



The Rotherham Enhanced Housing Options Service Delivery Plan

Overview

Rotherham's 'Key Choices' Housing Solutions service has a crucial role to play in addressing urgent housing need in Rotherham. In our bid to DCLG for funding for an Enhanced Housing Options service we recognised that in dealing with people with housing needs then there were often underlying issues such as the problems associated with worklessness and health inequalities.

£80,000 over a two year period has been identified by DCLG for 'kick start' funding for the Enhanced Housing Options service.

We have a track record in delivering a wide range of solutions that go beyond traditional landlord housing advice services. For example, between April 2008 and December 2008 our outreach service in local prisons prevented 31 ex-offenders in becoming homeless. Our bond and 'rent in advance' schemes allow access to private landlords and has helped 212 families into homes since the scheme was launched in January 2007. Without this help it is likely these families would have become homeless.

We also continue to drive up standards in the private sector through our Quality Landlord Scheme (RQL) which has been developed to offer homeless people the option of having a private rented home.

Tackling the underlying causes of worklessness has been a corporate priority for the Council in recent years. 'The Junction' and 'Best for Jobs' are two projects managed through the Work & Skills Board which provide 'drop-in' services at the Councils Property Shop ('Key Choices'), enabling people on out of work benefits to access the support they need to move back into work, and the Junction to engage with disadvantaged customers. This shows the Councils commitment to tackling worklessness in deprived communities by aligning both housing options and employment advice services together. This means that we are able to provide a much more personal service to customers so that we are able to provide housing solutions that can be sustained in the first

instance and secondly to provide vulnerable people to have greater housing aspirations in the future and ultimately have the opportunity to become home owners.

The delivery plan for the Enhanced Housing Options service is a key success factor for the Economy Impact Group which was developed following a workshop chaired by the Minister of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government, Rt Hon John Healey MP, in response to the “credit crunch”. It will also be critical for the local implementation of CLG’s ‘Mortgage Rescue Scheme’ and contributing to Rotherham’s Local Area Agreement.

The delivery plan detailed overleaf strengthens the Council’s commitment to tackling worklessness in deprived communities and increasing access to employment and training by joining up both housing options and employment services. However, we recognise that the current economic downturn will place pressures on the Housing Solutions Service, as such as part of the “Downturn Planning Process” the focus of the delivery plan will include a number of housing initiatives aimed at reducing the number of vulnerable home owners losing their home as a result of unemployment.

The key success factors for the work of this programme are:

- Implementing the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
- Developing a joint housing and employment Service Standard that sets out to customers what they should expect from the new service.
- Undertaking outreach in partnership with other advice agencies to local major employers where there is a risk of job losses.
- Establishing an effective referral process between housing, welfare benefits, and business advice for those interested in “self employment” and employment agencies so that customers can access the range of existing services available in Rotherham.

- Reducing the potential impact of homelessness for those people losing their jobs, by contacting major employers before job losses are finalised where possible.
- Using the Rotherham Quality Landlord and 2010 Rotherham Ltd housing tenancy 'sign up' process to promote employment / training / money / budgeting and debt advice as the best way to sustain a tenancy, changing the emphasis of Housing workers on providing personalised support.
- Offering financial health checks to those accessing our Housing Choices Service.
- Ensuring customers using the virtual booth in the Property Shop can access employment and training websites for free.
- Developing a person centred case management approach to finding suitable accommodation, employment and training places.

Outcomes

There are a number of anticipated outcomes arising from the implementation of the Enhanced Housing Options service. These are;

- Employment and Solutions team established in Year 1 and in Year 2 embedding the new ways of working within the wider Housing Solutions Team.
- Setting targets for the number of cases assisted through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme and ensuring that referrals meet or exceed these levels.
- Developing alternative prevention initiatives that include access to employment as part of our "toolkit" to prevent homeowners losing their home.
- Developing and achieving a target for the number of people engaging in the Employment Solutions Service who are helped into paid work or training by making referrals to employment/training and other advice services.
- Contributing to National Indicator 152 (within Rotherham's Local Area Agreement) to reduce the number of people claiming out of work benefits by engaging with 20 households each month.

