

PLACE AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS SCRUTINY PANEL

Day: Tuesday
Date: 10 March 2020
Time: 6.00 pm
Place: Tameside One

Item No.	AGENDA	Page No
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
2.	MINUTES To approve as a correct record, the Minutes of the proceedings of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel held on 7 January 2020.	1 - 4
3.	RESPONSE TO OMBUDSMAN FOCUS REPORT - HOUSING BENEFIT The Panel to meet Ilys Cookson, Assistant Director for Exchequer Services; and Tracey Watkin, Service Unit Manager, to receive a service response to a Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Focus Report which provides shared insight and learning from complaints related to Housing Benefit.	5 - 30
4.	HOUSING STRATEGY The Panel to meet Gregg Stott, Interim Assistant Director for Development and Investment; and Patrick Nolan, Head of Major Programmes, to receive an update on the development of a local Housing Strategy.	31-48
5.	CORPORATE PLAN SCORECARD The Panel to receive a quarterly update on the Corporate Plan Performance Scorecard.	49-50
6.	SCRUTINY ACTIVITY 2019/20 The Chair to present a summary of all Scrutiny activity undertaken during the 2019/20 municipal year.	51-52
7.	GREATER MANCHESTER SCRUTINY The Chair to discuss priorities and recent activity of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Scrutiny Committees.	
8.	CHAIR'S UPDATE The Chair to provide a verbal update on recent activity and future priorities for the Panel.	

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that this is the last formal meeting of the Panel for the 2019/20 municipal year.

10. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any additional items the Chair is of the opinion shall be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel 7 January 2020

Commenced: 6.00pm

Terminated: 7.35pm

Present: Councillors Glover (Chair), Mills (Deputy Chair), Billington, Bowden, Choksi, Chadwick, J Fitzpatrick, P Fitzpatrick, A Holland, Hollinshead, Pearce, Robinson, Sharif, Sweeton.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Alam, Bowerman, Lewis, Naylor.

30. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel held on 5 November 2019 were approved as a correct record subsequent to the addition below.

- Members to receive information and sources used to inform data and statistics quoted within findings and outcomes from the Peer Review of Healthy Spaces.

31. HIGHWAYS AND FLOOD PREVENTION

The Panel welcomed Lee Holland, Head of Engineering Services, to provide an update on winter pressures associated with flood prevention and highway maintenance.

Mr Holland provided a summary of legislative requirements when dealing with flood risk. A major change in 2010 resulted in a greater level of responsibility for local authorities. Prior to this, the Environment Agency held responsibility for all incidents relating to main rivers and watercourses, which changed to main rivers only. Designated as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), the Council has responsibility for flood sources which include:

- Ordinary watercourse
- Highway surface water (with Highway Authority)
- Surface water from other sources (with Highway Authority)
- Groundwater flooding

Further detail was provided on the roles and responsibilities for land owners (Riparian Ownership), with examples provided on the Council's work with residents and landowners across a number of areas. It was reported that over 200 inlet structures have been identified and added to the asset register. Of these, the Council maintain a number that are considered critical to flood risk. Grants and investment has enabled a number of crucial inlet structures to be repaired and replaced where necessary. This has improved functionality and allows urgent and routine inspections to be undertaken in a safe and controlled environment.

A breakdown of activity was provided on gully cleansing. This included information on the frequency that cleansing is carried out in critical locations and known hotspots. Mr Holland reported that while the service had previously reduced to only one machine, past feedback from Scrutiny had contributed to a recent decision to increase this to two machines. This supports a system with greater capacity to deal with both reactive and routine works.

The Panel heard that the Council has a duty to maintain the highway, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow and ice. The weather forecast from Met Desk is monitor 24/7 from November to April, with local intelligence also drawn from two weather stations. All information and data allows for effective decision making on when to spread salt on the highway network.

The service has experienced and fully trained winter gritting officers, with a range of vehicles to accommodate the variety of roads and footpaths. The winter maintenance schedule and gritting network has been reviewed to take account of periods where cold weather may be expected and for route optimisation to maximise the use of available resources.

The Panel asked how recent flood prevention work has helped to mitigate flooding and the associated risks. Mr Holland advised members that improvement work completed on critical infrastructure was much needed and provides a greater level of assurance prior to a period of expected rainfall. It is important to note that it remains very difficult to prevent all episodes of flooding should the borough experience an unprecedented level of rainfall.

The Panel asked about winter grit bins located across the borough and weather salt is replenished during the winter months. Mr Holland advised that there are approximately 360 grit bins located across the borough in historic locations. All bins are filled at the beginning of the winter period and there is often a greater need to ensure salt is used on the highway, for which all residents can benefit. A grit bin request will be approved only where a criteria is met, namely height above sea level and road category.

Resolved: That Mr Holland be thanked for attending the meeting.

32. RESPONSE TO GREATER MANCHESTER BUS CONSULTATION

Panel members reviewed a draft response letter to the Greater Manchester consultation, Doing Buses Differently, to be submitted by 8 January 2020. The Panel approved all content, with no amendments prior to submission.

Resolved: The Chair to submit the consultation response on behalf of the Panel.

33. GREATER MANCHESTER SCRUTINY

The Chair is a member of the Greater Manchester Housing, Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The most recent meeting was held in November 2019, with the following topics discussed:

- Greater Manchester Implementation Plan
- Town Centre Strategy
- A Bed Every Night / Housing First
- GM electric vehicle charging tariff proposal

The Chair reaffirmed that the Scrutiny Update emails will continue to include a link to all public papers for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Scrutiny Committees.

34. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair reported that the final report and Executive Response for the review of Improving Quality and Standards in the Private Rented Sector was presented at the Overview Panel meeting on 18 November 2019. The working group will meet again on 13 January 2020 to receive a progress update on improvement proposals and timescales.

The working group will remain in place to work in partnership, and as a critical friend to the Executive during future development and consultation stages.

Resolved: Details and outcomes from working group meetings to be routinely reported to the Scrutiny Panel.

35. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel will take place on Tuesday 10 March 2020.

36. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no urgent items for consideration at this meeting.

CHAIR

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Response to LGSCO Report – Focus on Housing Benefit

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Housing Benefit is a means tested Social Security Benefit that has been administered by local authorities on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) since 1992.
- 1.2 Applications for Housing Benefit are made on-line and customers provide details of household composition and evidence of rental payments and income. When a Housing Benefit application has been assessed a decision notice must be issued. The Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 detail the procedures for making decisions on entitlement and appeal. Decision notices must include items such as:
- The amount of any entitlement or overpayment
 - How the amount was calculated
 - If the overpayment is recoverable, who is it recoverable from and how will it be recovered
 - The person's right to request a written statement setting reasons on any matter stated in the decision notice and the manner and timescale in which to do so
 - The person's right to apply for a revision of the decision or appeal against it and the manner and time in which to do so if they disagree with the decision made by the Council
- 1.3 At 1 April 2019 there were 14,603 recipients of Housing Benefit in Tameside. A total of around £73 million was paid to claimants in 2018/2019, with payments audited by the DWP. In addition to this a total of 43,570 determinations (decisions) were made in 2018/19 in respect of new and existing claims where there had been a change in circumstances that would affect entitlement.
- 1.4 A total of 245 appeals were made in 2018/19 or 0.5% of all determinations. It is important to note that none of the appeals made in Tameside during 2018/19 resulted in a complaint made to the Ombudsman. The Council has not been found at fault with any Housing Benefit complaints. At a national level the Ombudsman received a total of 74 complaints regarding Housing Benefit for the same period.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The role of the Ombudsman is to regulate on a range of local authority service matters which include Exchequer functions, such as assessment of Housing Benefit, collection of Council Tax, Business Rates and Adult Social Care assessments. In January 2020 a Focus Report was published that detailed findings with regards to Housing Benefit and the administration of appeals titled Focus on Housing Benefit.
- 2.2 The report highlights common issues the Ombudsman have found whilst investigating complaints made by Housing Benefit recipients. The purpose of the report is to share learning with Councils to ensure all residents are treated fairly and in accordance with Housing Benefit Regulations. The report also encourages local accountability and assists Councillors to scrutinise how Housing Benefit Services carry out their duties.

3. KEY FINDINGS

Issues identified

- 3.1 The Ombudsman identified a number of key issues with regard to the processing of Housing Benefit claims. The key areas are detailed below on how Tameside addresses each matter.

Failing to identify appeals

- 3.2 The Ombudsman has found that some Councils have failed to recognise appeals submitted as the claimant has not used the words 'review' or 'appeal' in their correspondence.
- 3.3 Staff members working in Tameside's Housing Benefit Service are fully trained in all Housing Benefit assessment and appeals matters and a specific module focusses on identifying reviews and appeals and acting on them appropriately.
- 3.4 Decisions on appeals are communicated to claimants in writing and are advised if appeals are successful in full, or in part, or are unsuccessful. Decision notices are issued and claimants in Tameside are advised of their right to appeal and how this can be done. Notices also include information of their right to contact the Ombudsman should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of an appeal.

