so on. This analysis focuses solely on speed of processing whilst acknowledging that this is not the only factor in the system that customers may be interested in.

The overall average for district authorities for Quarter 2 in 2014-2015 is 20.80 days for new claims and 9.25 for change of circumstances. The overall average for unitary authorities for Quarter 2 in 2014-2015 is 24.07 days for new claims and 11.24 days for change of circumstances.

New Claims
In the top 10 performing district authorities for processing new claims for quarter 2 in 2014-2015, 6 are Predominantly Rural, 1 is Urban with Significant Rural and 3 are Urban.
In the top 10 performing urban authorities for processing new claims for quarter 2 in 2014-2015, 2 are Predominantly Rural and 8 are Urban.

Rushmoor – This has the top spot for processing new claims for Quarter 2 with a turnaround time of 5 days. Rushmoor is also in the top position for change of circumstances processing with a turnaround time for quarter 2 of 1 day.

Impressive results at Rushmoor have followed a significant period of focus on service improvement in the benefits team. Ten years ago they were taking on average 81 days to process new claims and 17 days for change of circumstances. They used external support to review their processes and systems alongside staff and discovered that they were spending 90% of their time in relation to new claims dealing with Failure Demand in the system (missing information, recontacting the customer, chasing calls and emails) and only 10% on the Value Demand work of processing new claims. Putting advisors on the front line and focussing on educating the customers about what evidence was needed for an application amongst other system improvements meant that within five years they had reversed this trend, with 81% of time spend on Value Demand work and 19% on Failure Demand leading to impressive turnaround times for processing both new claims and change of circumstances.

Top 10 authorities for processing of new claims Quarter 2 2014-2015 DISTRICT		Top 10 authorities for processing of new claims Quarter 2 2014-2015 UNITARY	
Rushmoor	5	Darlington	11
Boston	7	Telford & Wrekin	11
Sedgemoor	7	Herefordshire	12
Tendring	7	Plymouth	13
Melton	10	Milton Keynes	14
Gedling	11	Halton	15
Oxford	11	Middlesbrough	15
South Kesteven	11	Stoke-on-Trent	15
South Northamptonshire	11	Northumberland	16
Teignbridge	11	Stockton-on-Tees	16
		Swindon	16