
MEMBER COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT

1 UNIVERSAL CREDIT (UC) UPDATE

- 1.1 At the end of May 2020, the number of Stockport Homes' households claiming UC had increased to 2,919, which is 25 per cent of all households. There was an increase over the year of 1,449 but overall number of customer accounts in arrears at the end of May reduced by 218.
- 1.2 Average arrears on UC claimant rent accounts¹ remain considerably higher than arrears on non-UC accounts². Seventy one per cent of total arrears balances were on UC claimant accounts by the end of May and 55 per cent of all UC claimants were in arrears with their rent, compared to 19 per cent of non-UC claimants. Monitoring of accounts over time, however, continues to demonstrate that average arrears reduce where households have been claiming UC for over three months.
- 1.3 Throughout the Covid-19 period, incoming customer calls and enquiries to Customer Finance were significantly higher than normal. Many of the calls were from customers concerned about maintaining rent payments when their employment situation was unclear. A large proportion of the calls were from customers in long-term employment that had little or no experience of the benefit system. Over this period, the teams have been providing advice, support and reassurance to customers on claiming benefits or accessing new financial support packages.
- 1.4 Since 21st March 2020, customers have made 491 new UC claims, an increase of 123% on the usual number of claims expected over this period. By the end of May, claim numbers started to return to normal levels of around 20-25 per week.
- 1.5 Where rent arrears represent eight weeks or more of outstanding rent, or where tenant vulnerability issues can be demonstrated, landlords can submit a request to the DWP for the housing element of a claim to be switched back to the landlord. This is known as an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA). At the end of May, APAs were in place on 738 accounts.
- 1.6 Specialist Money Advisors continue to provide intensive support to all new UC claimants during the first six weeks of their claims. Of the 1,449 new UC claimants since May 2019, 82 per cent engaged with the team and paid as requested after receiving their first payment.

¹ Average arrears UC claimants accounts £522

² Average arrears on non UC claimant accounts £205

For further information please contact Christian Hartley, Head of Customer Finance, 0161 474 2824 or christian.hartley@stockporthomes.org

2 EMPLOYMENT

- 2.1 Between April 2019 and March 2020 Stockport Homes supported 252 customers into employment. This was as a result of bespoke support delivered by dedicated Employment Officers to help people to identify and apply for job opportunities.
- 2.2 In addition, the Team supported;
- 374 customers to gain accredited qualifications
 - 635 customers to access non accredited training courses
 - 124 customers to complete over 50 hours of individual volunteering in a number of our community settings including Your Local Pantry and Furniture Project
 - 42 individuals to access Apprenticeship places
- 2.3 Through the Covid-19 pandemic the Employment Team have continued to deliver the service remotely. The Team have utilised social media to raise awareness of the service and have contacted former customers to assess their employment status and identify immediate support requirements arising from the lockdown. Although employment opportunities have been severely limited by the pandemic, with primarily only Key Worker³ vacancies advertised in April and May, other employers are now starting to advertise as Covid-19 restrictions relax. In response to this SHG has increased the publication of the Job Booklet resource to twice weekly, ensuring customers are kept up to speed with the evolving landscape.
- 2.4 Customer Skills and Training has also successfully moved to remote means with the production of video training sessions to support customers in a range of areas including health and well-being as well as more traditional employment support around job searching, applications and interviews. Content has been shared widely and uploaded to the Stockport Council Jobs Match website. The video content has been well received with high levels of interaction from customers. All sessions signpost customers back to the SHG website where additional links and support can be accessed.

For further information contact Anne-Marie Heil, Assistant Director – Access and Support on anne-marie.heil@stockporthomes.org or 0161 474 3720

3 WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- 3.1 During the Covid 19 pandemic the activities SHG delivers for young people have been reviewed. An alternative approach has been developed to deliver the mental toughness sessions, which have been paused since March 2020.

³ Key Worker roles available during this period have largely related to employment within the NHS and supermarkets

Consultation has taken place with schools who are keen for the sessions to continue in a different format as soon as pupils return. In addition the intention is to extend provision to younger children in recognition of the increase in poor mental health amongst young people because of lockdown. In partnership with Stockport Youth Offending Service, SHG has applied for external funding to source e-learning activities, PPE equipment and tablets to deliver the sessions in an adapted way through a virtual classroom environment. If the bid is unsuccessful, the programme will be delivered in an appropriate format although to fewer children, based on consultation with schools and the availability of space in their facilities.

