

Housing & Community Advice Service 2022/23

Overview of Housing & Community Advice Service

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 and 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, referring clients to the homeless hostels. They are also the conduit for the Rent Deposit Scheme, Young Persons Project, Young Parents Project, provision and assistance for 16/17 yr old (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 well as the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2025 and the Council's corporate aims of:

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

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 their lives.

The service co-ordinate and attend community hubs/bus across the district.

Direct delivery of the Community Advice service 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 issues that they face in an ever-changing environment.

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

- Universal Credit (including the housing element)
- Domestic abuse
- Defending possession proceedings
- Conflict management
- Partnership oriented problem solving
- DASH risk assessments

- Armed forces covenants
- Immigrations status and eligibility
- Drug and alcohol awareness
- Adults and Mental Capacity Act
- Mental Health
- Neglect
- Parenting and learning disabilities
- Challenging personal independent payment decisions
- Overpayments of benefits and tax credits
- Employment law
- Mediation
- Rent arrears
- Debt and money advice
- Energy and Utility Bills
- Drug and Alcohol
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Employment
- Family
- Health
- Pensions
- Consumer rights
- Mediation
- Welfare Benefits
- Practical help with making benefit claims
- Support with understanding and responding to letters/emails from other organisations/companies e.g. energy companies
- Referrals or sign posting to other services

With the Pandemic, a lot of needs have also been highlighted and as a result we want to be a driving force behind the recovery out of COVID for all of our communities, and we are hoping to achieve this by continuing the service of the Community Advice Bus across our district.

- Reaching remote residents ending social and digital isolation.
- Bringing the internet to those who need it
- Rebuilding communities following the pandemic

Staffing Information

Housing & Community Advice Manager (FT)
 Housing Options Team Leader (FT)
 X 2 Housing Options Officer (FT)
 X 2 Housing & Community Advice Admin Officer (FT) (x1 funded by Covid grant)
 Income & Recovery Officer (FT)
 Court Officer (FT) (funded by Covid grant)
 X 2 Tenancy Support Officer (FT)
 Traveller Liaison Officer (PT)
 Community Advice Team Leader (FT)
 X 3 Community Support Officer (x 1 funded by Covid grant)

Housing & Community Advice Service Strategy Map: 2022-23



Performance Measure	Link to Corporate Plan Priority	Target and reporting timescale (i.e. 6 monthly or annually)	Baseline from previous year/output from previous year	Owner and co-owners
Maximising income via the re charging policy and reduce the risk of temporary accommodation	Sound Financial Management	To avoid the use of B&B accommodation where possible unless in an absolute emergency and there is no other accommodation available to the client.	100%	All Officers
		To prioritise emergency homeless presentations and where possible deal with the situation on the day of presentation to the council.	100%	All Officers
		To ensure that every effort is made by the Income Recovery Officer (IRO) to recoup monies loaned to clients for deposits, storage & removals and full recharge for any time spent in B&B with a collection rate of 85%	95%	Income & Recovery Officer
		To provide income maximisation services to all of our clients.	100%	Tenancy and Community Advice Officers
Provide a holistic Housing and Community Advice Service with the emphasis on preventing homelessness and offering an accessible Community Advice service.	Social & Community Infrastructure	To ensure we use 100% of Discretionary Housing Fund	98%	All officers
		To prevent or relieve at least 250 households from becoming homeless per year.	100%	All Officers
		To effectively engage with landlords by undertaking 2 landlord forums per year.	2	All Officers
		To undertake a rough sleeper estimate.	Yearly	All Officers
		To provide support in applying for grants to improve the quality of life/standards of living for our clients.	100%	All Officers
		To maintain and build on the 10 spaces we have for supported accommodation for mental health, drug and alcohol provided by The Pringle Group and Amicus.	Ongoing	All Officers
		To see all residents at first point of contact, providing a fully accessible drop in service daily between 10am and 4pm	100%	All Officers
		To ensure all clients are seen within 15 minutes of attending drop in sessions	100%	All Officers

Performance Measure	Link to Corporate Plan Priority	Target and reporting timescale (i.e. 6 monthly or annually)	Baseline from previous year/output from previous year	Owner and co-owners
		To ensure resolution guarantee for all clients seen by Community Advice	95%	All Officers
		All CRM's are responded to within 24 hours	100%	All Officers
		To work in partnership with our external agencies to continue to support residents of East Cambridgeshire	Ongoing	All Officers
To adapt the service to meet the needs of the customer	Social & Community Infrastructure	Update websites and ensure plethora of leaflets distributed across the district. Reviewed annually.	Annually	All Officers
		Conduct Customer Satisfaction surveys.	80%	All Officers
		Carry out home visits to those who need them.	100%	All Officers
		Coordinating efforts with EH to ensure all HMO's are licensed and meet the required standards prior to any placements within the private landlord remit.	100%	All Officers
		To carry out HHSRS inspections of all private rented sector properties let through Housing Services	100%	Housing Options Officers
To 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 service	Social & Community Infrastructure	Ensure all officers attend all mandatory Council training courses in policy and procedures for child safeguarding, equality , diversity & inclusion, health & safety etc.	100%	All Officers
		Appraisals to be completed annually	100%	All Officers
		All Officers to keep up to date with changes in law and legislation relating to all advice services offered	100%	All Officers
		To explore upskilling officers to carry out enforcement of unlawful evictions and landlord harassment in line with The Protection from Eviction Act 1977 Part 1.	Ongoing	Housing & Community Advice Manager

Performance Measure	Link to Corporate Plan Priority	Target and reporting timescale (i.e. 6 monthly or annually)	Baseline from previous year/output from previous year	Owner and co-owners
To ensure people feel safe in their home and neighbourhood	Social & Community Infrastructure	To support all residents in private sector and social housing in any court appearances, including assisting with all relevant court paperwork.	100%	Court Officer
		To allow Domestic Abuse applicants to remain in their own homes and to be safe in the knowledge that their property is secure, including referrals to the Bobby Scheme.	100%	All Officers
		To work towards attaining DAHA (domestic abuse housing accreditation) accreditation for the authority	Ongoing	All Officers
		To offer advice and assistance to all residents whilst continuing the Covid 19 road to recovery.	Ongoing	All Officers
		To provide advice and assistance to landlords on all aspects of renting properties.	100%	All Officers
		To ensure 5% more rents collected than in 2021/2022 from the Traveller Sites.	£76,089	Traveller Liaison Officer
		To attend meetings and conferences for MARAC, MAPPA and ASB, make sure housing team are aware of any impending homelessness relating to domestic violence/abuse, crime and disorder or ASB.	100%	All Officers
		To deliver refresher safeguarding training to all front-line staff	Annually	Housing & Community Advice Manager
		To carry out a review of our Safeguarding Policy	6 Months	Housing & Community Advice Manager

Performance Measure	Link to Corporate Plan Priority	Target and reporting timescale (i.e. 6 monthly or annually)	Baseline from previous year/output from previous year	Owner and co-owners
Ensure that the Council's corporate risks are managed effectively and mitigations are put in place to reduce impact	Sound Financial Management	To regularly review risks associated with Housing and Community Advice	Ongoing Reviewed regularly	Housing & Community Advice Manager All Officers
Undertake activities which help mitigate/adapt to climate change	Cleaner, Greener East Cambridgeshire	To contribute to the implementation of the Council's Climate and Environment Action Plan		Cross-council activity