



Housing Income and Money Advice

Team Plan 2015/16

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Service Plan: Housing and Building Services
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Team Overview – Housing Income and Money Advice

Housing Income and Money Advice team undertakes a number of key roles for the Council. The team aims to maximise the Council's housing related income whilst ensuring a sensitive and sympathetic approach to tenants in genuine hardship and to assist tenants and residents in maximising welfare benefit take up through the development of a comprehensive welfare benefit advice service.

The Team's broad functions are:

List the key functions of the team.

- To deliver an effective debt monitoring and management service
- To support and assist in the delivery of the Council's Financial Inclusion and other Corporate policies
- To liaise effectively with Housing Management Service, Supporting People Service, Social Services, DWP, Housing Benefit Service and any other relevant body with the aim of supporting tenants/residents to maintain their tenancies/homes
- To provide training, briefing and information to colleagues and other agencies to assist customers in understanding what benefits are available to them and to make applications
- To Act as advocate to customers in order for them to appeal or challenge welfare benefit decisions
- To organise, deliver and monitor appropriate welfare benefit take up campaigns in conjunction with the Housing Manager and Tenant Participation staff.
- Participate in the setting of meaningful and challenging performance indicators and targets
- To minimise housing related debt whilst maximising tenants/residents income through a proactive and sensitive debt recovery and advice service
- To ensure reconciliation of all related housing income, including VCAS, cash balancing, contents insurance, sundry debt accounts, former tenant debt, standing orders and direct debits. Comply with government guidelines and strict time limits in respect of Right to Buy legislation and assessment criteria

Our Contribution to Service Plan priorities 2014/15

Our contribution to the Service Plan priorities last year:

- Rent arrears are well below target. The current level remains consistently under 1%.
- The number of evictions has decreased. There have been improvements in delivery of Money Advice which has led to more tenancies being sustained.

Our Team Plan 2015/16

Service Outcome 1:		Everyone has a home that they can afford that meets their needs						
Objective 1:		To be an excellent landlord in terms of housing and asset management services						
Ref.	During 2015-16 we plan to:	Success Criteria/ Outcomes we'll achieve from this action are:	High, Medium or Low priority	Officer responsible for achieving this action	Start date	Finish date	How will the work be resourced?	Progress
HS/A113	Implement the Lettings Strategy associated operational plan and rechargeable repairs policy.	Improved service for tenants in terms of lettings. Ability to recharge tenants that have caused damage to property.	High	Mike Ingram	April 2015	March 2016	The Housing Management will develop. (Approximately 1 FTE will ensure completion of the action).	
(HS/A113)	1. Implement the recovery of rechargeable repairs in line with the Rechargeable Repairs Policy.	Documented procedures. IT profile set up as regards standard letters and history of recovery action. Customer recharge information leaflet. Rechargeable write-off policy. Monitoring criteria – i.e. amount of arrears outstanding, percentage of arrears collected and court cases.	High	Income Officer	Jan 2015	Aug 2015	Existing resources with possible IT implications	
(HS/A113)	2. Review current rent policy and rent	Develop revised rent policy and rent	High	SA/MA	Jan 2015	Aug 2015	Resourced across the department	

	procedure to reflect welfare benefit and legislative changes.	<p>procedure.</p> <p>Report to Cabinet.</p> <p>Develop rents newsletter/consulting with customers.</p> <p>Performance measures/indicators</p>						
(HS/A113)	3. Review leaseholder management including service charges.	<p>To include introduction of Section 20 processes, and review of Section 20 protocol.</p> <p>Attendance at leaseholder forums.</p> <p>Satisfaction surveys.</p> <p>Performance monitoring</p>	High	SA/IO Housing Accountant	April 2014	April 2016	Consultancy may be required - £15,000	
(HS/A113)	4. Benchmark income stream in line with Housemark.	To drive service improvement for customers and increase satisfaction.	Medium	Business Support Manager/SA	June 2015	Jan 2016	Senior managers to work with business Support Manager to develop logical and appropriate suite of indicators for benchmarking purposes.	
(HS/A113)	5. Review former tenant write-off policy.	<p>Develop revised write-off policy.</p> <p>Performance</p>	High	SA/IO Housing Accountant	Jan 2015	April 2016	Resources across the department	

		measures/indicators.						
HS/A075	Review Service charges and approach to leaseholder management – including the introduction of the Section 20 processes in relation to external repairs.	Leaseholder properties are improved with improved client satisfaction.	High	Mike Ingram	April 2015	March 2016	Income team to administer with Tenant Liaison team and Housing Officer carrying out the liaison role.	

Service Outcome 1:		Everyone has a home that they can afford that meets their needs						
Objective 3:		To identify and provide excellent housing related support services that meet the needs of our residents.						
Ref.	During 2015-16 we plan to:	Success Criteria/ Outcomes we'll achieve from this action are:	High, Medium or Low priority	Officer responsible for achieving this action	Start date	Finish date	How will the work be resourced?	Progress
	1. Prepare for the impact of Universal Credit for both the Authority and our customers.	To educate customers/need for bank account. Research banks/building societies/credit union. Profile tenants re I.T., literacy etc.	High	Money Advice SA	Jan 2015	April 2016	Within existing resources.	

Service Outcome 2:		Every customer is highly satisfied with the services we directly provide (Relates to non-housing services)						
Objective 3:		To deliver customer-focussed, cost-effective services						
Ref.	During 2015-16 we plan to:	Success Criteria/ Outcomes we'll achieve from this action are:	High, Medium or Low priority	Officer responsible for achieving this action	Start date	Finish date	How will the work be resourced?	Progress
	1. Introduction of customer satisfaction and learning logs for the Money Advice Service.	Continued improvement in our approach to tailored money advice solutions	High	Money Advice Team	Dec 2014	Aug 2015	No additional resources	
	2. Continue to strengthen links with other support organisations and to continue partnership working.	Continued improvement in our approach to tailored money advice solutions.	High	Money Advice Team/ Income Officer	April 2015	March 2016	No additional resources.	