



Housing and Community Advice Service Delivery Plan 2023 to 2024

Overview of the service

Housing Advice

The remit of the team is to deliver the Council's housing advice and homelessness service with the emphasis on preventing homelessness. This includes providing a fully comprehensive and holistic advice service.

The service is also responsible for fulfilling the Council's legal obligation to assist homeless persons, investigate the individual reasons for homelessness, advise the client accordingly and provide temporary accommodation where applicable.

In addition to the above, the team is responsible for ensuring illegal evictions and harassment within the district are eradicated, providing a Landlord Resolution Service and Landlord Forum, liaising with partner housing providers, and referring clients to homeless hostels. They are also the conduit for the Rent Deposit Scheme, Young Persons Project, Young Parents Project, provision and assistance for 16/17year olds or Care Leavers, Choice Based Lettings Scheme, Housing Register and Allocations of Social Housing.

We are regulated by Government and have to have regard of numerous Housing Acts (as amended) as well as the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 to 2025 and the Council's corporate aims of:

- maintaining sound finances by investing wisely, maximising income and providing effective and efficient services
- when delivering services, our customers are at the heart of everything we do

The team oversee the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and work with Community Advice Resettlement officers in supporting, re-matching and moving our guests into independent accommodation.

Community Advice

To provide a high quality, generalist advice service including in-depth advice and casework, covering welfare benefits, debt advice (including debt relief orders and bankruptcy), immigration, employment and consumer rights, wills and probate, relationship advice and mediation. Tailored to meet the needs of the individual, to help vulnerable people to improve their quality of life, achieve their goals and make a very real and positive difference to people's lives.

The team co-ordinate and attend the community hubs/bus across the district, reaching more remote residents and ending social and digital isolation.

Direct delivery of the Community Advice services enables the Council to act as a one-stop-shop for residents; providing a fully accessible range of services and expertise that is readily available and expanding on the Council's proven ability to intervene and assist residents with the issue that they face in an ever-changing environment.

The Housing and Community Advice team offer support and advice in:

- Universal Credit (including the housing element)
- domestic abuse
- defending possession proceedings
- housing options
- conflict management
- DASH risk assessments
- mediation
- income maximisation
- armed forces covenants
- immigration status and eligibility
- Adults and Mental Capacity Act
- mental health
- drug and alcohol abuse
- personal independence payments (PIP) applications and challenging decisions
- overpayments of benefits
- employment and consumer law
- rent arrears
- debt and money advice
- anti-social behaviour
- pensions
- referrals or signposting to other services

Cost of service

The gross cost of running the Housing and Community Advice service is £818,093 with a net cost to the authority of £224,666 the remainder of £593,427 is covered by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities funding.

Staffing Information

Housing and Community Advice Manager (full time)

Housing Options Team Leader (full time)

Housing Options Officer (3 including 1 vacant post, all full time)

Housing and Court Officer (full time)

Income and Recovery Officer (full time)

Traveller Liaison Officer (part time)

Community Advice Team Leader (full time)

Community Advice Officer (2 full time)

Community Advice and Resettlement Officer (2 full time)

Housing & Community Advice Admin Officer (vacant, full time)

Forward planning for Councillors

| Proposed item | Proposed date of decision | Committee |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Half year report 2023 to 2024 | November 2023 | Operational Services |
| End of year report 2023 to 2024 | March 2024 | Operational Services |
| Service Delivery Plan 2024 to 2025 | March 2024 | Operational Services |

Housing and Community Advice Service Delivery Plan 2023 to 2024

This Service Delivery Plan describes what Housing and Community Advice Service will be doing to deliver continuous improvement (service objectives). Each performance measure relates to the Council's strategic outcomes and Corporate Plan 2022 to 2023.

Council's strategic outcome: Maintain sound finances. Improve systems and practices.

Housing and Community Advice Service's strategic objective: Maximising income via the re charging policy and reduce the risk of temporary accommodation.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sound financial management.

Performance measure Target and reporting timescale Baseline/output from 2022 to 2023 Owner and co-owners

| | | | |
|--|----------------|------|---------------------------------------|
| Avoid the use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation where possible unless in an absolute emergency, high risk clients and there is no other accommodation available to the client | 90%, annually | 95% | Housing Options Team |
| Recoup monies loaned to clients for deposits, storage and removals with a collection rate of 85% | 85%, annually | 84% | Income and Recovery Officer |
| Prioritise homeless presentations and deal with 100% of clients immediately | 100%, annually | 100% | Housing Options Team |
| Provide income maximisation services to all of our clients | 100%, annually | 100% | Housing and Community Advice Officers |

Council's strategic outcome: Customers are at the heart of everything we do.

