

HOMES & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

14 MARCH 2022

SHERWOOD & NEWARK CITIZENS' ADVICE – ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020-21

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Sherwood & Newark Citizens' Advice (SNCA) achievements against the performance targets for the commissioned Debt Management & Homeless Prevention Service to residents in the district for the financial year 2020-21.
- 1.2 To share Sherwood & Newark Citizens' Advice Annual Report attached at **Appendix A**.

2.0 Debt Advice Service

- 2.1 Within the annual Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Council, Housing Options and Housing Management, the SNCA agrees:
 - To provide a community based debt and income maximisation service to support customers and potential customers of NSDC's Housing Options Service and tenants of N&S.
 - Deliver the service through appropriately qualified employees and/ or volunteers who meet the requirements of the Legal Aid Agency Specialist Quality Mark.
 - To deliver the service from the CAB offices on Forest Road, Ollerton, Castle House, Newark and offices of NSDC and other partners, subject to agreement between NSDC and SNCA.
 - Priority referrals will come directly from NSDC's Housing Options Service, Housing Management or self-referrals from individuals approaching directly for assistance who can be identified as households who may become homeless because of rent or mortgage arrears.
 - Referrals may also be taken from other support agencies.
 - To promote the service in the local media, community locations and through other appropriate outlets including digital media.
 - Provide training and awareness raising sessions to staff of NSDC, which advise how to address tenants' debt issues and encourage referrals to the project by staff of NSDC.
 - Provide awareness raising events with communities and other agencies to encourage referrals to the project
 - Provide guidance and support to NSDC staff in relation to dealing with debt issues.
- 2.2 The provision of a specialist debt service is additional to the Core Service, which the Council provides a separate Discretionary Grant. SNCA have a trained caseworker team to deliver specialist welfare benefits and debt advice. Specialist debt advisers can talk through the options available to people based on their situation; help people to prioritise debts to make sure that the most urgent issues are dealt with promptly; help people to budget accurately to work out how much they can afford to pay and negotiate with creditors. This service is available Monday through to Friday across the Newark & Sherwood District.

2.3 The nominated SLA Managers for the Council and SNCA meet quarterly to review the agreed performance targets and outturns, which are provided below for 2020/21:

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	Target	Outturn 2020/21
Total Number of referrals By: Referring organisation (priority to be given to those from NSDC) Location	270	234
Number of repeat contacts (within 3 month period)	Data Only	0
DNA Appointments	Data Only	55
Total number of individuals assisted By: Budget Advice Debt Casework	200	187
Tenure By: Social – Council Social – other RP Private Owner Occupier	Data Only	105 34 44 9
Number of homeless preventions (sustainable for 6 months)	125	111
Of the above, number of potential N&S evictions prevented	30	60
Total number of N&S individuals assisted By: Income Maximisation Advice For: Introductory Tenancies Secure Tenancies	Data Only	105
Total number of N&S individuals assisted holding Introductory Tenancies	Data Only	8
% of the above introductory tenancies sustained and successfully rolled over to secure tenancies without arrears due to CAB intervention.	Annual – 100% (Housing Management required to provide data)	
Total value of rent arrears managed: By: N&S Other RP's Private	£75,000	£197,988
Total value of mortgage arrears managed	£100,000	£122,661
Total value of other debts managed, such as Energy and Utility arrears and other debt managed	Data Only	£1,529,060
Training and Awareness raising sessions	4	1

2.4 The performance figures shows the impact that the pandemic has had on the delivery of the service. Performance figures throughout 2020/21 reduced significantly in both referrals and the number of households assisted.

2.5 A 'Lockdown Lifeline' has been created by Sherwood and Newark Citizens Advice (February 2021) which further explains the impact of the pandemic and efforts made to mitigate detrimental outcomes at **Appendix B**.

3.0 Equalities Implications

3.1 SNCA provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on his or her rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination.

4.0 Financial Implications – FIN21-22/1840

4.1 The Debt Advice Service is jointly funded from the District Council's Homeless Prevention Fund (contributing 50% £35,000) and the Housing Revenue Account (contributing 50% £35,000) each year.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee note the contents of the report, particularly the performance outturns for the commissioned debt management and homeless prevention service to residents in the District for the financial year 2020-21.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information, please contact Cheska Asman, Homeless Strategy Officer on 655643.

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