Failing to process appeals

- 3.5 The Ombudsman has found that some Councils have failed to pass on appeals to the Tribunal. It is for the Tribunal to decide if an appeal is valid and not a decision to be made by the Council.
- 3.6 The Housing Benefit Regulations are clear and state that a recoverable overpayment can be recovered from:
- The claimant
 - A person acting on behalf of the claimant
 - The person to whom it was paid
- 3.7 The Housing Benefit Service has a team which is dedicated solely to the processing of overpayments and the recovery of overpayments. This specialist team is fully trained on the regulations and makes every effort to reinstate benefit at the correct rate where an overpayment has occurred and a claimant remains entitled to help with their rental payments. It is important to process any revised entitlement in a timely manner to avoid hardship and the possibility of eviction.
- 3.8 Appeals against overpayments are considered from any person affected. The team are aware that not all appeals are made using the terms 'review' and 'appeal', nor are they always made by the person to whom benefit is paid. All appeals identified are passed to the Housing Benefit Compliance team for consideration.
- 3.9 Where there is any doubt that an appeal is not valid in accordance with Housing Benefit regulations, i.e. out of time, such cases are to be referred to The Appeal Tribunal to make that determination. The Appeal Tribunal Service is independent of the Council and DWP.

Delays in processing appeals

- 3.10 The Ombudsman has found that in some instances they were asked to investigate Housing Benefit appeals that were not dealt with in a timely manner.
- 3.11 Within the Housing Benefit Service there is a compliance team. The team works independently from the assessment team where determinations are made. The workload for all sections within Exchequer Services is monitored on a daily basis and reported to managers, this ensures that all appeals are dealt with in the appropriate time limits.

Failure to act on new evidence

- 3.12 The Ombudsman's findings are that delays in processing changes in circumstances has resulted in incorrect benefit being paid and in some instances this has attributed to overpayments occurring.

3.13 Tameside's Housing Benefit workload is prioritised on a daily basis to ensure that all changes are processed in a timely manner, and any overpayments which occur due to changes in circumstances are kept to a minimum. This is monitored on a daily basis to ensure that timescales and targets are met and to ensure resources are available should there be any increases in the workload at any time.

Recovery of overpayment whilst an appeal is outstanding

3.14 The Ombudsman suggests that Councils do not recover any monies until the appeal period has elapsed or any appeal submitted is considered. Exchequer Services has a team dedicated who deal with the calculation, classification and recovery of overpayments.

3.15 Where an overpayment has occurred the Council has a duty to notify the claimant and any person to whom benefit occurred about the overpayment. The decision notice issued gives the right to appeal the decision within 28 days. Housing Benefit regulations allows for the recovery of overpayment to commence from a person's ongoing benefit on a weekly basis or directly from the landlord in full following the calculation of any overpayment. Tameside currently administer recovery of overpayments in this way.

3.16 In view of the Ombudsman's recommendations to delay recovery until any time limit for appeal has elapsed or any appeal has been determined, the team will consider the current process on a case by case basis as the decision could result in some claimants having to repay significant arrears.

4. OVERVIEW

4.1 The Ombudsman report has detailed several areas to assist Councillors to scrutinise the way a Council carries out its Housing Benefit function. Whilst the detail in section 3 of this report provides assurance that the service provided should not be subject to any Ombudsman findings against the Council, the table below provides a response to the suggested scrutiny questions to reaffirm this.

Ombudsman questions for Councillors	Response of Tameside Housing Benefit Service
How many appeals does the Council receive on a quarterly basis?	The Council receives approximately 65 Housing Benefit appeals each quarter.
How long does the Council take to process these?	The target in Tameside is to process appeals within 20 days of receipt.
Does the Council have enough suitably trained and skilled officers to deal with the volume of appeals that it receives? If not, what is it doing to address this?	The Council has a dedicated team which deal with appeals. The officers on the team are all suitably skilled and knowledgeable in Housing Benefit administration and are trained on any new legislation as it is introduced. Staffing levels are appropriate to meet the demands of the appeals received.
How is the Council planning for the rollout of Universal Credit in its area? Is it keeping under review its assumptions about the implications this has for housing benefit case numbers and appeals given any delay in rollout?	The Council has multi trained its Housing Benefit staff so they are now skilled in the processing of Council Tax Support and Council Tax registration. This means as the demand for Housing Benefit processing reduces the staff resource can be redistributed. As Universal Credit cases will increase, it is likely that appeals will reduce, however, the roll out of Universal Credit is expected over a prolonged/phased period..
How is the Council monitoring whether appeals are being dealt with properly? Is there any evidence claimants are being refused appeals but their cases are not being passed to the tribunal, as the law requires?	The Housing Benefit Service has worked closely with the Welfare Rights Service to ensure that a robust appeal process is in place. All staff members are fully trained in the process and understand claimant appeal rights. Appropriate cases are referred directly to the Appeals Tribunal Service.
How does the Council monitor whether it is waiting at least one month before beginning overpayment recovery, to allow opportunity for an appeal?	This practice will be considered on a case by case basis to avoid a claimant potentially having to repay a large sum over a short period.
How does the Council ensure it is putting a hold on recovery action when it receives an appeal against a housing benefit overpayment?	This is undertaken on a case by case basis and will continue to do so.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The Housing Benefit Service has welcomed this report from the Ombudsman as it assists in considering complaints which the Ombudsman has upheld and outlines their reasons for doing so.
- 5.2 The findings and advice from the Ombudsman to all Councils is a useful tool to compare the way in which appeals and overpayments are dealt with in other Councils and how they are administered in Tameside.
- 5.3 This report confirms that the good practices within the Ombudsman's report are being undertaken in Tameside and this is confirmed by the fact that Tameside have had no recent cases found against them by the Ombudsman.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Elected Members are asked to note the Ombudsman's report and response of the Housing Benefit Service.
- 6.2 Consideration will be given to extending existing good practice to all cases where:
- Delaying overpayment recovery until the appeal timeframe has elapsed
 - Placing a hold on recovery until the outcome of any appeal is decided

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Local Government &
Social Care
OMBUDSMAN

***Focus on Housing
Benefit***



Focus report: learning lessons from complaints
January 2020
www.lgo.org.uk

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Ombudsman's foreword



We have published this report to highlight some of the common issues we see with councils delivering housing benefit services.

While housing benefit (for working age people) is in the process of being replaced by Universal Credit, this isn't happening as quickly as first thought. The latest Government statement says Universal Credit will now be fully implemented by 2023. This means a significant number – almost 3.6 million – of some of England's poorest and most vulnerable households still rely on housing benefit to help with living costs.

It also means councils, who previously expected housing benefit to have ended by now, still need to plan for resourcing and delivering the service for some time yet.

Throughout this transition period we have continued to investigate complaints about how councils administer housing benefit appeals. Last year (2018-19) our uphold rate rose to 78%, which is significantly higher than our average for all complaints (58%).

Using case studies based on the real-life experiences of the people who come to us, this report highlights some of the common issues we are seeing. These include families struggling to exercise their right to appeal a council's decision about their housing benefit entitlement.

We have also seen councils recovering money, which they think they have overpaid to claimants, before the window to appeal has closed. In some examples, they have even started to recover funds while still in the process of deciding the person's appeal.



Scenarios like this are contrary to the spirit of the legislation and can unnecessarily deprive vulnerable households of vital support. I encourage councils to think hard about the consequences of their actions in situations like this.

Mistakes in benefit administration can only add to the pressures households face. A delay in processing an appeal, later upheld, can lead to rising rent arrears. Many of the people who complain to us face the threat of losing their homes.

In one case we tell the story of a man who was left in limbo for two years, not knowing the amount of support he should receive and how much the council would pursue him for. A simple administrative error combined with an inability to update records meant the council could no longer work out why it had overpaid his housing benefit. All the while it sent him letters threatening recovery action every fortnight.

In this case, we made sure there was a positive outcome. By agreeing to review its procedures, the council ultimately decided it needed to recruit more staff to process appeals and go some way to avoid others suffering a similar fate. But how can we avoid this happening elsewhere?

All the case studies in this report include key learning points and help to show what good practice looks like when it comes to administering appeals and recovering overpayments. To help encourage local accountability and scrutiny, we also provide some suggested questions councillors can ask of their own authority.

We recognise officers dealing with housing benefit appeals are navigating a complex system, further complicated by rule changes to entitlement. So, I hope councils will welcome this report as a way to help them learn from the mistakes others have made and ensure all their residents claiming housing benefit are treated fairly and in line with regulations.



Michael King

**Local Government and
Social Care Ombudsman**

January 2020



Our role in housing benefits complaints



We investigate complaints about how councils administer housing benefit, including the administration of appeals. This might include things like delays in the process, not following policy or procedure, and failing to offer appeal rights. We are a free service, and totally independent. Anyone can come to us for a review of their complaint about a council service, and councils must tell people of this right within their complaints processes.

It's not for us to rule on whether someone is entitled to housing benefit or not. If someone disagrees with a council's decision on a claim, we would expect them to use the independent tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber of the First-Tier Tribunal).

In 2018-19, we carried out 74 detailed investigations about housing benefit, and upheld 78% of these. This is significantly higher than our average uphold rate of 58% across all investigations.

These detailed investigations are part of a larger number of complaints and enquiries we receive. These include instances where the person has

either not yet complained to the council or is complaining to us about the council's decision on their entitlement to housing benefit – something which only the Tribunal can independently decide on. We received 491 complaints and enquiries in 2018-19.

This report offers advice on best practice and sets out learning points for authorities including:

- > Identifying challenges to housing benefit decisions and how these should be processed in line with regulations as appeals. This includes correctly passing appeals to the tribunal where necessary.
- > Ensuring allocation of sufficient staff and resources to manage appeal requests and taking action to deal with backlogs in appeals.
- > Ensuring recovery of overpayments does not begin until appeal rights have expired or appeals have been completed.
- > Suggested questions to help elected members ensure good oversight of housing benefit appeals.



