

PROJECT CLOSURE

Project name	Intensive Housing Management Service - Stage 1	
Report date	25th September 2015	
	In October 2014 Leicestershire County Council formally notified Melton Borough Council of their intention to cease funding for Housing Related Support Services that they currently fund. This decision led to Melton Borough Council reviewing how we will deliver a service to manage the needs of our more vulnerable tenants.	
1 Performance against objectives	Original	Final
1.1	To develop a plan to de-commission existing Housing Related Support Service that is funded mainly by Leicestershire County Council	Task group was set up and a plan was devised end the existing service as a result of a loss of County funding for the supported service.
1.2	Consult with existing tenants to inform them of the proposed changes and implementation of a new Intensive Housing Management Service before 30th September 2015	A number of consultation events took place and every resident was contacted individually. The overwhelming response was to continue with the service
1.3	Define what the new service will look like and determine which properties will be provided with an intensive housing management service. Establish if those tenants that are allowed to opt out wish to receive the new service	A new Intensive Housing Support Service was devised with the use of an external consultant. Part of the consultation reviewed the option to opt out of the new service. Currently there are 588 properties signed up to the IHMS.
1.4	Determine the cost of the service to tenants who will receive the new service.	Detailed budget plans allowed us to allow for a figure that would ensure residents requiring the service could reasonable afford to pay and ensure the service was affordable without the need to subsidies
1.5	Map key processes by 31.03.15 and reassess those tenants who will receive the new service. This is to enable the Council to run an effective service from 1st April 2015	The project team reviewed the sign up process of new tenants. Clearly there was no point in having a split service between IHMS & general needs properties. End to End process reviews were carried out to map the existing process. We revolutionised the sign up process building in earlier forward offer contact, closer working with the tenant & the requirement of 4 week rent in advance
1.6	Implement a soft launch of the new service between 1st April 2015 and 30th September 2015.	The new service was launched on time – 1st April 2015

1.7	Ensure new charges are charged via Melton Borough Council rent accounts from 1st April 2015.	The Northgate housing system was updated to reflect new charges.
1.8	Develop a staff training programme and up-skill staff with the key skills they will to undertake their new roles. There is a four week probationary period in which capability will need to be monitored. The dates are April 1st 2015 – 30th April 2015.	A staff training plan was developed to ensure the new team had the necessary skills for their new roles. Support continues to be provided by the People & Place teams to ensure we have a holistic approach to IHMS. Review meeting were held as part of the probationary period.

2. Benefit Realisation

2.1 Background.	As an introductory tenant, those tenants that breach the terms of their tenancy either for rent arrears or ASB are invited to a panel hearing to review the tenancy. Of the 20 introductory tenancy appeal heard between April 14 – September 14 a pattern of concerns were being raised over & over again by new tenants
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property awarded – waiting for repair to be done before seeing the property <i>“I was told I had bid successfully but the repairs needed to be done. They told me it will take two weeks but I kept bugging the Council, calling them every other day. It took 4 weeks before I was told I would get the keys and I heard nothing”</i> • Tenants said the sign up process was very long and they didn’t understand all of the paperwork. <i>“It took me two days to go through it all and they give you so much paperwork. It was too much for me. I wanted something simpler. For me I have to read things twice, I just didn’t understand I telephoned the Council a couple of times for help”</i> • All the tenants were in “arrears” with Council Tax & rent at the 6 week point of their tenancy; a majority were water rates only. <i>“It took 3 weeks before the allpay card came and I was told to go to the Council Office to sort out my benefits as you needed my payslips, I didn’t bring them to the sign up” this meant in my first few weeks as a tenant I was receiving arrears letters”</i> • Tenants said they were given very short notice to sign the property. <i>“My Children were off school over the summer I was given 5 days’ notice I had to decorate and measure for carpets in three days, Clean my temporary accommodation so I didn’t lose my deposit, pack and move in. I just couldn’t do it so moved in the following week This meant she signed the tenancy but didn’t move in resulting in no HB being paid and starting her tenancy in arrears.</i> • At the 6 week visit <i>“I had forgot the appointment. I can’t remember her name who visited me. She was alright but I didn’t really know her or why she was coming back to see me”</i>

<p>2.2 The first 6 months of the new sign up process</p>	<p>During the 1st 6 months of the new service 1st April 15 to 30th Sept 15 56 new Introductory tenancies have been set up (both IHMS & general needs) using the new processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 52 tenants paid rent in advance totalling £4k• Of which 10 paid 4 full weeks in advance• Only 3 refusals of properties• Only 6 tenants in arrears at 6 months with the highest case £256• No Appeal Hearings <p>This compares to the same period 1st April 14 to Sept 2014 where 51 new Introductory tenancies had been set up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No rent in advance• 11 refusals of properties• 33 tenants in arrears at 6 months total arrears value £7,209• 20 Appeal hearings <p>Customer Insight showed historically new tenants made on average 10 calls to the Council in their first 6 months with the vast majority of calls being received following an offer of accommodation. Customers would regularly telephone CSC to ask when the property will be ready to view.</p> <p>As part of the process redesign we have removed the need for customers to make contact and already the evidence shows each new tenant is making 5 less contacts in the first 3 months of their tenancy.</p> <p>The forward offer process provides the customer with the date that the property will be ready, there is also a mini triage carried out with the new customer to ensure he or she is in the best possible position to sustain their forthcoming tenancy.</p> <p>The IHMS and CSC outreach officer keeps the new tenant up to date with the progress of the property. Officers case manage the tenants journey, from the offer of accommodation to the 3 week visit (previously a 6 week visit)</p> <p>The tenant is made fully aware that if they require Housing Benefit then we have an online process and inform the new tenant of what documents will be required to ensure the benefit is paid on time.</p> <p>Where tenants require additional support we use the full range of services at Me & My Learning to compliment the IHMS team.</p>
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2.3 Rent & Council Tax	<p>On the 1st April 2015 Rent arrears for the IHMS properties totalled £38,077. The arrears as at 30th Sept 2015 have reduced to £33,072. Council Tax arrears are being managed more effectively with arrangements being set up and fewer recovery notices being sent. The IHMS team work closely with the Revenues Team to ensure an holistic approach is taken to debt recovery and money advice.</p>
2.4 Contact	<p>One of the key areas of success is the reduction on calls to Customer Services. Since the 1st April the IHMS team log their contact direct on to the system which historically would have been carried out by Customer Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 82 Repairs logged direct onto Northgate by IHMS officers • 45 Arrears notepads added • 33 arrears / welfare visits requested by the Revenues Team carried out including C Tax discussions • 11 ASB visits undertaken <p>Every IHMS property has been visited and assessed. 97.42% of the tenants have been home at the time of the pre arranged visit. Just 15 tenants remain to respond to the regular visits. We are working with other partners regarding the best method of communicating with these customers.</p>

Report	Comment	Suggestions
<p>1. Within the project, what</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • went well • went badly 	<p>This project came into force because of external factors.</p> <p>Member & staff buy in was key to making this project work.</p> <p>The consultations proved very successful and we kept the residents informed throughout the process.</p>	
<p>2. A description of any surprises or unexpected events impacting on plans, anything important that was not anticipated.</p>	<p>There were a number of residents who were not previously receiving the support service who asked if they could pay for the IHMS.</p>	
<p>3. Recommendations for future enhancement or modification of the project management method.</p>	<p>This project is regularly monitored at the Monday morning weekly meetings.</p> <p>Officers of the meeting receive weekly Highlight reports and can share learning from key projects.</p>	

Project Manager m shields Date 25th Sept 15