



# Housing and Community Advice Service Delivery Plan 2024 to 2025

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## Overview of the service

### Housing Advice

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, 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, and referring clients to homeless hostels. They are also the conduit for the Rent Deposit Scheme, Young Persons Project, provision and assistance for 16/17year olds 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 amended) as well as the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 to 2025 and the Council's corporate aims of:

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

The team oversee the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, Asylum Dispersal Scheme and Afghan Resettlement Scheme and work with Community Advice Resettlement officers in supporting, re-matching, and moving our guests into independent accommodation.

## **Community Advice**

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 people's lives.

The team co-ordinate and attend the community hubs/bus across the district, reaching more remote residents and ending social and digital isolation.

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

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

- Universal Credit (including the housing element)
- domestic abuse
- defending possession proceedings
- housing options
- conflict management
- DASH risk assessments
- mediation
- income maximisation
- armed forces covenants
- immigration status and eligibility
- Adults and Mental Capacity Act
- mental health
- drug and alcohol abuse
- personal independence payments (PIP) applications and challenging decisions
- overpayments of benefits
- employment and consumer law
- rent arrears
- debt and money advice
- anti-social behaviour
- pensions
- referrals or signposting to other services

## Cost of service

The gross cost of running the Housing and Community Advice service is £818,093 with a net cost to the authority of £224,666 the remainder of £593,427 is covered by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities funding.

## Staffing Information

Housing and Community Advice Manager (part time)

Housing Options Team Leader (full time)

Housing Options Officer (4 full time)

Housing and Court Officer (full time)

Income and Recovery Officer (full time)

Traveller Liaison Officer (part time)

Community Advice Team Leader (full time)

Community Advice Officer (3 full time)

Community Advice and Resettlement Officer (3 full time)

Housing & Community Advice Admin Officer (1 full time)

## Forward planning for Councillors

Proposed item	Proposed date of decision	Committee
Half year report 2024 to 2025	November 2024	Operational Services
End of year report 2024 to 2025	March 2025	Operational Services
Service Delivery Plan 2025 to 2026	March 2025	Operational Services

## Housing and Community Advice Service Delivery Plan 2024 to 2025

This Service Delivery Plan describes what Housing and Community Advice Service will be doing to deliver continuous improvement (service objectives). Each performance measure relates to the Council's strategic outcomes and Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027.

**Council's strategic outcome:** Minimise the financial (cost) impact of the Council on its residents.

**Housing and Community Advice Service's strategic objective:** Maximising income via the re charging policy and reduce the risk of temporary accommodation.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Sound financial management.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timeline	Baseline/output from 2023 to 2024	Owner and co-owners
Avoid the use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation where possible unless in an absolute emergency, high risk clients and there is no other accommodation available to the client	90%, annually	85%	Housing Options Team
To secure alternative accommodation for high-risk clients to avoid the use of B&B accommodation		New performance measure	Housing & Community Advice Manager
Recoup monies loaned to clients for deposits, storage and removals with a collection rate of 85%	85%, annually	84%	Income and Recovery Officer
Produce a full re charging policy for B&B, deposits, removals and storage	100%, annually	New performance measure	Housing Options Team

**Council's strategic outcome:** Sustainable Communities

**Housing and Community Advice Service's strategic objective:** Provide a holistic Housing and Community Advice service with the emphasis on preventing homelessness and offering a fully accessible Community Advice Service.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Support our residents to live happy and healthy lives.

<b>Performance measure</b>	<b>Target and reporting timeline</b>	<b>Baseline/output from 2023 to 2024</b>	<b>Owner and co-owners</b>
<b>Meet all of our statutory duties relating to the Housing Act 1996 as amended</b>	100% annually	New performance measure	Housing & Community Advice Team
<b>Ensure that 100% of the discretionary Housing Fund is fully utilised to prevent homelessness</b>	100%, annually	100%	Housing and Community Advice Team
<b>Prevent or relieve at least 250 households per year from becoming homeless</b>	Minimum 250, annually	Prevented 247 Relieved 251	Housing Options Team
<b>To continue to implement the DAHA accreditation including providing DA survivors with essential packs of sanitary products and essential clothing and bedding to support when fleeing</b>	100%, annually	New performance measure	Housing and Community Advice Team
<b>Ensure 100% of clients are seen within 15 minutes of attending drop-in services and explore the possibility of more interview rooms</b>	100%, annually	100%	Housing and Community Advice Team
<b>Ensure resolution guarantee for 100% of clients that are seen by the Community Advice team</b>	100%, annually	96%	Community Advice Team
<b>Carry out 100% of welfare checks with our Ukrainian guests within a week of arriving at their host properties and continue to work in partnership on the Asylum Dispersal and Afghan Resettlement Scheme</b>	100%, annually	100%	Community Advice and Resettlement Officers

Performance measure	Target and reporting timeline	Baseline/output from 2023 to 2024	Owner and co-owners
Work in partnership with Environmental Health to ensure all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) are licensed and meet the required standards prior to any placements within the private landlord remit including upskilling another housing officer to carry out HRSS property inspections	100%, annually	100%	Housing Options Team
To ensure at least one officer undertakes training and are qualified to provide residents with immigration advice to enhance the service provided by the Community Advice Team	100%	New performance measure	Housing and Community Advice Team
Improve communications by updating our website and leaflets, relationships with registered providers and the private sector. Including regular promotional work to make residents aware of services available	As required, annually	Ongoing	Housing and Community Advice Team
Support residents in the private sector and social housing in any court appearances, including assisting with all relevant court paperwork	100%, annually	100%	Housing Options Court Officer
Ensure 100% of all unauthorised traveller encampments are visited within 24 hours and working with partner agencies to arrange planned move-ons or evictions	100%, annually	100%	Traveller Liaison Officer

**Council's strategic outcome:** A clean, green attractive place.

**Housing and Community Advice Service's strategic objective:** Undertake activities which help to mitigate/adapt to climate

**change. Link to Corporate Plan:** Cleaner, greener East Cambridgeshire.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timeline	Baseline/output from 2023 to 2024	Owner and co-owners
Reduce our paper usage within the service 10%	10% reduction, annually	19%	Housing and Community Advice Team