How housing benefit is administered

Councils have administered 'housing benefit' since 1992. It is a means tested social security benefit which supports low income households living in rented accommodation. The Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 set out the procedure for making decisions on housing benefit entitlement and appeals.

The Regulations state that a council must issue a decision about housing benefit in writing. The decision notice must also advise claimants of their rights to ask for more information (a statement of reasons) and rights of appeal.

If a council decides it has overpaid housing benefit then it must:

- > notify the claimant in writing;
- > tell the claimant how much they have been overpaid and why;
- > explain how it intends to recover any money owed, and;
- > give claimants a right to appeal both overpayment decisions and any decision about recovery.

So, for example, if a claimant agrees they have been overpaid benefit but considers that overpayment only arose through the council's official error, they can appeal its recovery.

If a claimant receives an adverse benefit decision or notice they have been overpaid, they can ask for one of three things – an explanation of the decision, a review of the decision by the council, or an appeal. Claimants must ask for a review or appeal within one month of a decision. ***(The Tribunal Procedure (First-Tier Tribunal) (Social Entitlement Chamber) Rules 2008)***

Government guidance refers to 'challenges' to decisions which can include both review and appeal requests. Where someone expresses

general dissatisfaction with a decision and does not specify whether they want a review or appeal, the council must decide how to treat that correspondence.

If a claimant appeals a housing benefit decision the council can reconsider it before passing it to the Social Entitlement Chamber of the First-Tier Tribunal ('the Tribunal'). If the council reconsiders a decision on appeal (or reviews it on the invitation of the claimant) and this results in a new decision which is partially in the claimant's favour, this carries fresh appeal rights. The council should then tell the claimant of those rights. So, the claimant can still have an appeal heard by tribunal where they remain unhappy with the revised outcome.

If a decision on appeal remains unchanged the council must pass the matter to the Tribunal "*as soon as reasonably practicable*". ***(Rule 24(1A) of The Tribunal Procedure (First-Tier Tribunal) (Social Entitlement Chamber) Rules 2008)***

Government guidance says where the council has offered more explanation for its decision it "*should make sure the claimant is satisfied with the explanation and is not challenging it*". ***(DWP Housing Benefit Guidance Part C6)***

If the council receives an appeal but does not believe it contains all the information needed it may write to the complainant asking for more information. Government guidance recommends allowing a minimum of 14 days for this. ***(DWP Housing Benefit Guidance Part C7)***

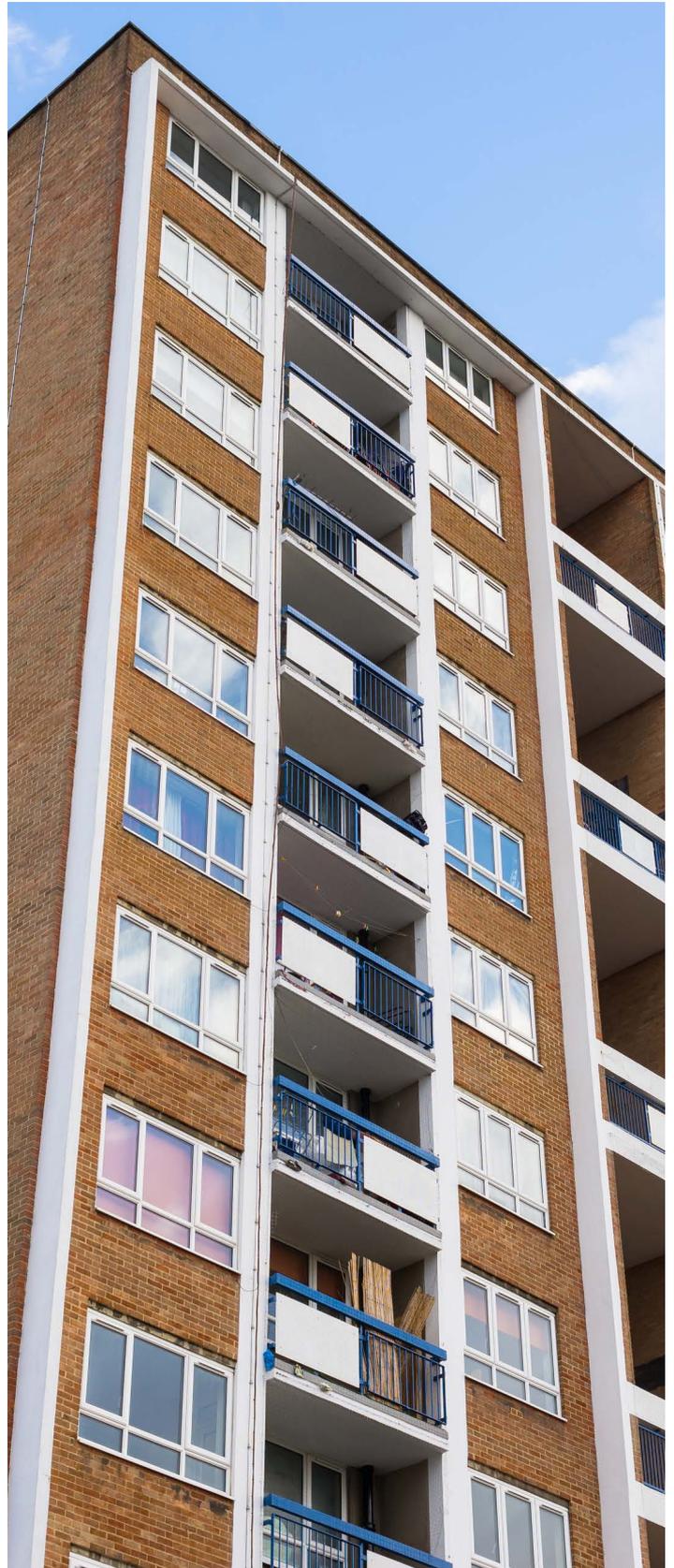
The Housing Benefits Overpayments Guide notes there is no legislative requirement for a council to halt overpayment recovery where it receives an appeal, but it considers it good practice to do so. It also recommends recovery action should not start until the appeal rights have expired. However, the guidance accepts



that in some cases, such as when a council receives a late appeal, this might be unavoidable (*Housing Benefit Overpayments Guide section 6.30*)

In 2010 the Government announced its intention to replace housing benefit for working age claimants with Universal Credit, legislated for in the Welfare Reform Act 2012. Universal Credit merges six benefits paid to working age families into one.

The Government predicted a gradual decline in the number of housing benefit claimants, with all working age people originally anticipated to have moved onto Universal Credit by 2017. The latest Government statement says Universal Credit will now be fully implemented by 2023.



Common Issues

Failing to identify an appeal

Not every challenge a council receives to a decision will be clearly marked as a review request or an appeal. Claimants should not be expected to understand complex regulations, or it assumed they have access to advice services. Sometimes they will simply believe their council has got something wrong and express that in simple terms. Even when a council thinks it has made the correct decision, it must not deprive people of their right to an independent appeal.

[Julie's story](#)

Julie and her adult son became homeless when their private landlord ended their tenancy. The council found them temporary accommodation in a hotel. Julie was entitled to claim housing benefit for her room. But shortly after moving in, the hotel told the council Julie and her son had swapped rooms. The council asked Julie to complete a change of circumstances form to confirm this, and to ensure she could continue to receive housing benefit.

Julie said the hotel was wrong, so she refused to complete the form. She asked the council to continue to pay her benefit. For three months, she challenged the council's understanding of events by telephone and in writing. She did not explicitly mark any of her letters as a 'review request' or an 'appeal', but it was clear she did not agree with the council's version of events.

The council decided Julie's letters did not require it to treat them as a review request or an appeal. Later, it explained this was because it did not think they contained enough information for it to do so.

As the council refused to reinstate Julie's housing benefit, she began to run up a debt to its housing services who were paying for her accommodation at the hotel. This increased to more than £1,000, adding to an already stressful time in her life when she was homeless, through no fault of her own.

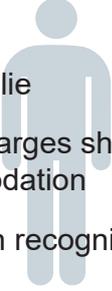
What we found

We found the council at fault for not treating Julie's contacts as a review or appeal request, or alternatively not asking her for the information it needed to review her case or pass it to tribunal. We decided the council's actions contributed to Julie's distress in finding herself running up a debt she could not pay without receiving housing benefit.



The council agreed to:

Individual remedy:

- 
- > apologise to Julie
 - > write-off the charges she incurred for the hotel accommodation
 - > pay her £250 in recognition of her distress

Service improvements for all:

- 
- > train its staff to respond properly to challenges not clearly marked as review requests or appeals

Learning points

Councils:

- > must identify where they receive challenges to housing benefit decisions. Challenges may not use the words “review request” or “appeal”
- > must give clear advice to staff on how to respond to such requests. Those responses must say if the council has treated the challenge as a review or appeal request
- > must tell claimants about further appeal rights, for example when the council does not change its decision or finds only partly in the claimant’s favour
- > can ask for further information if they believe a challenge is too vague to be treated as a review or appeal request. But they must write to claimants to explain how they have reached this view and set out what further information they want them to provide
- > must not ask for further information unnecessarily or waste time repeatedly asking the claimant for information they say they cannot provide
- > must tell people who raise concerns, of their right to come to us for an independent review of their complaint



Failing to process an appeal

Regulations sometimes allow councils a choice in who they recover overpaid housing benefit from. If a council pays housing benefit directly to a landlord, it can recover any overpaid housing benefit from that landlord. This often means the landlord recovers the difference from the tenant and puts the tenant in arrears. So, in choosing this method of recovery, councils must still allow the claimant to appeal the overpayment and/or its recovery. The claimant has one month to appeal. In exceptional circumstances this can be extended up to 13 months.

