

Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No.04 /25

Date: May 2025

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Regeneration, Culture and Environment
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Purpose:

It was recognised at Overview and Scrutiny committee on 15/08/2024 that further information is required regarding how many HRA households are claiming benefits, along with outlining the measures taken to assist them back into the workplace.

Benefits Data:

As of March 31, 2025, there are approximately 2,234 tenants (73%) receiving Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Costs support for their rent payments. Currently, there are 1,424 HRA Universal Credit claimants. Across the service, there are 35 active tenancy sustainability cases.

In Quarter 4, income maximisation saw £10,548.75 credited to rent accounts in lump sum payments, totalling £61,886.70 for the year 2024/25. Additionally, £10,390.00 was awarded through the Housing Support Grant in Q4, with a total of £64,206.00 for the fiscal year 2024/25.

Employment Support

The Tenancy Sustainment team work closely with HRA tenants to maximise their benefits and ensure that rent is paid and budgeted for as well as continuing to monitor tenants' general wellbeing and identify those in food and fuel poverty. The team contact all new tenancy sign-ups to identify those that require additional support and ensure that benefits are in place. This enables officers to assist residents to understand the financial commitments involved in sustaining their own property as well as maximising any other financial support that may be available.

The Tenancy Sustainment team run a coffee morning / afternoon tea chat with residents at our Homes for Independent Living (HFIL) providing benefit support and advice to residents. The Tenancy Sustainment team also carry out home visits to our vulnerable tenants who have difficulties in attending Tenancy Sustainment surgeries held at the hubs.

In 2024/25, the Tenancy Sustainment Team held surgeries attended by 403 tenants. The team offers benefit-related support and advice, signposting tenants to employment guidance provided by the Information, Advice, and Guidance Service (IAG).

In addition to Tenancy Sustainment surgeries, the HRA promotes Medway Adult Education courses to boost confidence and employment prospects at Big Door Knock events, through

the Housing Matters magazine, and on the Housing Facebook Page. As members of TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service), HRA tenants can access a variety of courses, such as chairing skills, scrutiny, and equality and diversity.

Increasing employment opportunities by informed Service provision

Throughout 2025, Tenancy Sustainment events will be informed by insights from the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) data and areas of dissatisfaction highlighted from the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) survey. These sources have identified geographical areas of high unemployment among HRA tenants. The data will be used to target resources, aimed at increasing employment opportunities for HRA tenants. The HRA team will continue to promote and collaborate with Medway Adult Education, Public Health initiatives and the Community Safety team.

Success for these efforts will be measured through the following key indicators:

- Employment Rates: An increase in employment rates among HRA tenants.
- Tenant Satisfaction: Improved scores in the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) survey, particularly in areas related to employment and support services.
- Analysis from LIFT data: trends from LIFT data indicating better outcomes for tenants.
- Engagement Levels: Higher attendance and participation in programs and initiatives offered by Medway Adult Education, Public Health, and the Community Safety team.
- Benefit Dependency: A reduction in the number of tenants relying solely on benefits for their income.

Summary

The Tenancy team is committed to working closely with HRA tenants to enhance employment opportunities, maximise benefits, and ensure rent is paid and budgeted for. Using data insights, the HRA will continue to develop targeted strategies to reduce benefit dependency and increase employment rates among HRA tenants.

Lead officer: Rachel Valerio

Head of Tenant Services Email: Rachel.Valerio@medway.gov.uk