

HOMES & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

11 MARCH 2019

SHERWOOD & NEWARK CITIZENS ADVICE – ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2017-18

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To inform Members that Sherwood & Newark Citizens Advice (SNCA) have largely achieved the performance targets in respect of core advice service provision and the debt/homeless prevention service to residents in the district for the financial year 2017-18, as set out in the agreed Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Council and SNCA.

2.0 Core Advice Service

2.1 In broad terms, under the agreed SLA for 2017-18, SNCA agreed:

- To provide support to all sections of the community within the Newark & Sherwood District who require it;
- Operate its core advice services from its offices on Forest Road, Ollerton (three days a week) and Castle House, Newark (two days a week) with effect from September 2017 under the agreed lease arrangements with NSDC;
- Maintain and continue to develop the outreach in the districts rural communities;
- To supply appropriate administration support where necessary, training and line management support to its staff and volunteers.

2.2 The core advice service relates to the drop in information and advice services that SNCA offers through face-to-face, phone, email and online services via adviceguide.org.uk, which are validated by the Advice Quality Standard.

2.3 Clients are greeted with a reception service at both offices in the district followed by a Gateway Assessment. This involves identifying client's issues and course of action required, which may be immediate generalist advice or a referral to internal or external specialist services.

2.4 The SLA requires SNCA to produce a comprehensive annual report to evidence the impact of the core advice service locally, supporting the Council's strategic priorities, which is attached at **Appendix A**.

2.5 The nominated SLA Managers for the Council and SNCA meet quarterly to review agreed performance outturns, which are provided below for 2017/18:

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	Target	Outturn
Number of clients seen per year	5,000	4,556
Number of clients seen per year – Sherwood	Data Only	1,802
Number of clients seen per year – Newark	Data Only	2,074
Number of clients seen per year – Other	Data Only	680
Number of contacts (captures repeat/re-occurring)	Data Only	9,693
Number of problems dealt with per year	16,000	16,762

The top five/six advice needs - the number of new social policy issues recorded for each category	Data Only	
Debt		6,694
Welfare Benefits		3,313
Housing		477
Employment		507
Financial Products		3,099
Fuel Poverty (10% of income)		107
Income Maximisation per year (Benefit Claims)	£2,000,000.00	£2,489,922
Debt Handled per year	£10,000,000.00	£6,277,065
Number of volunteers recruited and trained per year	8	13
Average of hours worked by volunteers	Data Only	14,000
Value	Data Only	£200,000
Case studies	4	4
Training session for front facing staff of the Council, such as but not limited to, Customer Services	1	1

2.6 Although Citizens Advice have not met the target of 5000 clients seen per year, the level of complexity of cases requiring multiple issues to be dealt with continues to increase.

2.7 SNCA continues to excel at maximising clients income by ensuring full entitlement to benefits is explored and claimed. The level of debt handled has reduced from the previous year of £7,327,014 to £6,277,065 suggesting that the successful interventions that have been put in place through the debt project is having a positive impact for the residents of Newark & Sherwood.

3.0 **Debt Advice Service**

3.1 In broad terms, 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 NSH.
- 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, Keepers Cottage, Newark and offices of NSDC, NSH and other partners, subject to agreement between NSDC, NSH and SNCA.
- Priority referrals will come directly from NSDC's Housing Options Service, NSH or self-referrals from individuals approaching directly for assistance who can be identified as households who may become homeless as a result of rent or mortgage arrears.
- Referrals may also be taken from other support agencies, such as Framework HA, Sure Start etc.
- To promote the service in the local media, community locations and through other appropriate outlets include digital media.
- Provide training and awareness raising sessions to staff of NSDC and NSH, which advise staff how to address tenants' debt issues and encourage referrals to the project by staff of NSDC and Newark and Sherwood Homes.

- Provide awareness raising events with communities and other agencies to encourage referrals to the project
- Provide guidance and support to NSDC and NSH staff in relation to dealing with debt issues.

3.2 The provision of a specialist debt service is additional to the core generalist service. 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.

3.3 The nominated SLA Managers for the Council and SNCA meet quarterly to review agreed performance outturns, which are provided below for 2017/18:

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	Target	Outturn
Total Number of referrals By: Referring organisation (priority to be given to those from NSDC & NSH) Location	270	612 <i>Awaiting figures from SNCA</i>
Number of repeat contacts (within 3 month period)	Data Only	5
DNA Appointments	Data Only	141
Total number of individuals assisted By: Budget Advice Debt Casework	200	143
Tenure By: Social – NSH Social – other RP Private Owner Occupier	Data Only	 131 46 126 32
Number of homeless preventions (sustainable for 6 months)	125	124
Of the above, number of potential NSH evictions prevented	30	50
Total number of NSH individuals assisted By: Income Maximisation Advice For: Introductory Tenancies Secure Tenancies	Data Only	 103
Total number of NSH individuals assisted holding Introductory Tenancies	Data Only	11
% of the above introductory tenancies sustained and successfully rolled over to secure tenancies without arrears due to CAB intervention.	Annual – 100% (NSH required to provide data)	0

Total value of rent arrears managed: By: NSH Other RP's Private	£75,000	132,240
Total value of mortgage arrears managed	£100,000	291,194
Total value of other debts managed, such as Energy and Utility arrears and other debt managed	Data Only	480,372
Training and Awareness raising sessions	4	3
Investigate the development of a money mentoring scheme in the District.		<i>Awaiting update from SNCA</i>
To work towards identifying the positive financial and health impact/outcomes on clients assisted by the scheme.		<i>Awaiting update from SNCA</i>

4.0 Equalities Implications

4.1 SNCA provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination.

5.0 Financial Implications – Fin 18-19/4445

5.1 Full Council approved the grant for SNCA of £68,330 for the period 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 for the Core Advice service (which included a 10% retention figure linked to delivery of agreed performance outturn targets).

5.2 Based on the delivery of its performance targets in respect of core advice service provision to residents in the district for the financial year 2017-18, the grant funding, including the 10% retention, was paid to SNCA. Continued grant funding of £68,330 for 2018/19 was included in the budget approved by full Council on 8 March 2018.

5.3 The Debt Advice Service is jointly funded from the District Council's Homelessness Prevention Grant (contributing 50% £25,000) and Newark and Sherwood Homes (contributing 50% £25,000).

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee note the contents of the report, particularly the performance outturns and annual report regarding the provision of core and debt advice service provision to residents in the district provided by Sherwood & Newark Citizens Advice.

Background Papers - Nil

For further information please contact Leanne Monger, Business Manager – Housing, Health & Community Relations on extension 5545.

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