Beverley's story

Beverley lived in private rented accommodation. In working out her housing benefit, the council calculated her 'eligible rent' incorrectly. 'Eligible rent' is the maximum amount of housing benefit someone can receive, considering factors like the size and location of their home. It is often lower than their actual total rent, with the onus on the claimant funding the difference. Before the council realised its error, Beverley was already struggling to pay the shortfall and had arrears of around £600.

The council's miscalculation meant it had overpaid Beverley around £1,600 in housing benefit, which it had paid direct to her landlord. The council chose to recover this money from the landlord who then added that debt to Beverley's existing rent arrears. With the overall arrears now at more than £2,000, Beverley's landlord began repossession proceedings, serving her with a 'Notice Seeking Possession'. This left Beverley anxious about the prospect of becoming homeless.

The council's decision letter, which informed Beverley of the overpayment, told her she could appeal its decision. She wrote to the council within four weeks saying she wanted to appeal. Beverley argued the overpayment only occurred because of the council's error, so it should not seek to recover it.

The council refused to recognise this as a valid appeal and implied this was because it was recovering the overpayment from her landlord. When Beverley rang the council to question this, a customer service advisor wrongly said the landlord would not recover the money from her.

Beverley complained but the council still did not recognise she had made a valid appeal request within four weeks. It neither reviewed its decision, changed it nor forwarded Beverley's appeal to the tribunal. This left Beverley angry and upset that no one would hear her appeal.



What we found

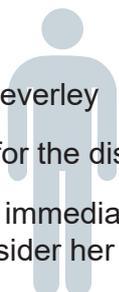
We found the council at fault for repeatedly failing to recognise Beverley had made a valid appeal against the decision it had overpaid her housing benefit. The council should have either reviewed its decision or, if it did not agree the overpayment arose from an official error which it should write-off, then it should have passed the case for appeal to the tribunal. It should have done this even if it believed Beverley had not made a valid appeal, as that would be for the tribunal to decide. The council eventually passed Beverley's case to the tribunal, but only after we began our investigation.

Failing to take this action sooner caused Beverley unnecessary distress and uncertainty that she might lose her home. We decided the landlord would most likely not have started possession proceedings without the council's actions, because Beverley's existing arrears had not caused it to do so previously.

The council agreed to:

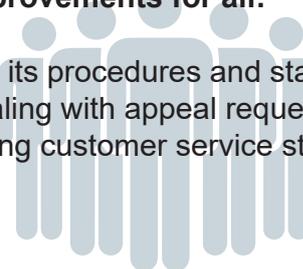
Individual remedy:

- > apologise to Beverley
- > pay her £250 for the distress caused
- > pass her case immediately to the tribunal service to consider her appeal



Service improvements for all:

- > review its procedures and staff training on dealing with appeal requests, including customer service staff handling calls



Learning points

Councils should:

- > be able to identify valid appeals against overpayments, including circumstances where they make recovery from landlords
- > embed knowledge of dealing with housing benefit appeals within all teams dealing with customer enquiries. Teams should, as a minimum, be capable of recognising where appeals have not been properly processed and understand a landlord's power to recover rent arrears from tenants – and the threat of homelessness which can ensue
- > forward appeals to the tribunal service, which they believe are not within the tribunal's jurisdiction. These are ultimately decisions for the tribunal service



Delays in appeal

Regulations do not specify how long councils should take to reply to housing benefit appeals. But they must do so as soon as is reasonably practicable. So, complaints about delay in processing appeals raise a matter of good administrative practice. Our [Principles of Good Administrative Practice](#) encourage councils to make timely decisions and proactively explain the reasons for any delays.

Sonia's story

When Sonia made a claim for housing benefit, the council decided within one month that she was not entitled. Within a month Sonia appealed. The council reviewed its decision promptly but did not change it, maintaining Sonia had no entitlement to housing benefit. So, Sonia appealed again, writing to the council within a month of its reviewed decision.

After several weeks, the council acknowledged Sonia's appeal, but said it would prioritise other people's cases before it dealt with hers. Our investigation discovered around 500 other claimants had made appeals against the council's decisions and were waiting for them to be dealt with. The oldest of these appeals had been waiting two years for the council to act.

What we found

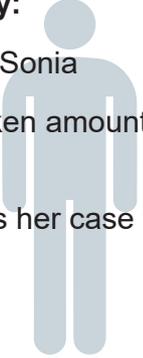
We found the council at fault for not dealing with Sonia's appeal in a reasonable time, and those of many other housing benefit claimants in its area. We said that, as a benchmark, the council should aim to process appeals within four weeks.

The council was also wrong to make Sonia appeal again after it reviewed her case (and in good time). Its review decision did not change, so the council should have passed Sonia's case to the tribunal at that point.

We do not decide whether people are entitled to housing benefit, so cannot say the council's delay had implications for Sonia's rent arrears. But we decided its actions caused distress and uncertainty over whether she could receive housing benefit to help towards her rent.

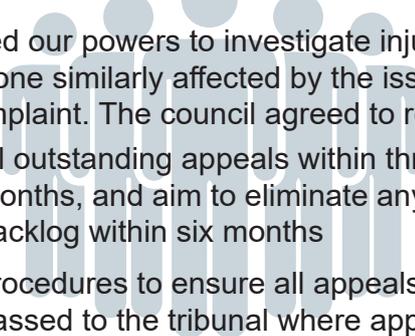
The council agreed to:

Individual remedy:

- > apologise to Sonia
 - > pay her a token amount for the distress caused
 - > urgently pass her case to the tribunal
- 

Service improvements for all:

We used our powers to investigate injustices for anyone similarly affected by the issues in the complaint. The council agreed to review:

- > all outstanding appeals within three months, and aim to eliminate any backlog within six months
 - > procedures to ensure all appeals are passed to the tribunal where appropriate
- 



Learning points

Councils:

- > must pass cases, which they have already reviewed and have not resulted in a more favourable outcome for the claimant, to a tribunal to hear an appeal
- > must allocate appropriate personnel and resources to manage appeal requests, and aim to consider them, or pass onto tribunal, within four weeks
- > must have sufficient oversight of housing benefit appeals to identify any delays. Regular reporting of the appeal volumes and the processing speeds may help
- > should introduce plans for tackling any backlogs. These should include systems to identify particularly urgent cases; for example, where a claimant faces imminent eviction and a successful appeal could remove that risk



Failure to act in response to new evidence or change of circumstances

Housing benefit is paid weekly. It is important claimants promptly tell their council of any changes affecting their entitlement. For example, the composition of their household or wages may change. It is equally important councils have procedures in place to react to changes in circumstance. Delays in updating a claim are a frequent cause of overpayment.

[David's story](#)

David rented a one-bedroom property from the council, but the council wrongly believed he occupied a two-bedroom home.

David alerted the council to its error and both its housing service and benefits service recognised it needed to correct his account, as he was also being charged too much rent. However, it took around eight months for both services to correct and co-ordinate their records. In that time, David went into rent arrears despite having an entitlement to maximum housing benefit, which met the full rent he was charged. Despite the housing service knowing about David's situation, it sent him letters every two weeks threatening recovery action if he did not clear the arrears.

Just before the council corrected its records, the Department of Work and Pensions told the council David's income had changed. He had been unemployed but had now found work. This meant he was no longer entitled to full housing benefit.

It took another six months for the council to re-assess David's housing benefit based on his earnings. When it did so, the council realised it had overpaid David's housing benefit by around £1,500. It told David it intended to recover this from his rent account. David appealed that decision. There was by now confusion about what overpayment was from the council applying the wrong rent and what was from David's change of income.

It took the council 14 months to consider David's appeal. When it did so, it confirmed its earlier decision and said it would pass the case to tribunal. The tribunal then ruled the council could not recover any overpayment from David via his rent account.

For more than two years David experienced considerable uncertainty about the housing benefit he could receive and whether any housing benefit overpayment was recoverable.



What we found

We decided the council had made a series of errors in administering David's housing benefit, culminating in the long delay in deciding his appeal against the recovery of overpaid housing benefit. He said it was distressing to receive letters from the council threatening possession of his home. He was also very frustrated with the time it took to resolve each issue.

The investigation also indicated the council was struggling to process appeals, which suggested systemic problems similar to Sonia's case above. The Government had trialled Universal Credit from an early stage in this council's area, which had led housing benefit claims and appeals to fall, but not to the numbers the council had expected.

The council agreed to:

Individual remedy:

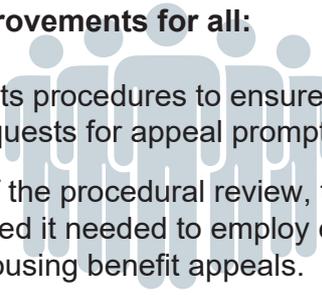
- > apologise to David
- > pay him £250 to recognise the distress caused



Service improvements for all:

- > review its procedures to ensure it dealt with requests for appeal promptly

As a result of the procedural review, the council decided it needed to employ extra staff to process housing benefit appeals.



