

Vision Statement for the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Service

Stroud District Council's corporate vision is to make the district a better place to live, work and visit. The vision for the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Service contributes to the corporate vision by helping to achieve some of the corporate aims as detailed in the Revenue and Benefit Service plan. The main corporate aims and objectives that this service contributes to are 'helping those in particular need' and 'preventing crime and disorder'.

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Service Aims:

'It is the aim of the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Service to provide an effective and secure Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit service that is accessible to everyone in the community. We aim to pay the correct benefit on time, be customer focused in all that we do, and to proactively tackle fraud and error. We aim to work closely with others to enable claimants to live in decent housing'.

To achieve our aims we will :-

- Develop Best Value in the delivery of our services, following the key principles of consultation, comparison, challenge and competition.
- Use the feedback from customer surveys and complaints to review our operations.
- Monitor and review staffing levels to ensure that sufficient staff resources are available to operate an efficient service.
- Encourage and motivate staff to realise their full potential through staff appraisals, personal development, professional training, and on the job training in benefits administration and customer care.
- Strive to ensure that the standard of our service meets the national Performance Standards set out by the Department of Work and Pensions / Benefit Fraud Inspectorate and encourage a strong culture of good performance.

- Take measures, including using a new integrated Document Image Processing and Workflow system, to improve the speed and accuracy of benefit assessments so that customers receive the benefit to which they are entitled.
- Use our benefit promotions officer and work with others like the Department of Work and Pensions and the Public Service Agreement partnership to increase the take-up of benefit, introducing campaigns to target benefit at those most in need, and minimising barriers to work.
- Utilise our corporate Citizen First Strategy to make Benefits more accessible to everyone in the community by using the new one-stop-shop/information points around the district, and to strive to continually improve the quality of customer service we provide.
- Work with the Housing Service and other internal and external agencies to contribute to the council's Housing Strategy to provide an effective service that helps claimants to live in decent housing.
- Develop policies, procedures and working practices to ensure that legislative requirements are met and administered efficiently, effectively and economically. Identify the resources required to deliver the intended service.
- Ensure that all overpayments are properly accounted for and prompt recovery action taken.
- Continue to operate the counter fraud Verification Framework Scheme and work to reduce the risk and level of Fraud. Investigating potential Fraud and imposing appropriate sanctions including prosecuting claimants who commit Fraud, in line with our prosecution policy.
- Treat all of our customers in a fair and equitable manner having particular regard to the Human Rights Act, Race Relations Act, Equalities legislation and any other legislation or policies, which may have an impact.