- Contributing to National Indicator 153 (within Rotherham's Local Area Agreement) to decrease the amount of people from deprived communities claiming out of work benefits by engaging with 20 households each month.
- Customer satisfaction levels reaching 90% for the Employment/Solutions Service by March 2011.

Objective: Implement a person centred enhanced housing options service						
Action	Target Completion date	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources Required	Target / Outcome	Progress/ Comments
1. Employment Solutions Service established and embedded, is high profile in Rotherham and is successfully reducing the impact of homelessness and worklessness	March 2010	<p>Service structure in place and recruitment and selection process completed (Feb 09)</p> <p>Learning and development programme completed (May 09)</p> <p>Formal protocols/referral procedures in place between employment, Job Centre Plus and advice agencies (July 09)</p> <p>Customer has access to use of the Virtual Booth in the Property Shop to use free internet access to access employment/training/money/debt advice. Staff on hand to assist customers with usage of booth. (August 2009)</p> <p>Joint housing access and employment service standard</p>	Martin Humphries (Housing Solutions Manager)	<p>Employment Solutions Team (1 FTE Co-ordinator, 1.5 x FTE Officers. RMBC cost is £39,963.</p> <p>DCLG funding £40,527 for staffing Employment Solutions Officers</p> <p>Total cost £80,490</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment/Solutions team established. April 09 • Contribute to NI 152 – to reduce the numbers claiming out of work benefits by engaging with 500 households by the ends of the project targeted at 20 per month. Baseline for referrals is Nil • Contribute to NI153 to decrease the amount of people from deprived communities claiming out of work benefits by engaging with 500 households by the ends of the project targeted at 20 per month. Base Line for referrals is Nil 	

Objective: Implement a person centred enhanced housing options service

Action	Target Completion date	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources Required	Target / Outcome	Progress/ Comments
		<p>developed providing customers with details of what the new service will deliver. This will be developed in conjunction with the Neighbourhood and Adult Service's customer inspection service and learning from customers forum (December 09)</p> <p>"Employment Check List" developed on ICT systems (OHMS) to utilise the Social Housing Tenancy 'sign up' process to promote employment/training/debt/Money/ budgeting advice as the best way to sustain a tenancy. This will be developed in conjunction with 2010 Rotherham Ltd and CORE. (January 2010)</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Satisfaction Level over 90% for Employment Solutions Service. There is no base line as this is a new team. • Service Standard Published (December 09) There is no Service Standard in adopted as this is a new team. • Employment Check List offered to all new tenants during the Social Housing Tenancy sign up, with a target of 75% of all new tenants completing an Employment Check List by end of the 	

Objective: Implement a person centred enhanced housing options service						
Action	Target Completion date	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources Required	Target / Outcome	Progress/ Comments
					financial year. The baseline is NIL as this service doesn't currently exist	
2.Target the Employment Solutions Service towards those most at risk of worklessness to reduce the impact of housing and future job prospects.	December 2009	<p>Participate in the Advice Sector Road Shows. The Employment and Solutions team are now part of the Councils/Job Centre Plus Rapid Response team. Where Employers make over 20 employees redundant they will inform Job Centre Plus. (February 09)</p> <p>Undertake outreach in partnership with the Rapid response team other advice agencies and at local employers where there is a risk of job losses. (March 09)</p> <p>Undertake advice outreach in Local Communities - weekly in all</p>	Martin Humphries (Housing Solutions Manager)	1 FTE employment solutions co-ordinator and 1.5 FTE employment solutions officers - £72k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NI 153 – the number of people within deprived neighbourhoods claiming out of work benefits by engaging with 500 households by the ends of the project targeted at 20 per month. The baseline is Nil as there is no referral process in place Increase the number of people engaging in the Employment /Solutions Service who are helped into paid work and training or money and debt 	

