

Stroud District Council **Visiting Policy for Revenue and Benefit Services**

General

This policy contributes to the implementation of Stroud District Council's corporate aims of working with others to make the district a better place to live and work, which comprises the objective of helping those in particular need.

The Revenue & Benefit Service is committed to providing an effective visiting service to our residents. We will visit people at home in the following categories:

- Housing and Council Tax Benefit claimants: welfare/advisory visits for those who are housebound; Verification Framework visits; Fraud investigation visits.
- Council Tax and Business Rates: property inspections; pro-active visits for recovery arrangements; eligibility to certain discounts e.g. disabled relief.

Purpose

1. Housing and Council Tax Benefit Claimants

We will undertake Welfare/Advisory home visits in order to:

- enable claimants who are housebound, elderly, disabled, or have recently been bereaved to complete Benefit application forms where they have no other means of submitting their application.
- clarify information to process a claim where the information cannot be obtained in any other way.
- respond to requests for home visits under the above circumstances from claimants or their representatives and staff.

We will undertake Verification Framework home visits in order to:

- Comply with the requirements of the counter fraud Verification Framework Scheme. In most cases these visits will be notified, however, the Authority will make un-notified visits in certain circumstances.

We will undertake Fraud visits in order to:

- Carry out interviews that may be required whilst investigating a claimant.
- Exercise our powers on obtaining information from employers under Section 109c and 110a of the Social Security Administration Act 1992
- Obtain witness statements from employers and other third parties

2. Council Tax and Business Rates

We will undertake property inspections in order to:

- Consider applications for reliefs, exemptions, certain discounts, and voids in order to determine the correct liability of Council Tax and Business Rates.
- Make recovery payment arrangements for debts that are difficult to collect

All staff undertaking home visits should refer to the guidance in the council's Lone Worker Policy.

Commitment

All of our visiting staff will display their official identification cards at every home visit. All visits and enquiries will be treated in a fair and equitable manner having particular regard to the Human Rights Act, Race Relations Act and any other legislation or Policies, which may have an impact.