

## **The Vale of Glamorgan Council**

### **Cabinet Meeting: 17th December 2018**

### **Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Building Services**

#### **Pilot Tenancy Ready Project Outcomes**

##### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Cabinet with details of the positive outcomes achieved by the Council funded Tenancy Ready Project which is managed by Newydd Housing Association to prevent homelessness and support tenancy sustainability.
2. To seek approval to continue to part fund the scheme for the financial year 2019/20.

##### **Recommendations**

1. That Cabinet notes the outcomes achieved by the Pilot Tenancy Ready Project, which is managed by Newydd Housing Association.
2. That Cabinet approves a financial contribution of £5, 619.49 (20%) towards the full running costs of the Scheme in 2019/20, in line with similar contributions agreed by the Council's partner Registered Social Landlords.

##### **Reasons for the Recommendations**

1. To ensure that Cabinet is fully informed of the important role the Project plays in supporting the Council's homelessness prevention agenda.
2. To ensure the continuation of the Project.

##### **Background**

3. The Tenancy Ready Project began in January 2017 as a 2 year pilot project to assist residents of the Vale of Glamorgan to maintain their homes and to sustain their tenancies.
4. The pilot was wholly funded by the Vale of Glamorgan Council to prevent tenancy failures and to reduce homelessness presentations. Delivered by Newydd Housing Association it targeted applicants on the Homes4U Scheme and existing social housing tenants of all of the Homes4U partners.

5. The project has enabled participants to develop an understanding of their rights and responsibilities as a tenant and how to maintain their home and live independently, including assistance with budgeting.
6. Research has shown that many tenancies fail within the first year, leaving housing providers with costs which could be prevented by pre-tenancy work. Conservative calculations indicate that an average eviction costs approximately £6000 due to void & rent loss, rent arrears, court costs and re-let costs.
7. It is as a result of these potential void costs and the successful outcomes achieved by the Project to date that approval is being sought for the Council to make a financial contribution to allow the Project to continue throughout 2019/2020.
8. An initial review of the project has been undertaken by Newydd and is attached at Appendix 1.

### **Relevant Issues and Options**

9. The first three months of the project were spent researching best practice in the field of tenancy sustainment activities and gathering the relevant information required from partners. The project was then rolled out to the Homes 4 U partners and partner agencies, the number of which continues to expand.
10. In the period April 2017 to April 2018, the Project received 185 referrals from the Council's Housing Solutions and Hostel Teams, Gwalia, Probation Services, Newydd & Hafod Housing Associations.
11. Over half of the referrals received by the Project were for applicants who were accommodated in temporary accommodation or residing with family and friends and classed in housing crisis and being supported to secure alternative, suitable and permanent accommodation.
12. Of the 185 referrals received 164 received the Tenancy Ready training, of these 93 were assisted to remain in their home and maintained a tenancy, 45 did not respond to the evaluation questionnaire and 2 tenancies failed due to incompatibility with their house share mate. The remaining 24 individuals were not included within the evaluation as they did not meet the evaluation criteria of it being more than six months from the end of their Tenancy Ready Training.
13. It was expected that there would be a high number of clients who had received the training that would not respond to the feedback questionnaires due to their vulnerability. For this reason, feedback will in future also be sought from landlords on tenancy sustainability following the training.
14. The Project has continued to develop. Less group sessions have taken place as experience has shown that some participants' level of knowledge varied greatly and more individually tailored training was required for some. The Project therefore now provides more 1-2-1 sessions to allow the trainer to concentrate on the individual's requirements more effectively.
15. Once the training is completed, the Project makes contact with the participants after 3 and 6 months in order to check that they have maintained their tenancies and to identify if there are any issues and if further support and assistance is required.
16. It is planned that in the future the Project will also contact all new Homes4U applicants when they join the Scheme to offer them the Tenancy Ready training.

17. The Project is also being extended to provide support and guidance to young persons accommodated by the Council in supported accommodation projects to ensure that they are ready for move-on into independent living.
18. Discussions have also been held with the South Wales Probation Service, the Governor of Cardiff Prison and St Giles Trust Prisoner Support Service to extend the Tenancy Ready Project within Cardiff Prison for prisoners from the Vale of Glamorgan to prepare them to live independently on their release.
19. More comprehensive outcomes data will be developed in 2019/20 which will be agreed by all partners and reported to Cabinet in the future.

### **Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)**

20. The Council's contribution of 20% (£5,619.49) towards the full annual cost for the Project in 2019/20 will be met from the Housing General Fund.