Objective: Implement a person centred enhanced housing options service						
Action	Target Completion date	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources Required	Target / Outcome	Progress/ Comments
		<p>5 Areas Assemblies (August 09)</p> <p>Financial health checks offered to those accessing our Housing Choices Service and referral to appropriate support and guidance. This will be prompted by developing a revised Initial Advice Assessment form (August 2009)</p> <p>'Drop-in' employment and other advice services at Key Choices Property Shop available to customers – 5 half days every week. This will be promoted via Rotherham News, VC Train, Best for Jobs, Prospect Services and A4E, who are part of the progress together Focus group, engaging and supporting customers who are out of work (December 2009)</p>			<p>advice by engaging with 500 households by the ends of the project targeted at 20 per month. The baseline is Nil as there is no referral process in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximisation of the training and employment opportunities of people in Rotherham by engaging with 500 households by the end of the Project targeted at 20 per month. The baseline is Nil as there is no referral process in place • Outreach advice service delivered weekly in 5 area 	

Objective: Implement a person centred enhanced housing options service						
Action	Target Completion date	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources Required	Target / Outcome	Progress/ Comments
					assemblies. The baseline is NIL as this service doesn't exist	
3. Implement Mortgage Rescue Scheme	March 2009	<p>Procedures and information leaflets cascaded for consultation from CLG, including attendance at briefings (January 2009)</p> <p>Housing Choices Team received training appropriate to roles. (January 2009)</p> <p>Protocol/Service level Agreement developed with Money Advice Service to assist in delivery of Mortgage Rescue Scheme (February 09)</p> <p>Protocol and referral developed up with RSL Zone Agent. (February 2009)</p> <p>Housing Solutions and Housing Choices Support Officers staff trained on Mortgage Rescue</p>	Martin Humphries (Housing Solutions Manager)	<p>Employment Solutions Team (1 FTE Co-ordinator, 1.5 x FTE Officers. RMBC cost is £39,963.</p> <p>DCLG funding £40,527 for staffing Employment Solutions Officers</p> <p>Total cost £80,490</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service level agreement (SLA) implemented. None in place • Referral procedure developed • 80% of Mortgage Rescue (MRS) application forms completed is successful for homeowners in difficulty. No MRS applications processed, as alternative prevention methods have been utilised 	

Objective: Implement a person centred enhanced housing options service						
Action	Target Completion date	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources Required	Target / Outcome	Progress/ Comments
		<p>Scheme (February 09)</p> <p>Develop alternative prevention initiatives within the Housing Assistance Policy and include in the “prevention toolkit” to prevent homeowners losing their home. This will be in partnership with the Housing investment team and Credit Crunch Corporate working group. (March 09)</p> <p>Presentation “What’s in our Mortgage Rescue Toolkit” to an “All Member Seminar” , and front line staff at 2010 Rotherham Ltd (April 09)</p> <p>Local Information Pack for homeowners including National Homelessness Advice Service leaflet. This will be developing in consultation with the Neighbourhood and Adult</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer knowledge of Options increased through local self help Information Pack. There is no formalised pack – only various leaflets Housing Choices Team able to deliver appropriate and relevant advice to aid customers in mortgage difficulties resulting in the use of the Mortgage Rescue Scheme. The Housing Solutions team have all received training – The new Employment Solutions team will receive training when in post in May 09 Rise in the number of 	

Objective: Implement a person centred enhanced housing options service						
Action	Target Completion date	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources Required	Target / Outcome	Progress/ Comments
		<p>Services Learning from Customers Focus group. (April 2009)</p> <p>Increase the number of enquiries for assistance from homeowners in difficulty by sending out a leaflet to 40,000 Home Owners. This will be undertaken as an insert to Rotherham News. (May 2009)</p>			<p>enquiries for assistance from homeowners. 5 enquiries received during March 09</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Members able to directly advise constituents on outlines of schemes available. Training session delivered in March 09 to an All Member Seminar 	