- 3.2 In partnership with Stockport Family, Life Leisure and youth services, SHG is co-ordinating the delivery of provision across the Borough during the Summer holidays offering a range of online and socially distanced face-to-face activities. The aim is to upscale programmes to provide activities and resources to households eligible for Free School Meals. This will include distributing family activity packs and the provision of a range of affordable food options to tackle holiday hunger. The Holiday Kitchen programme traditionally delivered by Start Well Centres and SHG in the Summer holidays to Bridgehall and Brinnington families will be delivered via on-line activities.
- 3.3 The Fabulous Foundations holiday clubs are traditionally run through two primary schools, in Brinnington and Heaton Norris. The programme aims to inspire 30 children in each area by feeding into their social and academic attainment, providing affordable childcare for working parents on a low income, in addition to supporting holiday hunger. Working in partnership with the schools, families will be offered alternative activities during the restrictions including activity packs including sports equipment, a digital offer, arts and crafts materials and cookery resources.

For further information contact Anne-Marie Heil, Assistant Director – Access and Support on anne-marie.heil@stockporthomes.org or 0161 474 3720

4 HEALTH

Welfare Checks

- 4.1 SHG has contacted all customers defined as ‘vulnerable’ during the Covid-19 restrictions to check on their health and welfare and provided support and assistance where required. This included 2782 customers aged over 70 years, households with disabilities and other vulnerable groups such as Looked After Children. Checks are now underway with those aged over 62, which is a further 850 households.
- 4.2 The Independent Living Service Team also completed additional welfare calls for households living in sheltered accommodation and accommodation designated for those aged over 60.

HOOP update

- 4.3 Throughout 2019-20, SHG’s dedicated Housing Options for Older People (HOOP) service gave bespoke advice and information to 737 older customers

about housing and care options. This enabled them to either remain in their homes for longer or move to more suitable accommodation. Successes included providing advice and support to 112 customers to access 'extra care' housing to prevent the need for residential care, 77 customers received other advice about issues such as money management (47), adaptations (30) and other issues to support independent living. The service supported 34 people out of hospital into suitable accommodation, reducing the length of stay in hospital.

For further information contact Anne-Marie Heil, Assistant Director – Access and Support on anne-marie.heil@stockporthomes.org or 0161 474 3720

5 HOMELESSNESS

- 5.1 The recent focus of the Homelessness Service has been managing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, but with work still ongoing to address existing priorities such as addressing rough sleeping.
- 5.2 The Covid response focussed on ensuring temporary accommodation was as safe as possible to limit infection risk and ensure an offer of a placement was made to everyone who was street homeless. This included:
- Expanding temporary accommodation provision within the Borough by four flats
 - Minimising the use of shared facilities with microwaves put in individual rooms
 - Deep cleaning of communal areas and social distancing measures in place
 - Accessing hotels in Manchester leased by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority
 - Increasing direct offers of permanent accommodation to free up temporary accommodation within the Borough.
- 5.3 The funding for the hotel provision is now ending with everyone placed from Stockport now returned to the Borough.
- 5.4 Wider work has including obtaining funding of £55,000 to continue the 'A Bed Every Night' (ABEN) scheme to offer additional accommodation and support to people who are street homeless, and the ongoing development of the Rough Sleeping Initiative Outreach Service (see below).

For further information contact Anne-Marie Heil, Assistant Director – Access and Support on anne-marie.heil@stockporthomes.org or 0161 474 3720

6 FOUNDATIONS STOCKPORT

- 6.1 Stockport Homes charitable arm Foundations Stockport continues to deliver a range of services which promote inclusion and support vulnerable households and explore a range of opportunities, often in partnership with others, to bring more resources into the Borough.

Rough Sleeper Initiative

- 6.2 Although only delivered since November 2019, the two Rough Sleeping outreach workers have been working with 32 rough sleepers across the two Boroughs of Stockport and Trafford. Most of the people engaged with have been homeless for significant periods of time, have often refused previous offers of accommodation and have a range of complex needs. Since November eight people have been supported to take up offers of accommodation, with Officers also facilitating appropriate support in order to ensure the tenancy is sustainable. Originally funded for one year, additional funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has now been secured to deliver the service up to April 2021.
- 6.3 During the Pandemic, the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) workers have carried on with outreach sessions, ensuring that they use social distancing and personal protective equipment where needed. The RSI workers have also supported the provision of extra temporary accommodation within hotels in Greater Manchester by covering support shifts at the schemes.

