



## Proposal for a Resilient Revenues and Benefits Processing Service for Watford and Three Rivers Councils

**Presented By:** Louise Freeth  
Services Manager – Revenues and Benefits

**Address:** Serco RB Solutions  
Suites 1 & 2  
Heritage Wharf  
Portland Basin  
Ashton under Lyne  
Lancashire  
OL7 0QA

**Telephone:** 0773 8897874

**Email:** [louise.freeth@serco.com](mailto:louise.freeth@serco.com)

**Date:** 17<sup>th</sup> May 2011



**Contents**

1 Introduction ..... 2

2 Our Approach..... 3

    2.1 General..... 3

    2.2 Service Overview ..... 4

    2.3 On –site Visits..... 4

    2.4 IT Requirements ..... 5

    2.5 Performance ..... 5

    2.6 Quality of Service..... 9

3 References..... 11

4 Our Commercial Proposal ..... 12

5 Terms and Conditions ..... 13



## 1 Introduction

RB Solutions is a unique company who offer value for money business improvement solutions to the Revenues and Benefits environment.

We have a highly skilled team of experienced practitioners who understand the complexities of the Revenues and Benefits environment and are well versed in best practice procedures in Local Government. Our experience of providing remote processing services for Councils is second to none.

Our proposal to Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council is based on providing a resilient remote processing service to ensure that the excellent performance which is already being achieved by the Council can be maintained at all times.

Like all organisations, the Council is affected by circumstances which result in periods of higher than average demand on the service throughout the year e.g. legislation changes, annual billing, annual upratings, system updates, staff retention and recruitment issues, sickness, holidays etc. RB Solutions offers a resilient processing service during such times so that the quality of service you provide is unaffected.

RB Solutions was acquired by Serco on 17 February 2010. The acquisition of RB Solutions by Serco and the combination of Serco's existing BPO capabilities combined with RB Solutions specialist skills expands the breadth of services we can offer to existing and new customers.



## 2 Our Approach

### 2.1 General

We have successfully been working in the Revenues and Benefits off-site processing market since 2004 and have therefore worked with, and are currently working for a large number of Council's who use our services on an ad-hoc basis to cover peaks in their workload.

A major part of our success is due to the fact that we fully understand the Revenues and Benefits market place and what drives the volumes through your services. Because of this market specific experience and intelligence and the partnerships we have developed with our customers we have been able to create staffing procedures that enable us to successfully manage our business and compliment our customer's requirements and demands.

RB Solutions currently employs 55 Revenues and Benefits Assessors (Not including 35 London Borough of Islington Assessors). All our staff must have at least 3 years processing experience and a minimum of 2 years experience of the major back office systems (Academy, Northgate, Civica and Pericles). In addition, during the recruitment process all candidates undertake a written test and system processing test which they must pass before a job offer is made.

All RB Solutions staff are full time employees and are based at our Processing Centres in either Ashton under Lyne or Barrow in Furness.

In addition to these core resources we have successfully developed a number of resource pools that compliment our permanent RB Solutions staff that we can call upon to increase the flexibility of our service provision. These are:

1. A partnership with arvato Local Government to provide additional service resilience

Since August 2008 we have had an exclusive partnership with arvato Local Government when they became our resilience partner for remote Revenues and Benefits processing. In essence the context of the partnership is that arvato supply RB Solutions with experienced Revenues and Benefits Assessors to assist with any additional workload we may have, over and above our permanent employed staff. If arvato's Assessors are ever utilised, they work to the same standards (output levels and quality levels) as RB Solutions Assessors.

2. A pool of experienced and reliable Revenues & Benefits Associates

Since 2005 we have grown a pool of experienced self employed Revenues and Benefits Associates that we can call upon should there be a requirement that we cannot fulfil from RB Solutions staff or arvato. The Associates that we use have a proven track record of delivering service excellence in the Revenues and Benefits market place.

3. A flexible pool of experienced resources who can work additional hours in overtime



Our RB Solutions staff, our resilience partners' staff and our Revenues and Benefits Associates are extremely flexible and are prepared to work additional hours at short notice. This is only used for short term assignment support.

## 2.2 Service Overview

An overview of how the service would typically be delivered is outlined below:

1. your front office staff continue to deal face to face with the public's enquiries
2. once checked, logged and scanned, the forms/accounts or files are batched into an agreed work tray(s), which can be accessed from our processing centre(s)
3. our staff then process these onto your back office processing system to agreed service levels (see section 2.5)
4. the forms/accounts or files are completed as appropriate when they have been fully processed
5. we will e-mail you a statement of work completed at a frequency to be agreed

For the day to day running of the contract, RB Solutions will appoint an experienced team leader's to manage the assignments.