### **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

21. The funding will help promote community stability ensuring the prevention of homelessness and improved tenancy sustainability for all tenures across the Vale of Glamorgan.

### **Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)**

22. The provision of the funding to Newydd Housing Association will enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duties set down in Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

23. The continuation of the Tenancy Ready Scheme and development of homelessness services across the Vale of Glamorgan will positively impact upon the lives of those threatened with homelessness, and help to protect the most vulnerable from crime.

### **Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)**

24. The provision of the funding to Newydd Housing Association will enable the Council to ensure its statutory homelessness service complies with the requirements of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and maintain its focus on addressing one of the most acute forms of social exclusion in Wales.

### **Corporate/Service Objectives**

25. This report is consistent with the following Corporate and Service Objectives of the Council's Corporate service plan;
26. Wellbeing Outcome 1: An inclusive and safe vale.
27. Objective 2: Provide decent homes and safe communities.

### **Policy Framework and Budget**

28. This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.

### **Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)**

29. No individual ward Members have been consulted as there are no proposals within this report that would affect a specific ward.

## **Relevant Scrutiny Committee**

30. Homes and Safe Communities

### **Background Papers**

Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014

Vale of Glamorgan Housing Strategy 2015 - 2020

Vale of Glamorgan Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan 2018 - 2021

Corporate Strategy & Action Plan for Children & Young People who need Care & Support  
2016 - 2019

Draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018 - 2022

### **Contact Officer**

Ian Jones, Housing Solutions Manager

### **Officers Consulted**

Committee Reports  
Elinor Hughes, Accountant

### **Responsible Officer:**

Miles Punter, Director of Environment and Housing

# Tenancy Ready Project

## One-year review



## Background

The Tenancy Ready Project began in January 2017 to give residents the skills, confidence and knowledge to manage their own tenancies. It is a partnership between Newydd and the other Homes 4 U partners, currently funded by the Vale of Glamorgan council for a period of 2 years and employs one officer. The project enables participants to develop an understanding of what a tenancy would involve and what they would need to do to maintain a tenancy and live independently.

The project is open to referrals from all Homes 4 U partners for both tenancy ready support and tenancy sustainment activities for those struggling with their tenancy.

The aim is to create sustainable tenancies;

*“A sustainable tenancy is one which can be maintained successfully by the tenant throughout the life of the tenancy” (CIH, 2014).*

Research by We Are Digital has shown that in the first year many tenancies fail, leaving Housing Associations with eviction costs which could be prevented by pre-tenancy work. Newydd’s conservative calculations have shown that the average eviction costs roughly £6000 which is caused by void rental loss, rent arrears, court costs and re-let costs.

The National Homelessness Advice Service have stated that the common reasons for tenancy failures within the first year are:

- having insufficient independent living skills
- not having enough household furniture and equipment (and insufficient funds to equip the household)
- inexperience and difficulties in learning to budget, which can lead to debt problems and rent arrears
- delays or difficulties in claiming benefits, or managing finances, which can also lead to debt problems and rent arrears.
- feelings of isolation in their new neighbourhood, particularly if a young person lives some distance from friends and family.
- suffering from antisocial behaviour and harassment
- a lack of tenancy support.

We have developed the training programme with this in mind, and also based on guidance provided by Crisis which explains vital tenancy management skills and covers housing options, tenancy agreements, rights and responsibilities, living on a limited budget, maintaining a property, anti-social behaviour, Welfare Reform, how to deal with issues that may arise, furniture options and help and support available.

There is a separate programme aimed at those who are looking to enter shared accommodation, which explains the expectations of living in shared accommodation and the differences in the tenancies for those who will be sharing facilities, as well as all the vital skills to live independently listed above.

The Tenancy Recovery programme is aimed at existing tenants struggling to maintain their tenancy. The programme looks at the skills needed to maintain the

tenancy and ways to correct issues that have already arisen such as rent arrears or antisocial behaviour.

For both the Tenancy Ready & Tenancy Recovery programmes; when individuals are referred they are usually seen within two weeks.

