

Performance Monitoring Report

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Summary and Recommendation:

In October 2011 a performance monitoring report was brought to the Strategic Housing Panel. This report is intended as a supplement to inform the Panel on operational activity within the housing section. It is recommended that quarterly reports are brought to the panel during 2012/13.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Housing Services Team cover several key areas regarding housing across the Borough. This includes but is not limited to; disabled facilities grants, unfit housing, empty properties, immigration inspections, overcrowding, developing the landlord forum, homeless applications, housing advice, rent deposits, homeless prevention and domestic violence

2. Housing Advice

- 2.1 Between the 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011 there were 318 requests for housing advice. Since 1 April 2011 there have been 231 requests, these are all cases where customers have been into the Copeland Centre and have been interviewed. The figure does not take into account the number of telephone enquiries made to the housing options team, which can range anywhere between 15 and 40 calls per day.
- 2.2 When a resident is threatened with homelessness because their property is due to be reposed by the mortgage lender due to arrears the lender must inform us. Since the 1 April 2011 there have been 67 such letters, a member of the housing options team contacts the homeowner by letter to let them know that there may be options available to them which will enable them to remain in their home. This is a slight increase on the number received during 2010/11.

3. Rent Deposits

- 3.1 When a resident is homeless or threatened with homelessness we can help with a deposit for a private tenancy. The property is inspected by a technical officer under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and as long as there are no hazards and the landlord has provided all the certificates then the deposit is paid. This is claimed back from the customer at an affordable amount each month. There were 32 rent deposits provided in 2010/11 and there have been 31 from 1 April 2011 to 28 Feb 2012.

4. Full Homeless Applications

- 4.1 The number of full homeless investigations carried out has risen steadily during 2009/10 there were 181 applications; during 2010/11 there were 220 cases and from 1 April 2011 to 28 Feb 2012 there have been 259 cases. This represents an increase of 43% in less than two years.
- 4.2 The majority of presentations are made by lone women who are either pregnant or already have children, and families with two parents and one child or pregnancy.

5. Prevention

- 5.1 Prevention figures have increased this year from 39 cases in 2010/11 to 53 between 1 April 2011 and 28 Feb 2012.
- 5.2 Prevention measures include amongst other things, helping residents clear small amounts of rent arrears; helping residents if they are threatened with illegal eviction; referring residents to support agencies etc.

6. MARAC – Domestic Violence

- 6.1 Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) are held monthly and attended by the housing options team leader. During the MARAC, high risk victims of domestic violence are discussed and partners who include social services, the police and probation make sure measures are in place to protect the victims and their families.
- 6.2 Two officers have undertaken training and are 'Domestic Violence Champions' for Copeland. The 'Champions' are involved in improving community and organisational responses to domestic violence and providing training and assistance to enable front line staff to support the lower and medium risk cases not picked up by MARAC.

7. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's)

- 7.1 Residents of the borough whether owner occupiers, tenants of a Registered Provider or private landlord can apply for a DFG. The resident is assessed by an Occupational Therapist and if adaptations are required they are referred to the Council for a grant. An application is then made and a means test carried out to see if the applicant qualifies, is the applicant is a child under 19 years there is no means test.
- 7.2 During 2010/11 there were 69 referrals for DFG's; from 1 April 2011 to 28 Feb 2012 there were 110 referrals, an increase of 59%. Of these, the majority are owner occupiers although we have seen a slight increase in the number of tenants who apply.
- 7.3 Technical officers have to visit a property at least twice when a DFG is applied for, firstly to assess with an Occupational Therapist what work is required, secondly to make sure the work has been carried out to the standards expected. Where more extensive works are required such as shower rooms, extensions to properties etc many more visits may be required, payments are only made to contractors when an inspection has been made and the work signed off so for example when an extension is being built several visits will be made. The number of referrals therefore does not adequately reflect the number of visits to a property.
- 7.4 There have been monthly meetings throughout the year with adult social care to discuss cases that are ongoing or pending.

8. Empty properties

- 8.1 During this calendar year visits have been made to 15 empty properties; the majority of the owners have been identified and written to. In addition to this, five properties are in the process of being refurbished due to the efforts of the team. Again, several visits can be made to ensure work has commenced etc.
- 8.2 An empty property strategy has been developed this year (discussed at SHP in Feb 2012) and all Parish Councils' have been contacted and asked to identify empty properties in their area. An empty property can also be reported via the website.

9. Unfit Properties

- 9.1 The council has a statutory duty to inspect tenancies where the tenant reports that the property is unfit. The property is inspected and contact is made with the landlord outlining a schedule of works required to bring the property up to a decent standard. This involves at least two inspections, there have been 47 inspections since April 2012, we have yet to prosecute a landlord, they have complied with legislation due to our involvement.

10. Overcrowding and Immigration Inspections

- 10.1 The team are responsible for inspecting properties if the tenant thinks they are overcrowded, there were no requests during 2010/11 and three requests from 1 April 2011 to date. This could be attributed to Choice Based Lettings as a higher Band is available if overcrowding is established. Out of the three properties inspected, one was statutorily overcrowded.
- 10.2 If a resident wished to sponsor a person from abroad and they are to live in Copeland, an inspection needs to take place to make sure the property in which they are to live is of a decent standard and will not become overcrowded. This is then given to the customer and sent to the British High Commission. There were two applications during 2010/11 and three this year, all of which were inspected.

11 Rent Deposit Property Inspections

- 11.1 When a resident threatened with homelessness or is homeless and a deposit is required from the council an inspection must be made of the property to ensure it is of a decent standard and that the appropriate certificates are available from the landlord. During 2010/11, 35 inspections were undertaken and since 1 April 2011 there have been 37 inspections. If a property fails an inspection the rent deposit is not given until the landlord has brought the property up to a decent standard.

Conclusion

The above report does not take into consideration all the activity that takes place but gives an overview of the section involved in front line services. It is proposed that quarterly monitoring reports are brought to the Strategic Housing Panel during 2012/13. The statistics will be accumulative which means by quarter 4 an annual report will be produced.