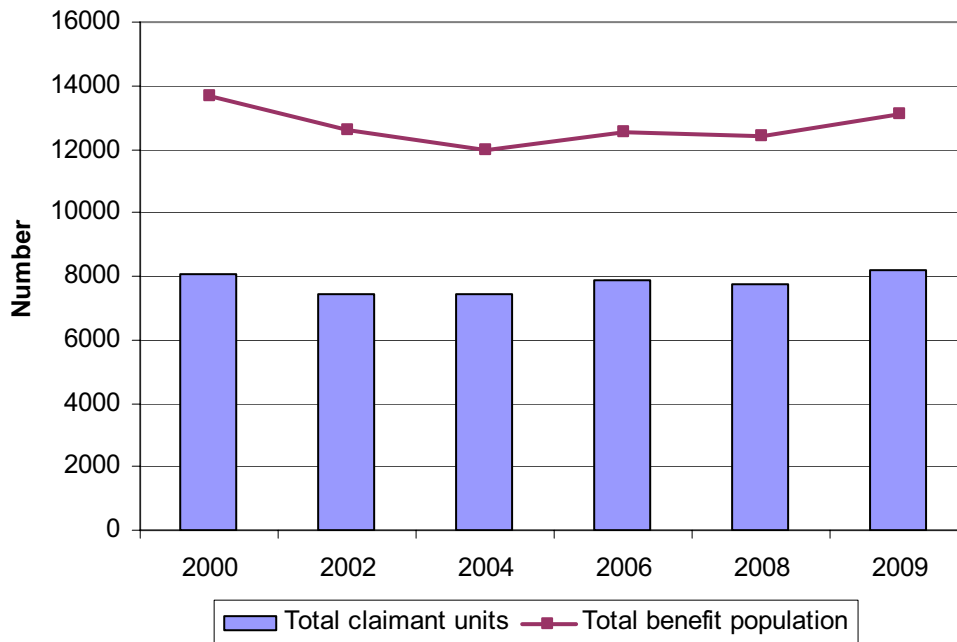


## 8 Conclusion

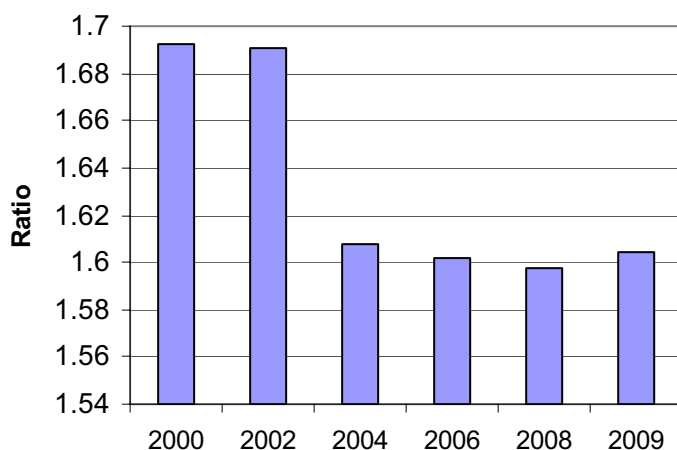
### 8.1 Summary of change over time

Figure 8.1 below compares the number of claimant units and the benefit population over time. Between 2000 and 2004 there was a marked reduction in the benefit population, which dropped by 12%, together with a decline of 8% in the number of claimant units. From 2004 to 2006 the number of claimant units and the total benefit population increased by 5%, probably as a result of a change in the reapplication process. Between 2006 and 2008 there was a 1% reduction in the number of claimant units and a fall of 1% in the total benefit population. Since 2008 there has been a 5% increase in the number of claimant units and a rise of 6% in the total benefit population.

**Figure 8.1: Benefit claimant units and benefit population over time; 2000-2009**



**Figure 8.2: Mean benefit population per claimant unit, 2000 to 2009**



There were 117 more claimant units in 2009 than in 2000; however, the benefit population was 4% smaller, with 13,122 people, compared to 13,649 in 2000.