All team leader's are suitably experienced in either the Benefits or Council Tax field and part of their responsibility will be to manage the work allocated to our 'team' of processors to ensure the work is processed in the most efficient way to achieve your strategic objectives and targets. This will include monitoring 'pending' items to ensure there is no unnecessary delay between information being received and accounts being actioned as required.

Anthony Case would assume the role of Assignment Sponsor for Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council and as such would be the point of escalation for any operational issues which arise during its duration.

We can also confirm that RB Solutions conforms to all the relevant Housing Benefits Standards on the use of agency workers/outsourcing in Strategic Management, Internal Security and recruitment.

## 2.3 On-site Visits

In order to ensure that we conform to the Council's working practices and procedures we will send the assigned members of the Revenues and Benefits team onsite for 2/3 days at the commencement of the assignment. They will familiarise themselves with your procedures and will begin to process work during the visit. The onsite assessor(s) will then train other members of the offsite processing team as required to ensure that the service we provide is consistent with the way you work. There is a small charge for this to cover expenses only.

In addition, we will also send a member of the Quality team onsite for 1 day to agree the requirements for quality checking. There is no additional charge for this.





Moreover, RB Solutions will always endeavour to allocate the same staff to Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council each time there is a requirement for work, once again maintaining continuity of service.

We find that the on-site visits are invaluable in ensuring that we deliver a service specific to the needs of the Council, NOT a generic service which could be provided to any local authority.

#### 2.4 IT Requirements

Serco RB Solutions has two processing centres - Ashton under Lyne and Barrow in Furness, with a sophisticated IT infrastructure replicated in each office. Therefore the contract can be managed from either location which provides a high degree of resilience. These offices are backed up by 30Mb and 10Mb dedicated internet connections; additionally each office has a 16Mb ADSL link for Disaster Recovery. Moreover, should either office be unavailable we have implemented a home working solution whereby staff can access our infrastructure and work from home if necessary. There is therefore a great deal of resilience in the service and a range of options to ensure that Business Continuity can be ensured whatever the cause of the disruption.

The infrastructure is supported by firewalls managed by a third party and subject to a stringent SLA.

Please also note that our 5-year contract with the London Borough of Islington involves 85 Islington Benefits, Contact Islington and Parking Services staff based in Ashton with Serco RB Solutions responsible for the IT infrastructure and support of PC's and printers.

We therefore have considerable experience in ensuring Business Continuity for offsite processing and are extremely confident that the solution we propose is robust and resilient and that continuity of service will be ensured whatever issues may arise.

Serco RB Solutions IT staff will make contact with the nominated person and establish the method of connectivity to be used. We generally access Council's IT systems in two ways, either through a Citrix Access Gateway or through VPN, either IPSec Site-to-Site or L2TP client VPN. We would be happy to use either method when accessing Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council's processing systems. If you have another method of access which you would like to us explore we would be happy to discuss this further with you.

We will at this stage also supply user details so that network logins and system logins can be created. Once the necessary logins have been created, these can be tested immediately and access to the relevant systems established. Should you require us to use @watford or @threerivers.gov.uk email addresses then these can also be set-up.

We will also agree in advance if you require letters we generate as part of our processing at your council offices or at our own offices in Ashton under Lyne. Should you require that we print and despatch the letters on your behalf a supply of stationery and envelopes will need to be provided and we can agree how the postage should be accounted for.



## 2.5 Security and compliance

### 2.5.1 Serco RB Solutions Resources

Serco RB Solutions has adopted the baseline personal security standards, which is the good practice guide to the pre-employment screening of staff. At Serco RB Solutions we ensure that pre-employment checks are carried out on all staff whose responsibilities include accessing DWP information on CIS. As a minimum we verify:

- Identity
- Employment history for the preceding 3-years
- Nationality and immigration status
- Unspent criminal record
- A reasonable account of any significant periods of time spent abroad

There are no declarations of interest for any claims or Council Tax records in Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council. We are happy for our staff to prepare and sign any confidentiality statement required by the Council.

### 2.5.2 IT

Serco RB Solutions are currently operating with Local Authorities who are GCSx compliant. In March 2009, the DWP issued guidance relating to external providers of Housing Benefit services and provided 4 options for ensuring ongoing compliance to the GCSx requirements. After exploring each of the options available, we have chosen option 3, which is "The local authority extends its network (and therefore the footprint of the CoCo) to the part of the third party network that is delivering housing benefits services on its behalf". This option is the most suitable for our business type and service provision and has been implemented across the LA's we are currently working with.