GM Housing First

- 6.4 The GM Housing First contract continues to be delivered across Stockport, Oldham, and Tameside with a total of ten referrals received during the course of the year, seven of which have engaged with the service (two did not engage and one is currently in custody). All cases are characterised by a range of complex needs including entrenched rough sleeping, offending behaviour, substance misuse and mental and physical ill-health issues resulting in behaviours that are difficult to manage and/or accommodate. Of the seven people supported by the project:
- Six have secured accommodation
 - All seven are addressing their substance misuse issues
 - Six have developed independent living skills
 - Six have been supported to access health services

- 6.5 A second Officer has recently been recruited in response to the increased allocation of referrals in Year 2 & 3 of the contract and will provide additional capacity to the service, particularly with the return of rough sleepers to the Borough who have been accommodated within GM hotels during the Pandemic.

Funding

- 6.6 A successful bid has been submitted to Homes England's Move-On Fund, which provides funding to increase the availability of affordable move-on housing for rent for people affected by homelessness and / or domestic abuse. Stockport Homes has submitted a bid for funding to acquire and refurbish 12 x 1 bedroomed self-contained properties to meet the needs of those presenting as homeless or where temporary accommodation is not the best option for their needs, with grant awarded for an initial six and an invitation to resubmit for the other six at a later date. The Fund also provides

revenue funding to deliver support services. Six properties have been procured with works to be completed by Three Sixty. Revenue funding for the worker, who will be employed by Foundations, can be drawn down upon practical completion of the properties.

- 6.7 Other funding successes include Your Local Pantry (YLP) receiving £6,335 from the Charities Aid Foundation to lease an additional refrigerated van to deliver much needed food to households. YLP has also received £2,000 from Brinnington Big Local to relieve period poverty and provide hygiene items to families in need, as well as a general food grant of £400 from Neighbourly to support households during Covid19. In partnership with the Youth Offending Service and the Safer Stockport Partnership, Foundations has submitted a bid for £48,692 from the Youth Endowment Fund to deliver youth outreach work to reduce youth violence.
- 6.8 SHG's Funding Officer ran a successful 'Find Your Funding' podcast in partnership with Stockport Council Local Fund Team and Sector 3. This replaced the traditional face-to-face gathering of community groups and funders. Other funding successes include support to local homeless charity H3 to win £18,898.08 from the Workers Educational Association to run employment courses for homeless women in partnership with SHG's Customer Skills and Employment Team. Support has also been provided to local social enterprise Starting Point, who were successfully awarded £14K for a men's mental health project.

For further information contact Anne-Marie Heil, Assistant Director – Access and Support on anne-marie.heil@stockporthomes.org or 0161 474 3720

7 CARECALL UPDATE

Working closely with Council colleagues, Carecall launched its Universal Offer on 6th January 2020 at a joint event with partners from the Third Sector, Health, Social Care, etc. The Universal Offer is integral to the Borough's approach of enabling people to 'Live Well at Home' with the increased use of technology.

In the first three months of operation Carecall saw a high volume of enquiries and referrals with the subsequent uptake being around 25% more than originally forecast. During the Covid-19 lockdown, referrals from professionals and other services reduced as services either closed or changed their working practices but as the situation begins to recover, referrals and installations are now approaching original estimates. The Universal Offer model is primarily self-funding and is structured to help residents to live independently for longer, reduce pressures on care and emergency services, and reduce the need for ongoing investment from the Council over the longer term.

One key benefit introduced with the Universal Offer was to extend the Falls Response service to be available 24-hours per day to all customers. This means that the night response service is now available to more than 4,500 people which, as well as being a great comfort to residents and their carers, takes pressure off the Ambulance Service. Since the beginning of 2020 the team have attended 2,166 emergency responses, with only 209 being passed on to

the Ambulance Service. As such, more than 90% of cases were dealt with in the home, within an average response time of under 20 minutes.

As a critical service, Carecall continued to operate throughout the Covid-19 pandemic with changes made to increase user and staff safety, including the rapid development of a contactless installation process and increased infection control procedures. In addition to the physical safety of customers, a wellbeing project was set up to ensure contact was made with all customers to establish if any additional help and support was needed. Numerous food parcels, online deliveries, prescription deliveries and safeguarding measures were quickly set up and over 60 staff members from across SHG volunteered to help. At its peak more than 1,100 customers were receiving a weekly call. Working with a range of community groups, Carecall co-ordinated donations to enable 'hobby parcels' to be made up and delivered. These included various items to help tackle feelings of isolation and focussed on an individual's hobbies and interests and more than 160 parcels have been delivered to date with very positive feedback from customers.

Working with Stepping Hill's Integrated Transfer Team and Stockport's Discharge to Assess team a fast-track installation service has also been established. This gives access to a same-day installation service for the highest risk patients and it enables Carecall to work with these customers from the point they get home. Stockport Adult Social Care supported this work by purchasing 30 mobile Telecare devices to assist with these cases.