As shown in Figure 8.2, the mean benefit population per claimant unit (the average number of people for whom each claim is made) has dropped consistently over time, with a marked drop between 2002 and 2004. While

2009 has brought an increase in both the benefit population and the number of claimant units,

the average number of people per claim has remained lower than in 2000, which explains why the benefit population is smaller. The reasons for this are explored further in Figure 8.3 below.

Figure 8.3 shows the composition of claimant units over time. Overall, the composition has remained fairly similar over time, with single pensioners and single non-pensioners without children forming the largest proportion of claimant units. Over time these two groups have grown to account for two thirds of claimants in 2009, compared to 62% of claimants in 2000. All couple claimant units (couple pensioners, couple non-pensioners and couple parents) have formed a decreasing proportion of all claimant units over time, from 21% in 2000 to 16% in 2008, however this has changed slightly since 2008, with couple claimants accounting for 17% of claimant units in 2009. The proportion composed of lone parent claimant units has remained fairly stable over time, but has decreased slightly since 2008.

These subtle changes in the composition of claimant units explain why the mean benefit population per claimant unit has fallen over time from 2000 to 2009, and why the average number of people per claim has increased slightly between 2008 and 2009. Since 2000, an increasing proportion of claims have been made for a single person, and a declining proportion have been made on behalf of a partner and/or dependent children, however, the proportion of claims made on behalf of a partner has increased slightly since 2008.

**Figure 8.3: Claimant unit composition, 2000 to 2009**

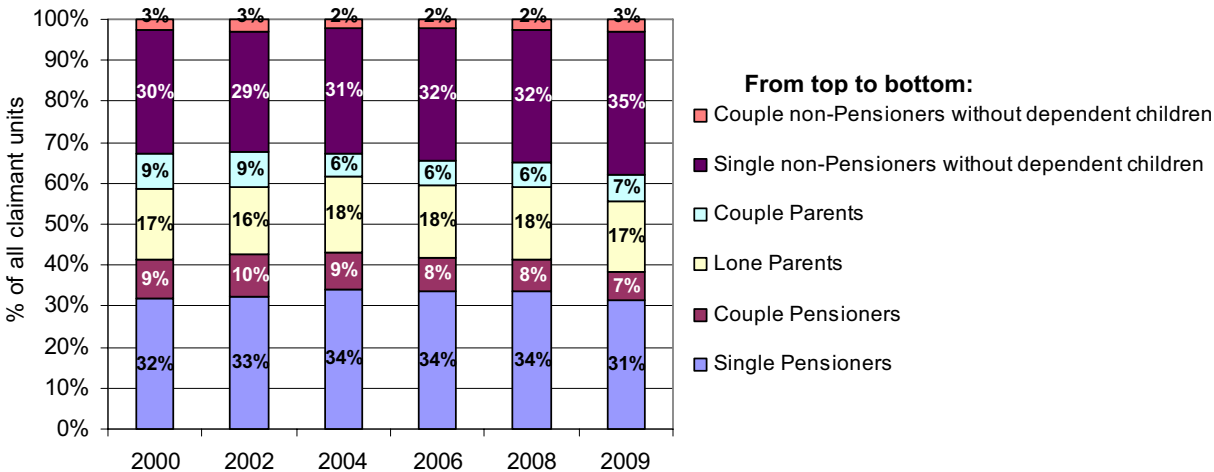


Figure 8.3 also shows other subtle changes in the composition of claimant units. Although the proportion of claims made for a single person has fallen slightly since 2008, the proportion of claims made by a single non-pensioner without dependent children has increased, from 32% to 35% of all claimant units. At the same time, the proportion of single pensioner claimant units has decreased, from 34% to 31% of all claimant units. Overall, the pensioner benefit population has fallen by 3% since 2008, despite a 6% increase in the total benefit population.

