

## PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL – 19TH FEBRUARY 2019

### Report of the Head of Landlord Services Cabinet Lead Member: Councillor Paul Mercer

#### ITEM 9      TENANCY SUPPORT

##### Purpose of Report

To consider the performance data in relation to tenancy support and tenancy sustainment, and the reasons for tenancy failure.

To provide information to Scrutiny around payment plans to reduce rent arrears as resolved at the Panel's meeting on 22nd January 2019.

##### Action requested

The Panel is asked to note the content of the report.

##### Trends in Performance

#### **1. Tenancy Support Team Caseload**

The Tenancy Support Team dealt with 206 cases for the period 1st April 2018 to 31st December 2018, around 13% less than the 238 cases dealt with at the same period the previous year. Whilst fewer cases were dealt with, the support provided has been more intensive.

The Team are focusing on the provision of support to tenants claiming universal credit (UC). The Landlord Services Financial Inclusion Team also support tenants in this respect, along with the recently appointed (November 2018) Landlord Services Universal Credit Officer<sup>1</sup>.

Over the last two years there has been around a 43% increase in new non-secure tenancies (where tenants are housed in the Council's stock pending a decision in relation to their eligibility for housing). These tenants typically have higher levels of need.

#### **2. Tenancy Support Case Closure Reasons**

When the Tenancy Support Team close a case, the case closure reason is recorded. A summary of case closure reasons can be found at Table 1. For the period 1st April 2018 to 31st December 2018 the team closed 152 cases. This is a decrease on the same period the previous year where 254 cases were closed. Due to the higher level of need cases are remaining open for a longer period.

140 cases were closed with positive or neutral closure reasons. Figures in this respect are consistent year on year with around 92% of cases closed with a positive or neutral closure reason in 2018/19 compared to 91% for the same period in 2017/18.

---

<sup>1</sup> The work of the Financial Inclusion Officer / UC Officer is not reflected in this report.

There were 12 negative case closure reasons. The Tenancy Support Team works with the most hard to reach tenants who often have highly chaotic lifestyles and can struggle with substance addiction and mental health issues. These issues can make it difficult for some tenants to keep appointments and engage with support. Therefore despite the best efforts of the team it is not always possible to work successfully with all tenants referred to the service. 10 tenants failed to engage with support and 2 were evicted for rent arrears.

Table 1 Tenancy Support Case Closure Reason

<b>Case Closure Reason</b>	<b>Cases Closed between 1/4/18 – 31/12/18</b>	<b>Cases Closed between 1/4/17 – 31/12/17</b>
One off support intervention	66	91
Support successfully completed	42	68
Advice given	8	41
Failure to engage	10	22
New tenant support ended	12	12
Cancelled / Support not required	4	7
Move to other floating support	4	6
Eviction prevented	0	4
Evicted Anti-Social Behaviour	0	1
Evicted - Rent arrears	2	1
Tenant moved	1	1
Gone to prison	2	0
Deceased	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>254</b>

### 3. Tenancy Support Actions and Outcomes

Successful actions and outcomes delivered by the Tenancy Support Team are recorded. These are detailed at Table 2.

Maximising rental income is a priority for the team, and this is reflected by the high number of successful actions around housing benefit and Universal Credit. Other actions, including charity and grant applications serve to maximise tenants' income and increase their ability to pay the rent. The work carried out by the Tenancy Support Team has resulted in £47,397<sup>2</sup> being paid directly to tenants rent accounts. For the same period in the previous year the figure was £38,000. This is an increase of 24.73%.

---

<sup>2</sup> This figure reflects the initial payment of Housing Benefit/housing element of Universal Credit. If the benefit secured by the Tenancy Support Team remains in payment throughout the financial year the figure is significantly higher.

Between 1st April 2018 and 31st December 2018, Tenancy Support Officers have dealt with 35 cases where there was a safeguarding concern about children or a vulnerable adult/s. There has been no significant change in terms of case numbers, with 36 cases being dealt with at same period the previous year.

This work involves close liaison with Children's Services and Adult Social Care and on occasion with the Police. As a result of these referrals officers also attend Safeguarding meetings and Vulnerable Adults Risk Management (VARM) meetings to work with partner agencies to share information and where possible reduce risk.

Table 2 Tenancy Support Outcome/Actions

<b>Outcomes/Actions</b>	<b>1/4/18 – 31/12/18</b>	<b>1/4/17 – 31/12/17</b>
Charity Application	79	84
New Housing Benefit Application	39	66
Housing Benefit Backdate	42	40
Rent payment improvement	21	26
Utilities	32	23
Utility Grant	9	23
Assistance with Welfare Benefits	39	22
Transfer Application	23	19
DHP Award	23	15
Community Care Assessment	5	14
Social Fund Community Care Grant	4	11
CBL bid	30	10
First Contact Referral	2	8
Assistance with Council Tax Arrears	23	7
Debt Advice – inc ref to Money Wise	8	7
Eviction / Legal Action prevented	10	7
Domestic Abuse Referral	1	5
Housing Benefit Overpayment Reduction	5	5
Mental Health Support	7	3
Setting up clockwise accounts	2	3
Refer to Local Area Co-ordinator	0	2
Condition of property/garden improvement	7	1
ASB improvement	1	1
Drug / Alcohol problem Support	3	1
Universal Credit (see Table 4 for a full breakdown)	65	n/a
Early help referral	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>404</b>

There has been a decrease in the number of new Housing Benefit applications, and an increase in UC claims following the introduction of UC full service.

#### 4. Vacation Reason

When a tenancy is ended the vacation reason is recorded, these are detailed at Table 3. Table 3 shows that transfer within the Council's own stock and Tenant Deceased are the most common reasons a tenancy ends.