Serco RB Solutions does not transfer any data from the authority's network to our own network. All data is accessed via the authority's network and system's and this provides the authority with the same safeguard's and audit trail that exists for their own staff.

Access by Serco RB Solutions to the authority's network and systems will be via a secure login for each member of staff. Serco RB Solutions only supply named users and do not use generic login details. All our PCs are password protected and appropriate access levels are determined, controlled and monitored and access is restricted to those with responsibility for working on that customers system.

Serco RB Solutions has a sophisticated firewall policy which is managed for us by a specialist company and allows us to ensure that our network cannot be breached and, therefore, prevents access to an authority's network by unauthorised parties.

Since Serco RB Solutions was formed in 2004 we have had no incidents relating to the misuse of confidential information that we have access to.

Our customers include us in any security audits they may be undergoing and we have had not had issues identified in our set-up.



### 2.5.3 Confidentiality

We will ensure that all information relating to cases in which the Council has instructed us to act on your behalf is treated as confidential and will not be disclosed for any purpose other than the performance of the contract.

All data held by us in connection with the contract will remain the property of the Council at all times and will be dealt with in accordance with the current Data Protection Legislation.

### 2.6 Performance

Below is a matrix which gives an indicative minimum average daily performance levels that RB Solutions would expect our Benefits Assessors to perform to with an industry standard DIP and Workflow system.

We are confident that RB Solutions can achieve these figures Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council.

CASE TYPE	NUMBER PER DAY
<b>New Claims</b>	
PRE-ASSESSED IS/JSA/PC Claims – Non PT	15
PRE-ASSESSED IS/JSA/PC Claims – PT	13-15
PRE-ASSESSED Non –IS Claims – Non PT	14
PRE-ASSESSED Non -IS Claims – PT	12
NOT PRE-ASSESSED IS/JSA/PC Claims – Non PT	13-14
NOT PRE-ASSESSED IS/JSA/PC Claims – PT	10-12
NOT PRE-ASSESSED Non -IS Claims – Non PT	12
NOT PRE-ASSESSED Non –IS Claims – PT	10
PRE-ASSESSED IS/JSA/PC CTB only Claims	16
PRE-ASSESSED Non –IS CTB only Claims	15
NOT PRE-ASSESSED IS/JSA/PC CTB only Claims	14
NOT PRE-ASSESSED Non –IS CTB only Claims	13
<b>CIC's</b>	
CANCELLATIONS	20
COA	13-14
HOUSEHOLD CHANGES	20
INCOME CHANGES	20-25





RENT INCREASES – Non PT	40
RENT INCREASED – PT	25-30
FUTURE UPRATINGS	40
ETD'S	40
POSTAL INTERVENTIONS – IS	30
POSTAL INTERVENTIONS – Non IS	15-20
VISIT INTERVENTIONS – IS	30
VISIT INTERVENTIONS	15-20

Similarly, the matrix below gives an indicative daily performance level for Council Tax Assessors which we are confident we could achieve for Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council.

WORK TYPE	NUMBER PER DAY
OCCUPATIONS/VACATIONS	30
DISCOUNT APPLICATIONS	40
EXEMPTIONS	40
CTY VO CHANGES	50
RECOVERY PROCESSING (MIXED CASELOAD)	25
MIXED CASELOAD	25

The above totals include the reading of correspondence on file, checking of associated accounts, dealing with any outstanding correspondence, completing notes on both the processing application and DIP system and writing associated letters / documentation.

We would assure the Council that should RB Solutions staff achieve the above average daily performance target within the 7.5 hour working day they will continue to process for the remainder of the working day.

The actual hours worked and performance achieved by individual and by the team in total will be provided to the Council at the agreed frequency from reports produced from our PMQA software.



## 2.7 Quality of Service

RB Solutions' focus is very much on Quality and we are convinced that we provide the best offsite processing capability for Revenues and Benefits in the UK. Our objective is to provide a quality service ensuring that the output we provide is of a very high standard.

The main reason we are able to provide such a high quality of service is that all our staff are highly qualified and experienced revenues/benefit processors. To ensure this we undertake a stringent selection process for all potential staff which includes in-depth interviews and a practical Revenues / Benefits knowledge test, which requires a 100% pass rate in order for an offer of employment to be made. In addition we only employ team leaders who have had previous supervisory experience in the Revenues / Benefits environment.

Within RB Solutions each team leader is responsible for the day to day management of a maximum of 8 processing staff, monitoring and allocating the appropriate type and amount of work to each individual on a daily basis. Targets for both throughput and accuracy are set for staff, and are monitored continuously by team leaders and daily by managers. The team leader managing the staff will also carry out regular spot checks to ensure that the appropriate quality is achieved. This enables us to monitor the accuracy and throughput of staff.