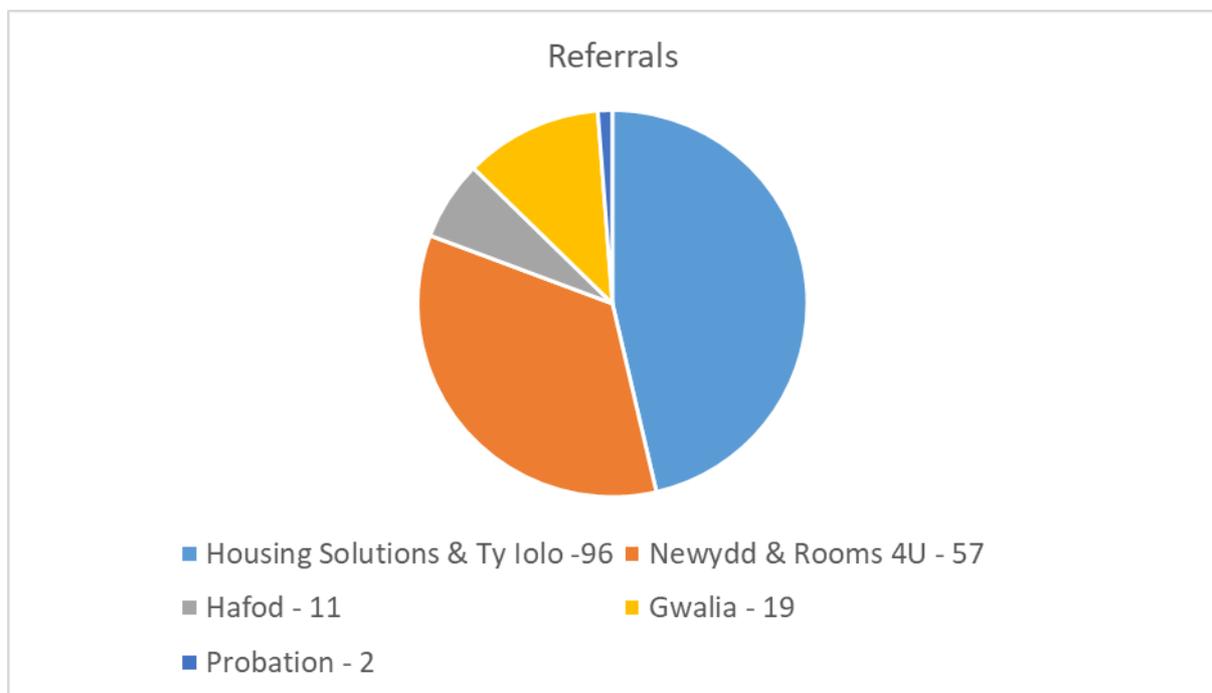
Following the pre-tenancy training, participants are contacted three months and 6 months after the training has been completed to ensure they are managing the tenancy; and if they are not the correct support can be put in place to ensure the tenancy is sustained.

## Project statistics

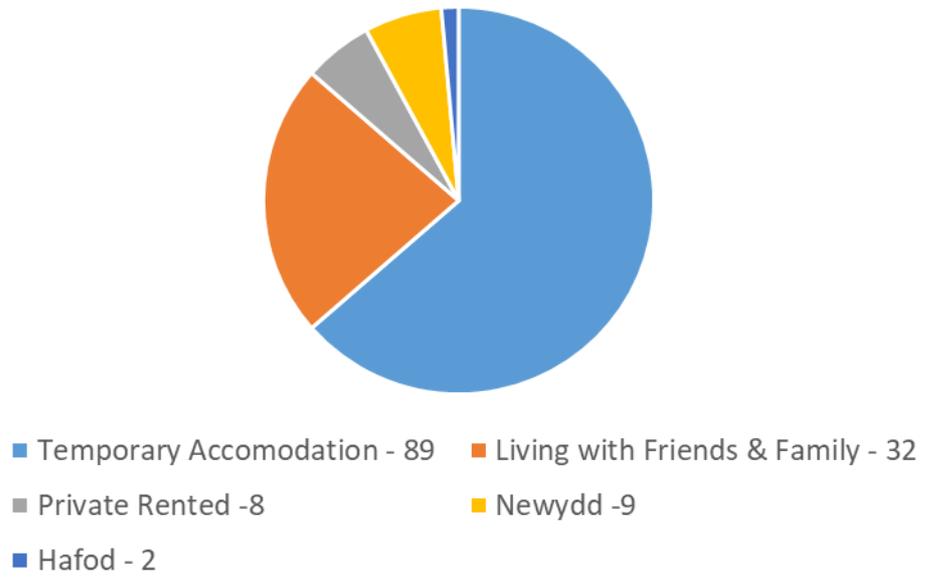
The first three months of the project were spent researching best practice in the field of tenancy sustainment activities and gathering the relevant information required from partners. The project was then rolled out to the Homes 4 U partners and partner agencies; as well as requesting any additional areas that each partner would like included in the training. We are continuing to ensure to branch out by contacting and working with as many agencies as possible. The following statistics are from April 2017 to April 2018.