Table 3 - Vacation Reason (all tenancy types)

<b>Vacation Reason</b>	<b>1/4/17 - 31/3/18</b>	<b>1/4/16 - 31/3/17</b>
Transfer - Charnwood	96	124
Tenant Deceased	96	115
Residential Care/Nursing Home	56	48
Transfer - Housing Association	73	62
Right To Buy - Freehold	32	52
Mutual Exchange	38	31
Moving Out of Area	18	32
Moving in with Friends	19	15
Tenant Evicted - Other (including intentionally homeless decision)	5	16
Moving to Private Rental Accommodation	15	14
Tenant Evicted - Arrears	10	11
Abandoned	16	9
No Information Received	8	9
Financial Reasons	8	2
Right To Buy - Leasehold	4	8
Harassment/safety	5	2
Do not like Area	2	2
Notice to Quit	3	2
Tenant sent to Prison	4	4
Illegal Occupier	4	8
Buying Other Property NOT RTB	2	4
Health / Medical	7	4
Neighbourhood Dispute/Nuisance	3	1
Temporary to Permanent	54	12
Do not like Property	0	1
Moving in with Partner	3	2
Transfer - Removal of Spare Room Subsidy	1	1
Entered in Error	0	2
Possession - Other	5	7
Evicted ASB	3	10
Evicted ASB and arrears	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>613</b>

#### 5. Tenancy Sustainment

The number of tenancies sustained for longer than 12 months from the date of tenancy commencement is monitored. Where a tenancy ends within the twelve month period the vacation reason is reviewed. If the vacation reason is classed as negative e.g. *Tenant Evicted, Abandonment, Neighbourhood Dispute, Evicted, Harassment / Safety* this is recorded as a tenancy failure.

340 tenancies<sup>3</sup> were started in the period 1st April 2017 - 31st December 2017. Of these tenancies, at the corresponding period 12 months on from the tenancy commencement 2 tenancies were considered to have failed.

The in-year Tenancy Sustainment rate is therefore 99.4%. The sustainment rate was also 99.4% for the previous year. This is in excess of the target set of 95%.

## **6. Universal Credit (UC)**

The table below shows the work carried out by the Tenancy Support Team to assist tenants to make and sustain a claim for UC.

Table 4 - Universal Credit

<b>Action</b>	<b>1/4/18 - 31/12/18</b>
UC –claim (including setting up emails and arranging for I.D. to be verified as part of the claim process)	26
UC - Income generated (cases where money has come in to the rent account as a direct result of the intervention of Tenancy Support Officers)	8
UC – claims sustained (helping tenants maintain their claim)	23
UC – advance payments (helping tenants to apply for an advance on their first UC payment to help them pay for essential items pending payment)	3
UC – managed payments (requests for payments direct to Charnwood)	2
UC – sanctions (helping people appeal against sanctions)	3

The Tenancy Support Team commenced recording the work carried out in relation to UC from 1st April 2018.

Part of the borough went over to UC full service in June 2018 with the remainder transferring in July 2018.

It is anticipated that the number of tenants on UC will increase as more tenants make a claim for UC following a change of circumstances, and as tenants migrate over to UC from their current benefit.

## **7. Customer Feedback**

In the period 1st April 2018 – 31st December 2018, the Tenancy Support Team has received three compliments. One of the compliments is shown below, and serves to illustrate the positive impact the team has on the lives of vulnerable tenants:

*“My father moved to Charnwood around 5 weeks ago and this has been an extremely stressful and anxious time for him. However, from the start of the process and*

---

<sup>3</sup> This figure includes introductory and secure tenancies. Non-secure tenancies are excluded.

*throughout Paul has been absolutely excellent. The support that he has provided to my father has been first rate and without such support my father would have undoubtedly found the system almost impossible to navigate. Paul has gone above and beyond in terms of signposting my father to relevant agencies and supporting him with his universal credit claim. My father has severe dyslexia and has difficulties in processing information. However, Paul was able to effectively communicate with him and help him to resolve issues. Paul has also liaised with me with my father's consent and kept me updated accordingly.*

*In summary I just want to say that Paul should be commended for his work. He is truly an asset to your service and without his support my father would not have coped with this process"*

## **8. Payment Plans to Reduce Rent Arrears**

At the meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Panel on 22nd January 2019 the Panel resolved that:

*The Head of Landlord Services be asked to include additional information regarding whether payment plans are in place to recoup [the] rent arrears in the Tenancy Support report to be submitted to the Panel at its meeting to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019.*

*The Panel wished to understand that options were in place to recover [the] tenant arrears.*

Officers in the Tenancy and Income Management Team seek to make payment plans with tenants to reduce rent arrears.

The court's *Pre-Action Protocol for Possession Claims* sets out that...

*'The landlord and tenant should try to agree affordable sums for the tenant to pay towards arrears, based upon the tenant's income and expenditure (where such information has been supplied in response to the landlord's enquiries). and that...*

*If the tenant meets the appropriate criteria, the landlord should arrange for arrears to be paid by the Department for Work and Pensions from the tenant's benefit.'*

A payment plan is in place for around 68% of the 1705 arrears cases.

A summary of repayment plan types (position at 05/02/2019) can be found in the below table.

Table 5 - Payment Plan Summary

Type of Payment Plan	Number of Tenancies
Court order	262
Repayment agreement	467
DD payers in arrears	238
Alternative payment arrangement confirmed - DWP	180
Arrears direct payments - DWP	12
Total	1159

Background papers: None

Officer to contact: Peter Oliver  
Head of Landlord Services  
Tel 01509 634952  
peter.oliver@charnwood.gov.uk

Claire Westrup  
Principal Officer - Tenancy and Income Management  
Tel 01509 634604  
claire.westrup@charnwood.gov.uk