This report has also identified other subtle changes in the characteristics of the benefit population since 2008. For example, the proportion of privately or socially rented claimant units has increased from 34% to 37% of all claimant units. In 2009, 88% of claims for HB/CTB had been in place for six months or more, compared to 93% in 2008. People receiving benefits in 2008 had been claiming for 6 months longer, on average, than people receiving benefits in 2009. 13% of all HB/CTB claims were made by a claimant who also claimed Jobseeker's

Allowance in 2009, compared to 8% in 2008. Among those claiming HB/CTB for under six months, 36% were also receiving Jobseeker's Allowance in 2009, compared to 22% in 2008.

These subtle changes indicate a slight shift in the makeup of the benefit population. Although the large core of people attached to benefits identified in last year's report still exists, the benefit population now includes a greater proportion of single non-pensioner claimants without dependent children, and greater proportions of non-pensioner couple claimants, both with and without children. Working age claimants now make up 61% of all claimant units, compared to 58% in 2008, and have increased in number by 493, with a 77% increase in the number of working age claimants also receiving Jobseeker's Allowance. The number of pensioner claimants has fallen, however, by 3%.

## **8.2 Conclusion**

Regularly monitoring the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit population in Cambridge City allows us to build up a detailed picture of changes across the City in terms of areas that are likely to be more or less vulnerable to deprivation.

- The total HB/CTB benefit population in Cambridge has risen by 6% since 2008, but still represents 11% of the City's population as the 6% increase in the benefit population represents a relatively small number of people.
- Working age claimants make up 61% of claims, with pensioner claimants making up the remaining 39%. 21% of working age claimants also receive Jobseeker's Allowance and a further 14% receive Incapacity Benefit or Employment and Support Allowance. Of the remaining 65% of working age HB/CTB claimants, 25% are lone parents, and a further 10% are disabled (receiving DLA). Of the remaining 30%, 19% receive income-related benefits (IS) and 11% receive no additional support.
- The number of dependent children living in HB/CTB claimant units has risen by 5% since 2008, following a fall of 1% between 2006 and 2008. Overall, however, the proportion of the benefit population composed of dependent children has remained unchanged since 2006.
- The number of single non-pensioner claimants without dependent children has risen by 14% since 2008, following a fall of 1% between 2006 and 2008. People in this group now form 35% of benefit claimants and 22% of the total benefit population.
- The number of pensioners living in HB/CTB claimant units has fallen by 3% since 2008, following a fall of 1% between 2006 and 2008. Pensioners make up 28% of the total HB/CTB benefit population, yet account for 39% of the HB/CTB claimant units.
- The location of new development incorporating social housing is having a noticeable effect on the concentration of claimants at a small area level. Overall, however, the geographical distribution of the benefit population has changed little since 2008, with almost no change in the share of the benefit population in Abbey (15%), Arbury (11%), Castle (2%), Coleridge (7%), King's Hedges (14%), Market (2%), Newnham (1%), Petersfield (5%), Queen Edith's (4%), Romsey (7%), Trumpington (6%) and West Chesterton (4%), and only a small increase in East Chesterton (12% to 13%), and a small decrease in Cherry Hinton (10% to 9%).

- The distribution of the benefit population follows similar patterns to the distribution of other factors related to deprivation, such as poor educational attainment and poor health status. This suggests that people vulnerable to income poverty are also likely to be experiencing other aspects of deprivation. This highlights the value of using the benefit population as a small area indicator of deprivation in general.

While the proportion of Cambridge City's population living in households receiving HB/CTB remains about the same, the characteristics of the benefit population continue to change subtly over time. With the downturn in the national economy, rising unemployment and increasing benefit claimants, it is not surprising that the makeup of the benefit population has changed slightly in 2009. What is not clear is what will happen in the future. It is not known when and if benefit claimants will return to pre-recession levels, or whether the changes in the claimant characteristics will have any lasting effects on the benefit population. For these reasons, it will be crucial to continue to monitor the uptake of means-tested benefits across the Cambridge City Council area.