***The project has helped 140 individuals through tenancy ready training.***

***The project has received 185 referrals from the following agencies.***

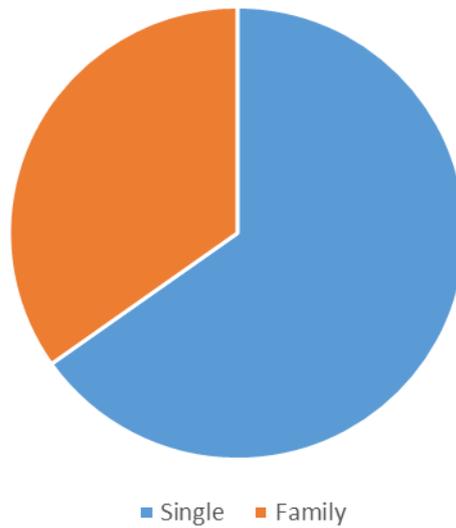


Accommodation whilst completing the training



The number of single people or families we have seen.

Single/Family





Part of the Tenancy Ready process is ensuring the help and support is in place.

Below are the referrals that have been made to agencies and services from April 2017- April 2018.

Employment support - referred for one to one help to either further education or to find suitable employment.

CAB - To receive help with debts and other financial issues.

Shelter - help with legal enquiries

Supporting People - longer term support.

Financial Inclusion - Ongoing financial support

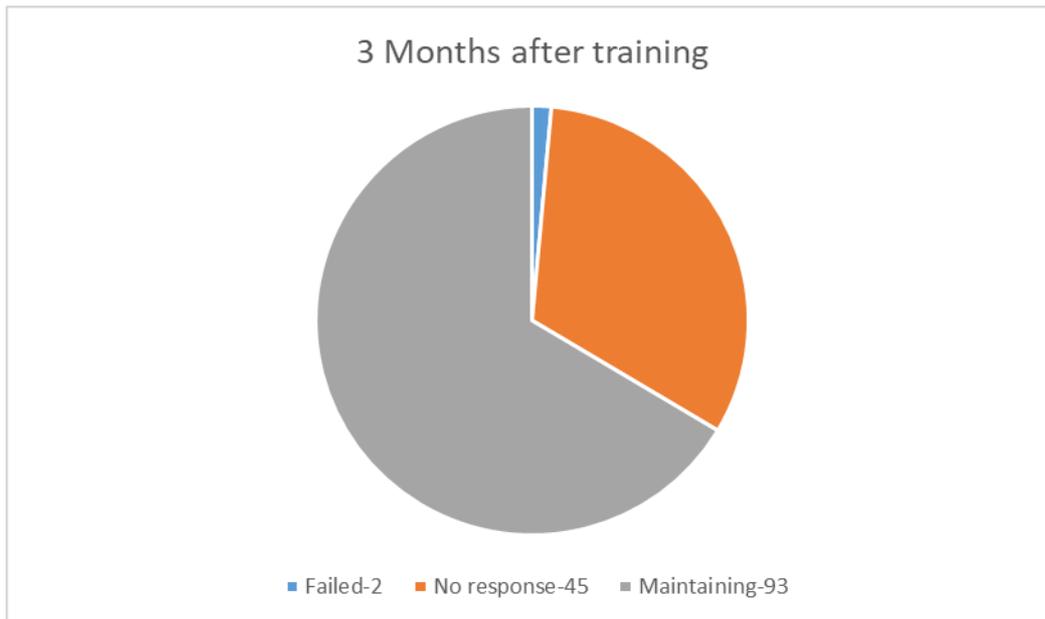
Discretionary Assistance fund - essential items when moving into a property