Housing and Community Advice Service's strategic objective: Provide a holistic Housing and Community Advice service with the emphasis on preventing homelessness and offering a fully accessible Community Advice Service.

Link to Corporate Plan: Social and community infrastructure.

Performance measure

Target and reporting timescale

Baseline/output from 2022 to 2023

Owner and co-owners

| | | | |
|--|-----------------------|---|--|
| Ensure that 100% of the discretionary Housing Fund is fully utilised to prevent homelessness | 100%, annually | 100% | Housing and Community Advice Officers |
| Prevent or relieve at least 250 households per year from becoming homeless. | Minimum 250, annually | The team have prevented 255 and relieved 201 clients from homelessness. | Housing Options Team |
| Undertake the annual rough sleeper estimate typically in November | 100%, annually | Completed. | Housing and Community Advice Team |
| Maintain the 10 bed spaces we have for supported accommodation for mental health, drug and alcohol provided by The Pringle Group and Amicus | 100%, annually | 100% | Housing and Community Advice Team |
| Ensure 100% of clients are seen within 15 minutes of attending drop in services | 100%, annually | 100% | Housing and Community Advice Team |
| Ensure resolution guarantee for 100% of clients that are seen by the Community Advice team | 100%, annually | 96% | Community Advice Officers |
| Carry out 100% of welfare checks with our Ukrainian guests within a week of arriving at their host properties | 100%, annually | 100% | Community Advice and Resettlement Officers |
| Work in partnership with Environmental Health to ensure all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) are licensed and meet the required standards prior to any placements within the private landlord remit | 100%, annually | 100% | Housing Options Team |

Council's strategic outcome: 'Can do' approach and open for business.

Housing and Community Advice Service's strategic objective: Be open for business and champion a 'can do' approach.

Link to Corporate Plan: Social and community infrastructure.

Performance measure

Target and reporting timescale

Baseline/output from 2022 to 2023

Owner and co-owners

Improve communications by updating our website and leaflets, relationships with registered providers and the private sector with regular landlord forums and to ensure services accessible for all residents within East Cambridgeshire making use of our Community Bus

As required, annually

Ongoing

Housing and Community Advice Team

Council's strategic outcome: Safe, vibrant and inclusive communities. Community sustainability.

Housing and Community Advice Service's strategic objective: Ensure people feel safe in their homes and neighbourhoods.

Link to Corporate Plan: Social and community infrastructure.

Performance measure

Target and reporting timescale

Baseline/output from 2022 to 2023

Owner and co-owners

Support residents in the private sector and social housing in any court appearances, including assisting with all relevant court paperwork

100%, annually

100%

Housing Options Court Officer

Allow domestic abuse applicants to remain in their own home and to be safe in the knowledge that their property is safe and secure, including referrals to the Bobby Scheme

100%, annually

100%

Housing and Community Advice Team

Work towards attaining DAHA (domestic abuse housing accreditation) accreditation for the authority

April 2024, annually

Ongoing

Housing Options Team Leader

Ensure 100% of all unauthorised traveller encampments are visited within 24 hours and working with partner agencies to arrange planned move-ons or evictions

100%, annually

100%

Traveller Liaison Officer

Council's strategic outcome: Be an excellent employer.

Housing and Community Advice Service's strategic objective: Train staff and maintain a full and professionally qualified team that is technically up to date with current and emerging legislative changes and a comprehensive understanding of the service.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sound financial management.

| Performance measure | Target and reporting timescale | Baseline/output from 2022 to 2023 | Owner and co-owners |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Ensure all staff attend all mandatory council training courses in policy and procedures for safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion, health and safety; ensure all staff maintain their professional development records | 100%, annually | 100% | Housing and Community Advice Manager Housing Options Team Leader Community Advice Team Leader |
| Appraisals completed annually and within timeframe set by HR. | 100%, annually | 100% | Customer Services Manager Customer Services Team Leader |

Council's strategic outcome: A clean, green and attractive place.

Housing and Community Advice Service's strategic objective: Undertake activities which help to mitigate/adapt to climate change.

Link to Corporate Plan: Cleaner, greener East Cambridgeshire.

| Performance measure | Target and reporting timescale | Baseline/output from 2022 to 2023 | Owner and co-owners |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Reduce our paper usage within the service by 5% | 5% reduction, annually | 100% | Housing and Community Advice Team |