Learning points

The facts of David's case are not typical of all housing benefit investigations, but there are lessons that can be drawn from it.

Councils:

- > must act promptly to changes in circumstances to avoid multiple changes affecting benefit entitlement. If they do, it becomes harder to understand the root cause and to recover overpaid sums fairly
- > should consider how its benefit and housing teams could liaise to minimise disruption for the claimant, when the claimant is also a council tenant. This would be appropriate when benefit services are aware of pending changes or have received an appeal that has not yet been dealt with
- > must have a system to identify outstanding appeals older than four weeks, even if they are an exception to the norm



Overpayment recovery while an appeal is outstanding

Where the council has overpaid housing benefit it must give the claimant the opportunity to appeal both the decision which has created the overpayment and any decision to recover overpaid benefit from them. Recovery can take various forms but often involves a reduction in the claimant's ongoing housing benefit. While the regulations do not prohibit councils from applying such reductions straight away, we think it is poor administrative practice to do so. This is supported by Government guidance.

[Hussain's story](#)

Hussain's housing benefit was reassessed by his council, and it decided it had overpaid him around £2,000. Hussain remained entitled to ongoing housing benefit, so when the council told Hussain its decision, it said it would recover the overpayment through deductions of his ongoing benefit at a rate of around £20 a week. This was in addition to the reduced housing benefit Hussain received following the reassessment.

Hussain appealed the council's decision straight away. He argued he should not have to pay because the overpayment was the council's error. Less than a month after making its decision, and before considering Hussain's appeal, the council started to recover the overpaid housing benefit.

Hussain did not hear about his appeal for two months, at which point he decided to complain. The council apologised for the delay but still did not consider his appeal for another two months. It eventually agreed Hussain could not have realised he had been overpaid housing benefit previously. It wrote off the overpayment and returned to him around £340 recovered from his ongoing housing benefit.

Hussain told us the council's actions caused him significant difficulties.

What we found

We found the council at fault for starting to recover the overpayment without first considering Hussain's appeal. The appeal was also delayed.

The case highlights the hardship that can be inflicted when recovery action is started before considering an appeal.



The council agreed to:

Individual remedy:

- > apologise to Hussain
- > pay him a token amount for his injustice



Service improvements for all:

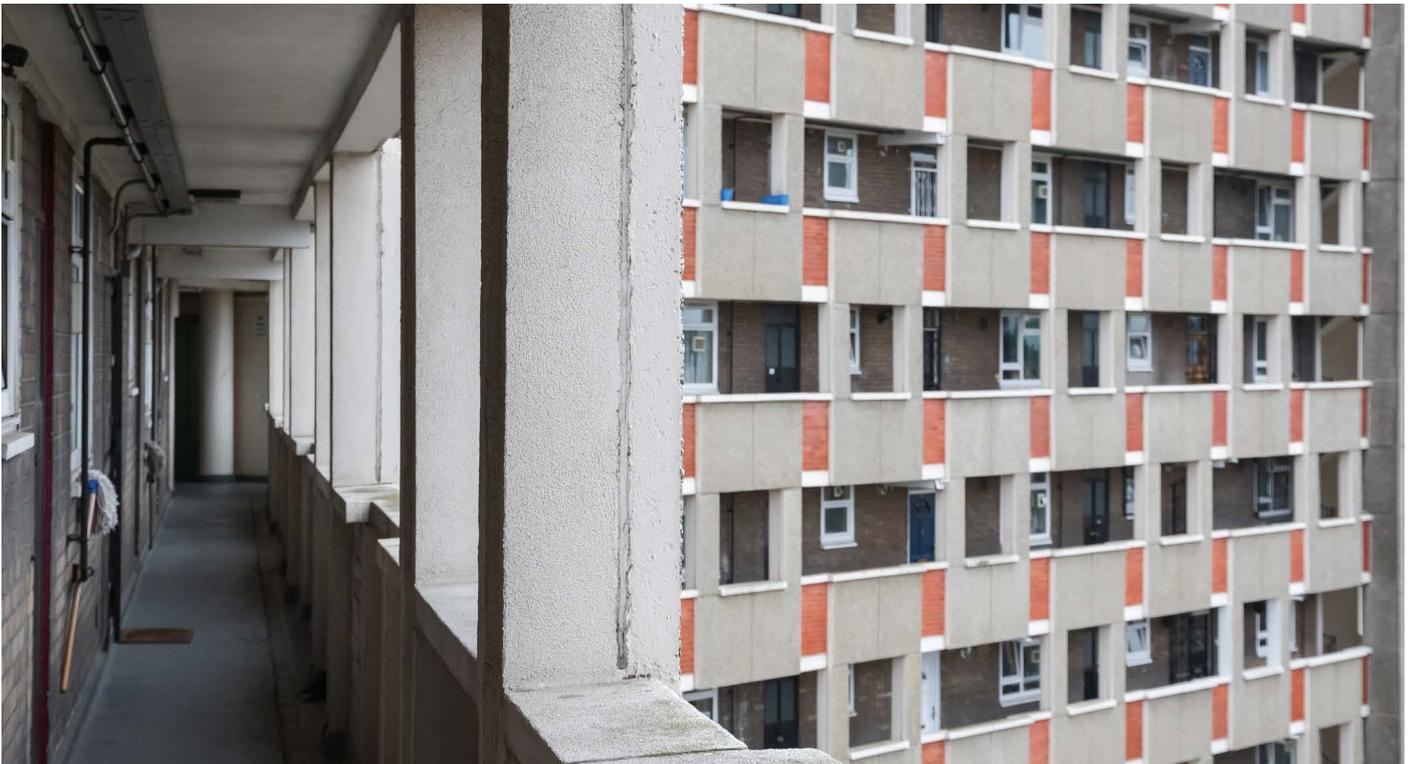
- > remind staff that recovery action should be put on hold as soon as it receives an appeal against a benefit overpayment



Learning points

Councils should:

- > not recover overpayments until the one month time limit for appeals has passed (unless the recipient agrees and says they won't appeal). This includes when a council has partially upheld a review in the claimant's favour, but an overpayment remains outstanding
- > not try to recover overpayments until a submitted appeal has been decided



Putting things right

Where a council is at fault and causes injustice to the complainant, we will always recommend how it should put things right. We may also recommend how to improve services to avoid similar issues affecting other people.

Our [Guidance on Remedies](#) sets out our principles for remedying complaints. We apply these to complaints about housing benefit as follows:

- > We always aim to put the complainant back in the position they would have been but for any fault. So, if a council needs to decide an appeal or pass an appeal request to the tribunal then we will recommend that.
- > We will always expect a council to apologise if a fault has resulted in injustice to a complainant.
- > We will recommend a financial remedy to take account of any distress caused to the complainant by fault. For example, if a failure to act has resulted in a threat to the complainant's tenancy. Payments for distress are usually within the range of £100 to £300 but may be higher – for example, if a complainant has lost a home as a result of the fault.
- > We will consider a financial remedy for any time and trouble caused to the complainant. For example, if a council delayed acting on an appeal request and the complainant had to chase several times over many months. This would be even if the outcome of the appeal ultimately made no difference to their benefit entitlement.
- > We expect councils to consider reviewing their policies or procedures if a complaint reveals problems in a particular area. For example, if it becomes apparent a council is not deciding appeal requests in accordance with the law and is not passing cases for tribunal hearings when it should.
- > We expect councils to review staff training and resources if a complaint reveals problems in these areas. For example, if there are large backlogs in processing appeals because a council does not have sufficient qualified staff to deal with them.



Encouraging local accountability

We want to share lessons from complaints brought to us with locally elected councillors who have the democratic mandate to scrutinise the way councils carry out their functions and hold them to account.

We believe complaints raised by the public can be an important tool and source of information to help councillors identify issues affecting local people. Complaints can therefore play a key part in supporting local public service scrutiny.

Our experience has highlighted several key questions councillors could ask officers when scrutinising housing benefit services around appeal issues.

- > How many appeals does the council receive on a quarterly basis? How long does the council take to process these?
- > Does the council have enough suitably trained and skilled officers to deal with the volume of appeals that it receives? If not, what is it doing to address this?
- > How is the council planning for the rollout of Universal Credit in its area? Is it keeping under review its assumptions about the implications this has for housing benefit case numbers and appeals given any delay in rollout?
- > How is the council monitoring whether appeals are being dealt with properly? Is there any evidence claimants are being refused appeals but their cases are not being passed to the tribunal, as the law requires?
- > How does the council monitor whether it is waiting at least one month before beginning overpayment recovery, to allow opportunity for an appeal?
- > How does the council ensure it is putting a hold on recovery action when it receives an appeal against a housing benefit overpayment?

We would encourage councillors to look at the issues highlighted in this report, as well as complaints raised locally, to ensure benefit appeals are receiving proper and effective scrutiny and that service is accountable to local people.

We now publish our complaints data for each council on an [interactive map](#) which helps to encourage further local accountability. We also publish [weekly alerts](#) for the latest Benefits and Taxation decisions which anyone can sign up to receive.