Digital - develop digital skills and access digital products

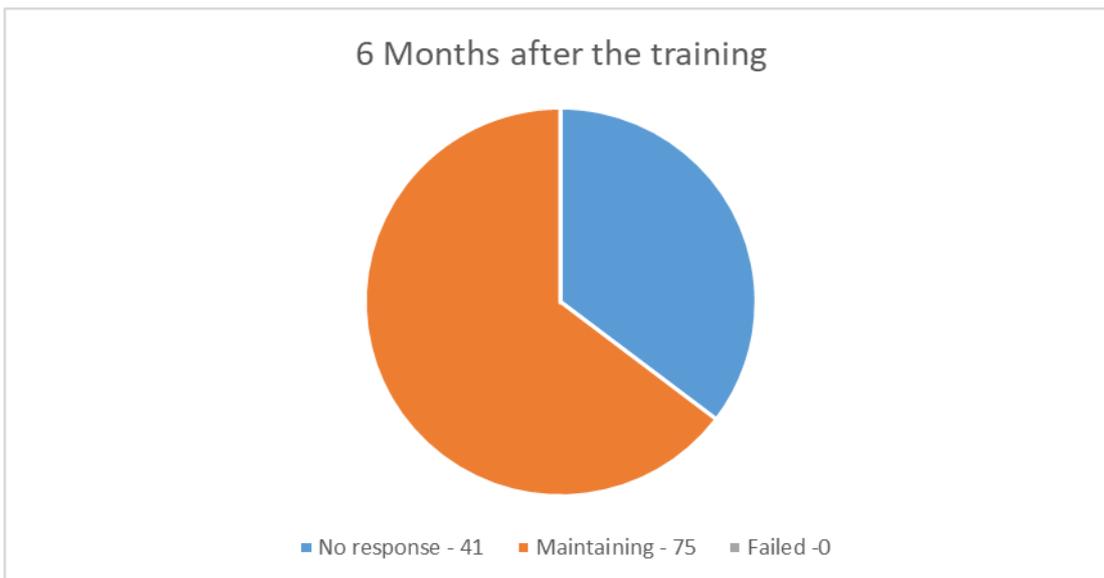
Utilities - Set up essential utilities

Green Stream flooring - Access to flooring tiles

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme, we contact tenants after three months and six months'. At this stage we also ensure the tenant is receiving all of the support necessary to maintain their tenancy, and to find out if there are additional queries since the tenancy ready training and accepting a property.



After three months, 93 were maintaining their tenancies, 45 were not responding due to various reasons and 2 failed. The 2 that failed were in the shared accommodation and could no longer live together.



There are still 24 individuals who are yet to be included in the statistics due to the date they completed the training and therefore the 6-month reviews are not yet due.

Due to the level of non-responses from participants at the call back stage, it would be extremely useful if an additional data sharing protocol could be set up amongst the Homes 4 U partners. Whereby the Tenancy Ready Officer is able to request information to ascertain whether or not a tenant who has undertaken the training has maintained their tenancy at three and six months if they are unable to be contacted in the first instance. This would ensure we are able to provide assurances to the partnership of the continued success of the project.

# What we have learned so far

1. When the project started we thought group sessions would be the most suitable way to educate as many people as possible. Early on it was clear that the group sessions were only effective in a few situations, for example close friends and for the shared accommodation. In the one to one sessions the financial situation of each participant can be looked at in greater detail by for example carrying out a financial capability assessment which allows us to check the affordability of their housing costs, budgeting, and benefits review. This allows us to support participants to deal with any potential issues before the tenancy starts.
2. The knowledge of each participant varied greatly, and meant sessions had to be adapted to each participant.
3. The training is the start of the tenancy ready process. The sessions are to give a basic knowledge which can then be built on in various different ways, to ensure the tenancy is set up and maintained.
4. The three monthly calls and six monthly calls have been beneficial to identify any issues and offer assistance and guidance if it is needed.

## Plan going forward

Funding is due to end in January 2019. Until this point, the project will continue to build relationships with agencies and try to fit the tenancy ready project into organisations' procedures to ensure tenants get the help they require.

The project is working with the Housing Solutions team and St Giles Trust to set up procedures to engage with prison leavers before they leave prison. This is to give them the best opportunity possible to be able to sustain a tenancy once they are released. The pre-tenancy training will be provided prior to their release date and the Housing solutions team will work with them to find a property. This will mean they can avoid temporary accommodation which many often struggle with.

The project will continue to offer help and support to the vulnerable residents and ensure they get the help and support they require whether that is from the Tenancy Ready Officer or through referrals to other agencies.

**We are seeking approval from the Homes 4 U partners to permanently fund this position. This will cost £5,563.85 per partner, with a 1% increase per annum in line with potential salary uplift. This cost includes all on costs such as pension and redundancy, but does not include potential maternity or paternity payments. If these are required we would need to seek additional monies from the partners. The full breakdown of this is available in appendix A.**

# Case Studies

## Case Study 1

Tenant called the Tenancy Ready Officer and asked for help as she had rent arrears and her landlord was going to serve a Notice to Seek Possession. She was having issues with Universal Credit, the housing element had not been paid since she moved in. The Tenancy Ready Officer checked with the rent department who confirmed the tenant had £1151 of arrears, and they were serving a Notice of Seeking Possession.