Our processing centres are developing a true "ONE TEAM" Culture – with daily team briefings, weekly structured meetings and a weekly training session using both internal and external resources, to keep up with and share best practice procedures. A monthly "Legislation Workshop" ensures that we can be confident in our staff's knowledge of regulations and other initiatives.

To further ensure that RB Solutions staff conform to a consistent and accurate level we utilise checklists on all contracts we undertake. We can provide example Quality reports for both Council Tax and Benefits, which are used as a Best Practice guideline to maintain accuracy and overall efficiency should you require them.

As standard we provide a 10% quality check for all the work we have processed – all checking being done by our quality team, not by the team processing the data. Quality Control Checklists for Council Tax and Benefits, which demonstrate how this is achieved can also be provided if required.

As far as accuracy is concerned, on all our contracts we achieve a very high accuracy figure (95%-99% is the average for pre-assessed work) and we would deliver 98% accuracy at Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council.

The actual figures for both throughput and accuracy will be collated and monitored as part of the contract and statistics will be provided to the Council at an agreed frequency. For our own internal purposes we monitor Quality on a weekly basis so that any issues that can be identified quickly and remedial action put in place if necessary.

The PMQA system allows for a percentage of work to be automatically selected for each member of staff. The percentage selection can be varied for each user.



The system selects the cases to be checked each day, and our QA Team then carry out the checks as necessary and record the details and result of the check within the system. This then allows us to see the following information at any time:

- Number of checks completed for each user;
- Number of errors identified, broken down into financial, non-financial & procedural error categories;
- % quality level for financial, non-financial and procedural error categories;
- Details of any errors, such as income details or claim details, which enables us to quickly identify and training needs.

Any errors identified either financial or non-financial will be corrected at our expense.

DRAFT



### 3 References

As mentioned above our business is built very much on the quality of the service we provide and we strongly encourage all prospective customers to take up references.

RB Solutions has undertaken a substantial amount of processing work for a large number of Council's. The following Authorities are a selection for your information and we would be happy to pass on contact details for you to take references as required:

Bath and North East Somerset Council ([Council Tax, Benefits and Appeals](#))

Basildon District Council ([Quality Checking, Council Tax, Benefits and Appeals](#))

Bracknell Forest Borough Council ([Benefits, Appeals and Quality Checking](#))

Broxbourne Borough Council ([Benefits](#))

Dacorum Borough Council ([Benefits](#))

Dudley MBC ([Benefits](#))

Fareham Borough Council ([Benefits and Council Tax](#))

Flintshire County Council ([Benefits](#))

Gosport Borough Council ([Benefits](#))

Gwynedd Council ([Benefits](#))

London Borough of Barnet ([Council Tax and Benefits](#))

London Borough of Enfield ([Council Tax and Benefits](#))

London Borough of Haringey ([Benefits and Council Tax](#))

London Borough of Havering ([Benefits and Council Tax](#))

London Borough of Islington ([Benefits, Appeals and Quality Checking](#))

Medway Council ([Council Tax and Benefits](#))

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea ([Benefits](#))

Southend on Sea Borough Council ([Benefits](#))

West Somerset District Council ([Council Tax and Benefits](#))

Wrexham County Borough Council ([Council Tax and Benefits](#))

In addition we would be delighted to host a visit to our processing centre in either Ashton under Lyne or Barrow, for members of the Council's Revenues and Benefits team to see the operation and meet some of the people involved in providing the service.



#### 4 Our Commercial Proposal

Serco RB Solutions are proposing to enter into a flexible partnership with Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council where the Councils can call on our services as and when you require them.

##### **The solution:**

Serco RB Solutions would offer the services of suitably experienced Revenues Officers and Benefit Assessors for a fixed daily rate.

The rate would either be a flat rate, which is not dependent on the number of assessors or the length of the assignment, or could incorporate discounts depending on the number of staff required and the duration of the assignment.

Serco RB Solutions would provide staff to Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council within a maximum lead time of 10 working days from the request being received (if the resource is available within the 10 working day period, it will be made available earlier).

The costs are based on a 37.5 hour week.

All prices are subject to VAT.

The quote would be valid for 30-days from the date of the proposal.

DRAFT





## 5 Terms and Conditions

This proposal is subject to terms and conditions to be agreed.

It is proposed that this service be added to the existing contract under full Contract Change management.

Prices quoted are subject to VAT at the standard rate.

DRAFT