**Local Government and Social Care
Ombudsman**

PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Phone: 0300 061 0614

Web: www.lgo.org.uk

Twitter: [@LGOmbudsman](https://twitter.com/LGOmbudsman)

BEYOND BRICKS AND MORTAR

Developing Our Housing Strategy, 2020-2025

Gregg Stott
Interim Assistant Director, Growth

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Agenda

Housing is a crucial part of
Tameside's future

We need a strategy that can
deliver the Corporate Plan

We want homes that give our
children the best start in life

Homes that unlock
inclusive growth, that bring
vitality to our towns and
communities

Homes that are warm and secure,
that allow us to live independently
and in good health into old age

Homes that drive and support
the growth of our Borough

BEYOND
BRICKS
AND
MORTAR

Housing seen through a wider lens,
responding to the major challenges we face
and finding sustainable solutions.



Our Role as a Strategic Provider

Deliver our Statutory Duties
e.g. Social Care, Reducing Homelessness

Taking the strategic lead on development to
unlock inclusive growth

Plan for and support sustainable housing
development that meets the needs of our
residents

Effective neighbourhood management

Plan for and commission health and social care
support around the home

Our Plans in Context

December 2017

Tameside Housing Need
Assessment 2017

Greater Manchester Strategic
Housing Market Assessment

January 2019

June 2019

Greater Manchester Housing
Strategy 2019-2024

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**Tameside Housing
Strategy
2020-2025**



Starting Well

Living Well

Ageing Well

Priorities



Very best start in life where children are encouraged to learn and engaged to thrive and develop

Reduce rate of smoking at time of delivery

Reduce the number of children born with low birth weight

Improve school readiness

Children attending 'Good' and 'Outstanding' Early Years settings

Take up nursery at 2yrs

Promote good parent infant mental health



Aspiration and hope through learning and moving with confidence from childhood to adulthood

Reading / writing / maths at Key Stage 2

Attainment 8 and Progress 8 at Key Stage 4

Young people going onto higher education

Children attending 'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools

Number of 16-19 year olds in employment or educated

Increase the proportion of children with good reading skills

Promote a whole system approach and improve wellbeing and resilience



Resilient families and supportive networks to protect and grow our young people

Early Help Intervention

Reduce the number of first time entrants into Youth Justice

Increased levels of fostering and adoption

Improve the quality of social care practice

Improve the placement stability for our looked after children

Reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences



Opportunities for people to fulfill their potential through work, skills and enterprise

Increase median resident earnings

Increase the working age population in employment

Increase the number of people earning above the Living Wage

Increase number of enterprises / business start ups

Working age population with at least Level 3 skills

Increase the number of good quality apprenticeships delivered



Modern infrastructure and a sustainable environment that works for all generations and future generations

Improve air quality

Increase the number of net additional dwellings

Increase the number of affordable homes

Digital inclusion - average download speeds

Reduce tonnes of waste sent to landfill and increase the proportion recycled

Increase journeys by sustainable transport / non-car

Increase access to public transport



Nurturing our communities and having pride in our people, our place and our shared heritage

Increase participation in cultural events

Reduce victims of domestic abuse

Reduce the number of rough sleepers / homelessness

Improve satisfaction with local community

Victims of crime / fear of crime

Reduce levels of anti social behaviour

Increase access, choice and control in emotional and mental self-care and wellbeing



Longer and healthier lives with good mental health through better choices and reducing inequalities

Increase physical and mental healthy life expectancy

Improve the wellbeing for our population

Decrease smoking prevalence

Increase levels of physical activity

'Good' and 'Outstanding' GPs practices

Reduce drug and alcohol related harm



Independence and activity in older age, and dignity and choice at end of life

Increase the number of people helped to live at home

Reduce hospital admissions due to falls

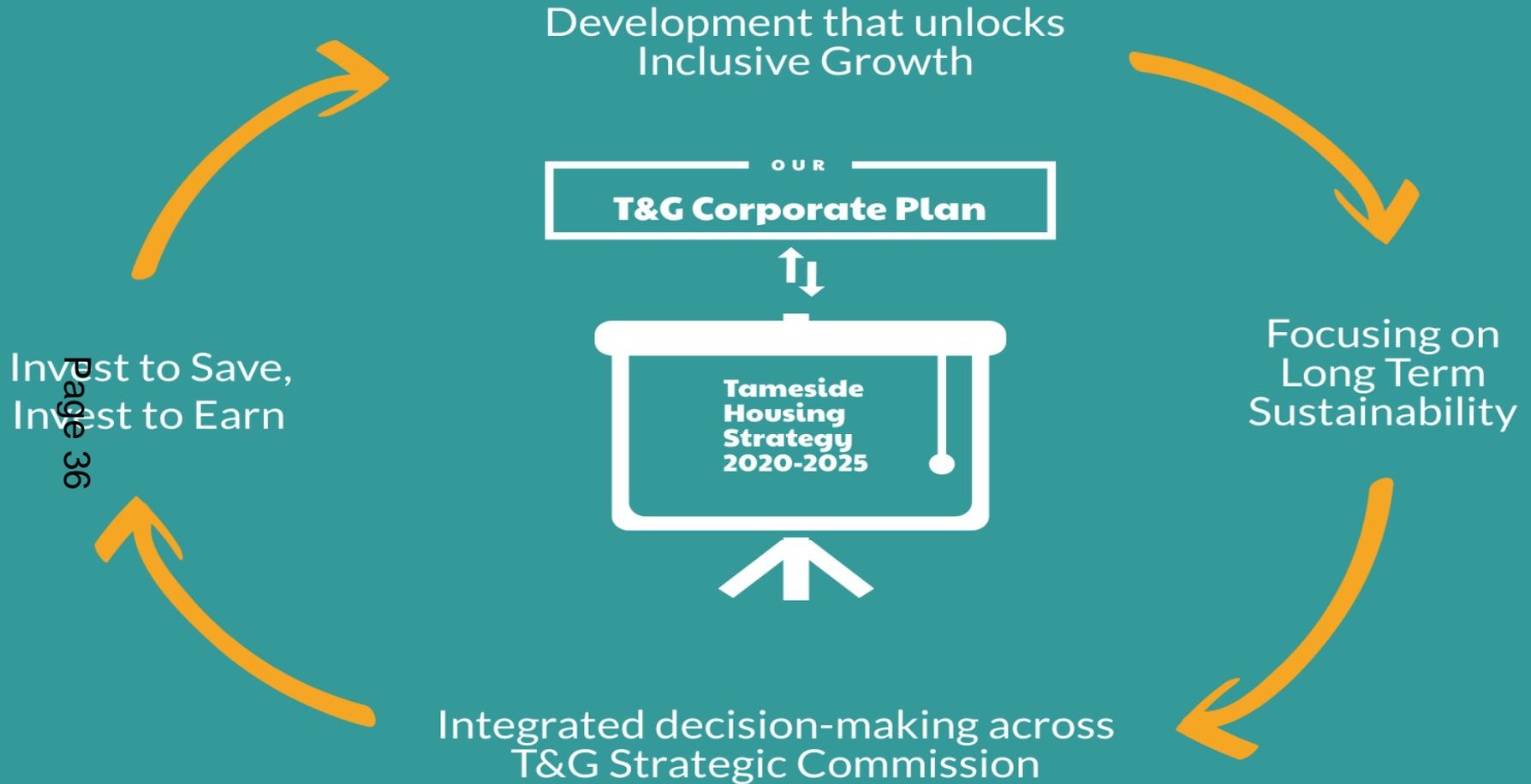
Increase levels of self-care / social prescribing

'Good' and 'Outstanding' social care settings

Prevention support outside the care system

Great Place Inclusive Growth

Sustainable Development



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Invest to Save,
Invest to Earn

Our Strategic Priorities for Action

Population Growth and New Housing Supply

Delivering for an Ageing Population

A Range of Affordable Housing

Specialist and Supported Housing

Improving Standards in the PRS

Reducing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Page 37



Population Growth and New Housing Supply

The Council leading on future-focused development

Comprehensive green infrastructure network and net biodiversity gains

Zero-carbon technology to ensure climate resilience.

Strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable neighbourhoods

Powerful vision and engagement with the local community

Integrated and accessible transport systems, with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport.

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A Range of Affordable Housing

Work with Housing Association partners to enable new affordable homes through various Homes England programmes and continuous market engagement

Working with developers, housing associations and our Planning Team to maximise the number of affordable homes delivered

Continue to improve and expand the reach of our Empty Homes Programme

Page 39

Delivering for an Ageing Population

'The way we plan, build and organise our city region can help or hinder social connections. At worst, failed approaches can 'build-in' social isolation, with long-term damage to quality of life and physical and mental health'

GM Age-Friendly Strategy



Specialist and Supported Housing - Children

Early help has the best chance of success where individuals and their families feel supported to find their own solutions to the issues facing them in the communities where they live

Homes that do not meet the bedroom standard mean less room to play, less quiet space for homework and less privacy leading to issues at all stages of child development

Overcrowding can lead to relationship tensions within the family causing stress and anxiety



Moving to Independence

High Quality Move-On
Accommodation for Children
leaving Care

Supporting Care leavers make a
successful transition into adulthood

Page 42

The Transition Support Team is well-
staffed and in a position to expand
support services.