The rent team confirmed they had put an Alternative Payment Arrangement application in which has yet to be granted. On a home visit to the tenant, she stated Universal Credit had said to her 3 times previously they were going to pay for her housing costs but this had not materialised.

After a long conversation with the Universal Credit helpline, it was confirmed that the Department for Work and Pensions would pay £907.40 to clear some of the arrears that had accumulated. This would appear in the Landlords bank account within a few days. The tenant was then supported by the Tenancy Ready Officer to arrange a payment plan for the rest of the arrears as well as the importance of making rental payments as a priority. The tenant didn't have any carpets, so the Landlords Carpet scheme was discussed and a referral was made. The tenant had recently started working and was supported through her budgeting.

## Case Study 2

The tenant was referred to the Tenancy Ready Project by a Social Worker from the 15+ team for Tenancy Ready Training. The young care leaver had never had any responsibility and no knowledge of what the essential bills were, nor how to set them up. The tenant had the initial training and then her needs were identified in order to help her set up the tenancy. The tenant was independent but she required help with the financial side of the tenancy. Support was given to ensure she was on the cheapest tariffs possible and able to manage her bills. Support was then retracted several weeks into the tenancy as support was no longer needed. Proving the value of this one on one service, and the trust gained by the Tenancy Ready Officer with the tenant; several months later the tenant contacted the Tenancy Ready Officer to get help to change her benefits, one visit was sufficient to complete the task to ensure payments remained in place and the tenancy was maintained.

# Conclusion

The project has had many successful outcomes with a few tenants having issues that have since been resolved. The project will not be able to prevent all problems that occur within a tenancy, but enabling tenants to know where to get help or how to deal with them is essential. The project can and is helping towards creating sustainable tenancies and preventing homelessness through eviction. Many of the tenants who have already completed the Tenancy Training came from temporary accommodation because they have either already failed a tenancy or many have never had a tenancy before. Without the intervention of the Tenancy Ready programme, it is highly likely that these individuals will continue to fail tenancies.

With the cost of one failed tenancy at a conservative £6,000, the project will pay for itself if we utilise a target of one sustained tenancy per Homes 4 U partner. However, we envisage that the numbers will be far higher than this as is evidenced within the statistics element of this report.

## Appendix A - Costs of Tenancy Ready Officer post

Job Title	Salary	Salary + On Costs	Complete years of service	Redundancy Pay	Notice Pay	TOTAL PAY (REDUNDANCY + NOTICE)	Salary, on costs & redundancy spread out over the 5 years	Cost per partner
Tenancy Ready Officer - 2019/2020	£ 23,291.00	£26,277.72	0	£0.00	£2,189.81	<b>£2,189.81</b>	£27,819.24	£5,563.85
Tenancy Ready Officer - 1yr service - 2020/2021	£ 24,106.19	£ 27,197.44	1	£0.00	£2,266.45	<b>£2,266.45</b>	£ 28,738.96	£5,747.79
Tenancy Ready Officer - 2yrs service - 2021/2022	£ 24,949.90	£ 28,149.35	2	£2,436.00	£2,345.78	<b>£4,781.78</b>	£ 29,690.87	£5,938.17
Tenancy Ready Officer - 3yrs service - 2022/2023	£ 25,199.40	£ 28,430.84	3	£3,690.54	£2,369.24	<b>£6,059.78</b>	£ 29,972.36	£5,994.47
Tenancy Ready Officer - 4yrs service - 2023/2024	£ 25,451.39	£ 28,715.15	4	£4,969.93	£2,392.93	<b>£7,362.86</b>	£ 30,256.67	£6,051.33
Tenancy Ready Officer - 5yrs service - 2024/2025	£ 25,705.91	£ 29,002.30	5	£6,274.54	£2,974.60	<b>£9,249.13</b>	£ 30,543.82	£6,108.76

Year	Min. Maternity Pay	Max Maternity Pay	Paternity Leave
2019/2020	£7,334.98	n/a	£1,516.02
2020/2021	£7,430.49	n/a	£1,569.08
2021/2022	n/a	£13,478.69	£1,624.00
2022/2023	n/a	£13,586.96	£1,640.24
2023/2024	n/a	£13,696.31	£1,656.64
2024/2025	n/a	£13,806.75	£1,673.21