Carecall's priorities for the remainder of 2020 are to further roll out the offer to residents of the Borough by working with professionals in the Third Sector, Health and Social Care to be integral to the culture of 'Living Well at Home'. The service also aims to increase public awareness of Technology Enabled Living (TEL) by developing a Town-Centre exhibition space, which will both demonstrate and help people become familiar with the types of equipment available.

For further information contact Si Welch, Business Transformation and Major Projects Lead on simon.welch@stockporthomes.org or mobile 07875990117.

8 MOTIV8

- 8.1 The Motiv8 programme has been successfully shortlisted for a TPAS award in the category of 'Excellence in employment, skills and training' award and as a finalist for the UK Housing Awards 'Resident Employment and Training' category. Both events will now take place in September.
- 8.2 The programme has also been shortlisted in the Festival of Learning Awards 2020, which highlight innovative projects that have demonstrated a commitment to investing in skills. This campaign is led by the Learning and Work Institute and supported by a wide range of bodies including the Department for Education.

For further information contact Amanda Ward, Employment and Support Services Manager on amanda.ward@stockporthomes.org or 0161 4744148

9 TLC UPDATE

- 9.1 The Talk, Listen, Change (TLC) contract continues to be delivered successfully with 384 referrals received during April 2019 to March 2020 and 935 counselling sessions provided to 280 different customers. In addition, 15 students were recruited and trained to deliver counselling sessions.
- 9.2 Feedback from customers is very positive as illustrated by the quotes below:
- “It’s been like someone holding your hand when you’re feeling desperate”. Female client – TLC Stockport
 - “It has been so helpful. My second diagnosis came as a real shock and I was very distressed and not in a good place at all. I don’t know how I would have coped without the counselling.” Female client – TLC Stockport
- 9.3 During the Covid-19 pandemic the service is being provided remotely in line with government guidelines and to ensure customers and staff are protected. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) has produced new guidelines enabling student counsellors to offer remote services, primarily via the phone and Zoom application. Seven students received training from their colleges enabling them to deliver remote counselling, the remaining eight students were not permitted by their educational establishments to deliver counselling remotely and will resume their placement following reintroduction of face-to-face sessions. During April, 20 referrals were received and 96 counselling sessions provided.

For further information contact Tanya King, Customer Engagement & Inclusion Manager on tanya.king@stockporthomes.org or 0161 474 2887

10 FUNDING UPDATE

- 10.1 During Covid-19, SHG’s Funding Officer has worked on a wide range of bids to support vulnerable customers to access support services and secure funding to provide food and other essential items. Local social enterprise Starting Point was supported to win £14,104 to deliver a ‘Men Matters’ project to reduce male suicide and support employment. Other successes include supporting Your Local Pantry (YLP) to access £400 from Neighbourly to purchase food items in short supply and £2,000 from Big Local to purchase toiletries and other essential non-food items. Your Local Pantry has also been contracted by Stockport Council to deliver food parcels to households in most need across the Borough. This includes vulnerable Looked After Children and young carers, amongst others. H3, a local homeless charity, has received £1,000 for ‘mood food’ parcels and mindfulness creative kits to support the mental health of temporary accommodation residents during Covid-19 restrictions

For further information contact Mark Rogers, Funding Officer on mark.rogers@stockporthomes.org or 0161 474 3463

11 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

- 11.1 Caretaking services have continued to be delivered to 4,500 customers living in multi storey, low-rise accommodation and independent living schemes during the lockdown period. The caretaking schedules which includes health and safety checks has reflected the need to focus on cleaning high touch and footfall areas to all locations. Customers have positively welcomed the continuation of the service to ensure the continued safety and cleanliness of buildings. During this time there has been increase in waste disposal and incidents of fly tipping. The caretaking team have remained in contact with colleagues, including Housing Officers via the Sweep Up app and with SMBC to take action as appropriate.
- 11.2 The grounds maintenance service paused on 23 March until the 4 May due to the Covid19 restrictions. The service has since resumed with the priority works on grass cutting, which initially focused on open communal areas. The service is now being delivered to all locations within the contract, in line with government advice. All SHG playgrounds remain closed, each location is being inspected during this time, and sites will be reopened in line with government advice.
- 11.3 Since March 23 all nine Community Centres have been closed to the general public in line with government advice. The Local Pantry is operating as a hub for food delivery and collections out of First House and at the Bridgehall centre, the NHS continue to deliver services. For each of these locations the caretaking team continue to provide daily services. A risk assessment and an assessment of practical measures required is underway, in consultation with users and community groups, in order to ensure the centres can reopen in line with government advice.