Expansion from 7 to 17
bedsits over a phased period

**Annual accommodation
cost for 17 young people
in the bedsit programme is
estimated at £180,000**

**The alternative –
placements through
private agencies – would
cost the Council up to
£3.5m every year**

Specialist and Supported Housing - Adults

Prevent and Manage people away from long-term hospital stays

Access to funding to enable housing of choice that delivers on our Strategy

Person-centered approaches and tailored solutions

Working with architects, planners and engineers to embed age-friendly principles to development

'Good social care has to start with housing'
Director of Adult Services, TMBC

Creating new opportunities and housing options for People with Learning Disabilities

Page 43

"Living here helps my independence a lot and helps me to grow in my community"

Timi CAMBRIDGESHIRE



Improving Standards in the PRS

More vulnerable groups such as families with dependent children and older people now finding homes in the private rented sector for longer

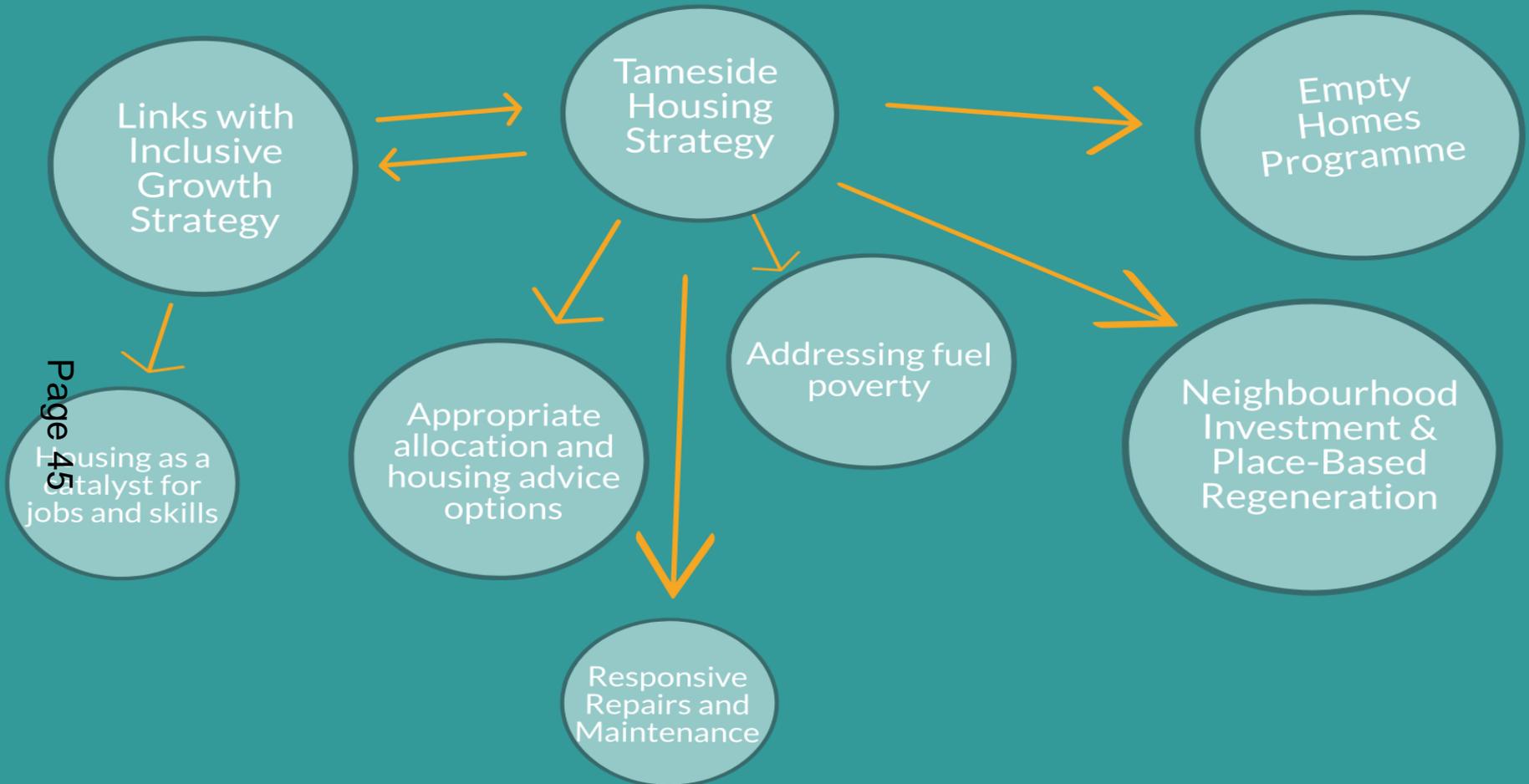
Poor quality conditions, insecure tenancies and poor management have massive impact on physical and mental health

A more proactive approach aligned with population health, employment and skills, and incentives for energy efficiency technology

Place-based programs that shift crisis intervention to long-term prevention

Regulation in poorest areas to drive up standards in the private rented sector

Reducing Homelessness and Tackling Poverty



Looking at Our Strategic Sites

Tameside Council has significant land assets which have the capacity to deliver a significant number of new homes over the next five years.



TMBC is a strategic enabler

Barrets at Hattersley

Nook and Key in Hyde

Capturing value through Section 106 Agreements

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Placemaking

Inviting
Innovative
Safe
Sustainable

Inclusive Design that highlights walkability, social inclusion and connection, capitalising on our green and blue infrastructure

Places that offer access and connection to a range of healthy activities

Dedicated plans for our town centres and new communities such as Godley Green

Developing and growing our offer, meeting need and building-on our identity as a Borough

Working in partnership, linking development in with other place-based initiatives such as Beelines and Streets for All

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Action Plan and Timeframe



Activity: 2019 -20	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct
Stage 1 Initiation/Key Officers/ Inception Meeting	Dark Blue	Dark Blue									
Stage 2 Refresh Evidence Base		Brown	Brown								
Stage 3 Update Response document				Red							
Stage 4 Discussion with Officers				Yellow	Yellow						
Stage 5 Consultation					Light Green	Light Green					
Stage 6 Strategy Preparation					Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue			
Stage 7 Final Consultation								Dark Purple	Dark Purple		
Stage 8 Implementatio n Plan									Red	Red	
Stage 9 Governance Timeline: SLT / Board/ Exec Cabinet									Black	Black	Black
Stage 10 Report Launch/ Publication											Blue

Theme	Priority	Outcome	Metric	Previous Position	Current Position	National Average	Progress	Target 2020	Target 2025	Target 2030		
Starting Well Vibrant Economy Resilient Families Work Skills & Enterprise Aspirations & Hope Very Best Start	Debbie Watson	Reduce rate of smoking at time of delivery	% Smoking at time of delivery	14.60%	14.00%	10.60%	↓	11.40%	10.50%	All expectant mothers to be supported to be smoke free at the time of delivery		
		Reduce number of children born with low birth weight	Low weight births as a % of all full term live births	3.16%	3.29%	2.82%	↔	2.78%	2%	All mothers and babies are supported to achieve a healthy start in life		
		Improve school readiness	% achieving a 'good' level of development	65.7%	66.90%	71.80%	↑	68.90%	75%	All children start school ready to learn		
		Children attending 'good' and 'outstanding' early years settings	% 3 & 4 YO's at 'good' or 'outstanding' EY settings	95%	91%	91%	↓	96%	98%	All children to attend good or outstanding early years settings		
		Take up nursery at 2 Years	% 2 YO's in funded early education	85%	77%	68%	↓	87.70%	95%	All eligible 2 year olds benefit from funded early years education		
		Childhood Obesity	% of children in year 6 who are overweight or obese	34.6%	36.5%	34%	↑	35.50%	34%	All children to be a healthy weight at the end of Year 6		
		Promote good parent infant mental health	% of new mums that receive a health visit within 14 days of the birth	92%	90.2%	N/A	↓	95%	97%	All new mums receiving good quality postnatal care		
	Tim Bowman	Reading / Writing / Maths at Key Stage 2	% students achieving KS2 expected standard	64%	63%	65%	↓	65.40%	70%	All children to be provided with the opportunity to achieve their full educational potential		
		Key Stage 4 attainment	Average attainment 8 score	43.9	44	44.5	↔	45.7	50			
		Young people going into higher education	% achieving Grade 4 or above in English & Maths GCSEs	62.1%	62.9%	59.5%	↑	64.20%	70%	All young people going into/remaining in further education after KS4		
		Children attending 'good' and 'outstanding' schools	% KS4 going into/remaining in further education	83%	84%	86%	↑	84%	90%			
		Number of 16-19 year olds in employment or education	% Primary schools 'good' & 'outstanding'	89.30%	89.50%	87.60%	↔	92.50%	95%	All children attending a good or outstanding primary school		
			% Secondary schools 'good' & 'outstanding'	73.30%	73.30%	76.20%	↔	75.58%	80%		All children attending a good or outstanding secondary school	
		Proportion of children with good reading skills	% 16 & 17 YO's in education or training	92.43%	93.14%	92.52%	↑	93.50%	95%	All 16 & 17 year olds in education or training		
	Promote a whole system approach and Improving wellbeing and resilience	% KS2 achieving expected reading standard	73%	71%	73%	↓	75%	80%	All children to be provided with the opportunity to achieve their full educational potential			
	Tracy Morris	Early Help Intervention	Mean worthwhile ratings (adults 16 and over)	7.86	7.97	7.89	↑	7.91	8.5	All residents 16+ feel that the things they do in life are worthwhile		
		Resilient Families & Supportive Networks	CAF's currently open	662	686	N/A	N/A	To be developed		All vulnerable families receive the help they need		
			Reduce the number of first time entrants into Youth Justice	First Time Entrants into Youth Justice aged 10-17	227.3	306.9	238.5	↑	243.3		212.9	No young people entering the youth justice system
			Increased levels of fostering and adoption	% LAC adopted in year	22%	12%	13%	↓	13%		18.60%	All looked after children provided with the opportunity to be adopted, where its of benefit to the young person, within the year
			Improve the quality of social care practice	CS Audits Rated 'Good' & 'Outstanding'	46%	32%	N/A	↓	25%		50%	All Children Social Care audits rated good or outstanding
			Improve the placement stability for our looked after children	% of LAC with 3+ placements	7%	8%	10%	↑	5%		2.50%	All our looked after children are in safe and stable placements
Reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences			LAC rate per 10,000	141	142	64	↑	122	99.1		Children are supported to stay in the family environment where it is safe and possible to do so	
David Berry	Work Skills & Enterprise	CSC Referrals related to domestic abuse	2757 (full year figure)	661	N/A	↑	2482	2000	No CSC referrals related to domestic abuse			
		Increase median resident earnings	Median Annual Income	£24,289	£24,405	£29,869	↑	£26,819	£27,492	The median annual income to be in line with the England average		
		Increase the working age population in employment	Percentage in Employment	73.80%	74.0%	75.6%	↔	75.40%	78%	All people who can work are in work		
		Increase the number of people earning above the Living Wage	% earning below living wage foundation rates	25.70%	27%	22.9%	↑	24.40%	22.90%	All employees earning at least the Living Wage		
		Increase number of enterprise / business start-ups	New enterprises (percentage of total businesses)	12.36%	12.48%	13.15%	↔	15.94%	18.97%	Tameside is recognised as a vibrant economy where entrepreneurs are supported to start new businesses		
		Working age population with at least Level 3 skills	Percentage of population with at least level 3 skills	46.10%	47.5%	57.7%	↑	50%	54.90%	Higher proportion of Tameside's population have Level 3 skills than the national average		
Increase the number of good quality apprenticeships delivered	Number of apprenticeships started	2050	1,560 (Aug - April 18/19) (111.3 per 10K)	311,170 (88.8 per 10K)	↑	2100	2310	Apprenticeships are available to all that seek them				

Ageing Well - Steph Butterworth		Longer & Healthier Lives Elaine Richardson / Pat McKeivey		Independence & Dignity in Older Age Sandra Whitehead					
Infrastructure and Environment Emma Varnam	Improve air quality	Nitrogen dioxide (ug/m^3)	34.3	32.90	28.0	↓	30	28	Air quality to be good and at least be in line with the UK average
	Increase the number of net additional dwellings	Net Additional Dwellings per 10,000	21.6	28.69	43.1	↑	Targets to be agreed		
	Increase the number of affordable homes	New Affordable Homes per 10,000	3.55	4.71	10.3	↑			
	Digital inclusion	Maximum Mean Download Speed	38.2	37.70	37.9	↔	37.4	41.5	All households to have access to high quality internet services
	Reduce tonnes of waste sent to landfill and increase the proportion recycled	Percentage of all waste recycled	52.80%	52.4%	43.2%	↔	55.02%	57.78%	All household waste recycled where possible
	Increase journeys by sustainable transport/no car	% population walking / cycling 3+ times a week	37.90%	40.5%	47.0%	↑	43.20%	47%	Tameside is a walking/cycling friendly borough
	Increase access to public transport	% of residents with Level 4 access to public transport network at peak times		82.7% (GM)	N/A		Targets to be agreed		
Nurturing Communities Emma Varnam	Increase participation in cultural events	# cultural events (arts & engagement team)	329	398	N/A	↑	418	468	500
		# participants/spectators at above events	42,352	50,931	N/A	↑	53477	59727	65977
	Reduce victims of domestic abuse	Rate of PPIs per 1000	33.8	33	N/A	↓	31.8	25.1	Tameside has low rates of domestic abuse
	Reduce the number of rough sleepers/homelessness	Street counts & estimates of rough sleepers	7	5 (0.53 per 10k HHolds)	4677 (2 per 10K Hholds)	↓	5	2	Nobody sleeping rough on the streets of Tameside
	Improve satisfaction with local community	Mean life satisfaction ratings	7.66	7.73	7.71	↑	8	8.5	Maintain mean life satisfaction at 8.5
	Victims of crime/fear of crime	Crime rates per 1000	142.7	135.6	88.11	↓	128.8	96.6	Tameside is a low crime borough
	Reduce levels of anti-social behaviour	ASB Crime rates per 1000	31.7	21.9	24.2	↓	20.8	15.6	Tameside is a low crime borough
Increase access, choice, and control in emotional and mental self-care and wellbeing	IAPT Referrals	9156	9435	N/A	↑	9906.8	12383.4	Everyone has access to good quality mental health services	
Longer & Healthier Lives Elaine Richardson / Pat McKeivey	Increase physical and mental healthy life expectancy	Healthy Life Expectancy at birth	Male - 57.6 years, Female - 58.1 years	Male - 58.1 years, Female - 57.6 years	Male - 61.2 years, Female - 62.3 years	↔	Male - 60 years, Female - 60.4 years	Male - 61.2 years, Female - 62.3 years	Healthy life expectancy to be in line with the England average
	Improve the wellbeing of our population	Happiness ratings (average)	7.45	7.61	7.56	↑	7.48	7.52	Maintain mean happiness ratings above 8
	Smoking prevalence	Prevalence of smoking, 18+. Survey Data	17.30%	16.80%	14.4%	↔	14.40%	11%	Tameside and Glossop are smoke free areas
	Increase levels of physical activity	% of population 'inactive' (<30m exercise a week)	31.40%	28.0%	25.1%	↓	27.10%	25.20%	All residents are physical active where possible
	Good' and 'Outstanding' GPs practices	CQC Audit Results: % good or outstanding		97.50%	95.30%	↔	98%	100%	All GP practices to be rated good or outstanding by CQC
	Reduce drug and alcohol related harm	Admission rate for alcohol related harm per 100k	2756	2741	2224	↔	2590	2250	Alcohol harm rates are low and support is available
Independence & Dignity in Older Age Sandra Whitehead	Increase the number of people helped to live at home	Funded 65+ in residential/nursing homes per 100k	667.3	677.4	580	↑	626.5	585.6	Only those in most in need access residential/nursing care at the right point for them
	Reduce hospital admissions due to falls	Emergency admissions for falls 65+ per 100k	2143	2126.5	2170	↔	2083.97	1875.57	Emergency falls in the 65+ age group are low
	Increase levels of self-care / social prescribing	% service users who find it easy to find information	74.80%	70.20%	69.70%	↓	76.7%	78.6%	Tameside and Glossop is a place where people are supported to self care
	Good' and 'Outstanding' social care settings	CQC Audit Results: % good or outstanding		76%	Awaiting Data		75%	80%	All residential/nursing settings are rated good or outstanding
	Prevention support outside the care system	Number of people supported outside the social care system with prevention based services	7792	6740	N/A	↓	7000	7500	All people are supported to remain in the community

* Where available data will be provided at the Tameside & Glossop level for health related indicators. All data is as at 29 November 2019.

Scrutiny Activity 2019/20

The table below provides a summary of Scrutiny activity and oversight carried out during 2019/20. This includes updates to seek assurances on service provision and outcomes.

Scrutiny activity and oversight (June 2019 to February 2020)

Place and External Relations	Integrated Care and Wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GM Clean Air Proposals and Public Conversation • Quality and standards in the private rented sector • Peer Review of Healthy Spaces • Highways and Flood Prevention • Housing Strategy • LGSCO focus reports and shared learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Benefit • Corporate Plan / Performance Monitoring • Cooperative Council update • Mid-year budget update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of Care Homes • Children’s Services Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers • Peer Review of Domestic Abuse • Urgent Treatment Centre / Winter Preparedness • Living Well at Home • LGSCO focus reports and shared learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SEND • Corporate Plan / Performance Monitoring • Cooperative Council update • Mid-year budget update <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Children’s Working Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes from activity and recommendations to the Executive on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading - Attendance / Exclusions • Children’s mental health and wellbeing • Children’s Services – Sustainability Projects

In-depth reviews

The following in-depth reviews have been carried out during 2019/20:

Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel - a review was completed on Quality and Standards in the Private Rented Sector. Report and Executive Response presented at Overview Panel on 18 November 2019. Scrutiny will remain involved in consultation and developments to inform the local approach.

Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel - a review was completed on the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers. Report and Executive Response presented at the joint meeting of Executive Cabinet and Overview Panel on 12 February 2020. Scrutiny to periodically review the impact of sustainability projects directly aimed to improve fostering placements and outcomes.

The Children's Working Group has remained in place as a fixed sub-group of the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel. The group includes co-opted members and has reviewed Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing; and Early Help projects within Children's Services.

Consultation and Engagement

Scrutiny will remain suitably informed of open consultations at a local, regional and national level. Past responses include:

- Over the Counter Medicines – 14 September 2018
- Greater Manchester Clean Air Conversation – 30 June 2019
- New Rent Standard – 30 July 2019
- Domestic Abuse Services – 2 August 2019
- VCSE in Greater Manchester – 30 September 2019
- A New Deal for Renting – 12 October 2019
- Greater Manchester – Doing Buses Differently – 8 January 2020

Regular Updates

All Scrutiny Panel members will continue to receive regular update emails that provide access to scrutiny resources and the opportunity for councillors to contribute and share any consultation and engagement material. The emails create a further opportunity to inform members how the work of Scrutiny is shared with the Executive and reported within the Council.