For further information contact Jane Allen, Head of Neighbourhoods on jane.allen@stockporthomes.org or 0161 474 3876

12 ASB SERVICE UPDATE

- 12.1 Incidents of ASB have significantly increased during the Covid-19 crisis, in line with regional and national trends. Although new reports do now appear to be levelling off, individual caseloads remain very high. Noise continues to be highest type of ASB reported although this is quickly being caught up by verbal harassment/threats and it appears that frustrations of being in lockdown is a significant trait. Inconsiderate behaviour and also residents being less tolerant of behaviour and challenging those not conforming to social distancing is prevalent in majority of cases, which then can create tension leading to verbal abuse/offensive comments and threats being made between parties. Further to this, ASB officers are finding the issue of Mental Health being a key factor both for those being a victim and those perpetrating the behaviour. Positive Engagement Officers are still supporting customers and taking new referrals who are perpetrators to offer welfare calls and support of a "kind ear".
- 12.2 The ASB Service has also started Domestic Abuse Welfare calls which involve a very short, sensitive and controlled script for ensuring current and

previous victims of domestic abuse are supported. Domestic abuse reports to the service has increased which are not always the “a-typical” cases between partners but there is an increase in older children acting as a “harmer” towards parents.

- 12.3 The ASB Service have recently had some legal action successes and have secured four injunctions. Officers are also currently working on other injunction applications for Fire Related issues in Lancashire Hill, repeated anti-social behaviour in Woodley including noise nuisance following an assault and there is also a further pending application for injunction for anti-social behaviour including drug use in Hazel Grove.
- 12.4 The ASB Service is also working with IT to launch a new customer App for reporting anti-social behaviour, providing a more instant, user friendly way of allowing customers to report directly to the ASB team using a smartphone or tablet. Information can be sent instantly including audio and video file and placed directly into React, the system which is used to manage cases. It is hoped that this will go live and can be promoted to customer from 15th June 2020.

For further information contact Liz Smith, ASB Services Manager
liz.smith@stockporthomes.org or 0161 218 1381

13 GENDER PAY GAP

- 13.1 The Gender Pay Gap for Stockport homes at April 2019 was 9.4% (median). The ONS (Office of National Statistics) calculated that the National Gender Pay Gap at the same point was 17.3%. This position was slightly increased from 8.7% in 2018.
- 13.2 An overall conclusion from carrying out this analysis was that societal trends relating to gender are influential and there are demonstrable gender influences on career choices. Stockport Homes as an organisation has a strong focus on delivering services that support customers to improve their lives, and also on high quality customer access services. Customer support and customer service roles are hence much more prevalent at Stockport Homes than many organisations. Roles within these types of services tend to be female dominated and nationally usually attract salaries of below average earnings. Hence the broader societal influences have an impact on the gender pay gap for the organisation. Stockport Homes continues to work hard to explore potential initiatives and implement actions to help positively effect this trend.
- 13.3 During 2019 SHG progressed actions previously identified to narrow the gender pay gap (further embedding flexible working, progression pathways for women and recruiting more women into trade / technical roles). It is continuing to address these throughout 2020, as well as other initiatives.

For further information contact Di Laming, Head of People and OD
di.laming@stockporthomes.org or 0161 218 1468

14 REPAIR 1ST UPDATE

- 14.1 The Repair 1st Team has achieved three awards this quarter. They successfully gained a RoSPA gold award for Health & Safety for the 2nd year running and at the 2020 Building Communities Awards held in Leicester they were awarded two; the In-House Maintenance Team of the Year and Partnership of the Year for our work with B4box.

For further information contact Jason Tighe, Head of Maintenance and Commercial Services jason.tighe@stockporthomes.org 0161 218 1316

15 PROPERTY MOT

- 15.1 SHG has instigated a proactive estate by estate rolling repairs programme which is known as the Property MOT. The Property MOT is designed to concentrate on the external envelop of a customer's home by carrying out proactive repairing works such as easing and adjusting doors and windows, clearing gutters, repairing fencing, pointing, relaying loose paving flags etc.
- 15.2 The idea of the Property MOT is to deal with repairs and routine maintenance in a systematic manner therefore lengthening the life of a component and preventing failure which would need replacing on a programme at greater expense.
- 15.3 The 2020/21 MOT works are planned to take place on the Swythamley Road estate and Cheadle Heath. Repairs will be carried out to 132 homes and the duration of the work will run for approx. 26 weeks from late June/July 2020

For further information contact Joe Keating, Environmental and Energy Manager joe.keating@stockporthomes.org 0161 218 1363