Voluntary Sector Strategy Group  
19th September 2016  
Minutes of Meeting

Present
Councillor Yasemin Brett (Chair) – LBE (YB)  
Rob Leak – LBE (RL)  
Shaun Rogan - LBE (SR)  
Niki Nicolaou - LBE (NN)  
Caroline Fanning – LBE (CF)  
Doug Wilson – LBE (DW)  
Sabena Ahmed – LBE (SA)  
Jany Thompson – LBE (JT)  
Alan Weinstock – Age UK Enfield (AW)  
Chandra Bhatia – Enfield Racial Equality Council (CB)  
Pamela Burke – Enfield Carers Centre (PB)  
Hamida Ali – Enfield Children & Young Persons’ Services (HA)  
Jill Harrison – Enfield Citizens Advice Bureau Services (JH)  
Lesley Walls - One-to-One (Enfield) (LW)  
Paula Jeffery – Enfield Voluntary Action (PJ)  
Rita Melifonwu – Stroke Action (RM)  
Tim Fellows – Enfield LGBT Network (TF)  
Ilhan Basharan – LBE (IB)  
Harriet Potemkin – LBE (HP)  
Julie Pocock – LBE (JP)  
Conor Cusack – LBE (CC) 

1. Introductions and Apologies

1.1 The Chair (YB) welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

1.2 Apologies were noted.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the meeting of 20/6/2016 were agreed as a correct record.

2.2 All issues were resolved.


3.2 IB to circulate the power point presentation to the VSSG members. IB

3.3 LW stated that One to One Enfield is unfunded to participate and that they fill the gaps to LBE services.

3.4 YB stated that the EFLG feeds into any report but the local authority has been funding organisations to attend.

3.5 CB asked what the rewards of EFLG were. RL explained that the Council is committed to equalities even though we are downsizing staff numbers. This is because we are still recruiting.

4. Support for Business Employment – Conor Cusack

4.1 CC presented on Support for Business Employment (appendix 2).
Enfield is in a good position for job opportunities. They are setting up a training programme for young people/adults, who are not in education or training, where they then have the opportunity to progress onto an apprenticeship programme.

4.2 CC to circulate the power point presentation to the VSSG members. CC

4.3 LW stated that as the chair of the Autism Strategy, the Mental Health Partnership Board, and the Learning Difficulties Partnership Board already have employment opportunities set up. It is the Physical Disabilities Partnership Board which is having more difficulty.

4.4 YB suggested that CC should set up a day to help support organisations to become better equipped to run as a small business as this will enable them to become more sustainable in the future. PB to link with CC regarding setting up a day. PB/CC

4.5 DW to link with CC with regards to merging the Apprenticeship Programme with Physical Disabilities. DW/C

5. Enfield Connected and Digital Champions – Julie Pocock

5.1 JP presented on Enfield Connected (appendix 3). She is liaising with the IT Team to work on the issues on the webpage. Enfield Connected is used for filling online forms and finding information. You must have an Account in order to fill out online forms.

5.2 JP discussed the Live Chat option on the webpage. It is only located on the Contact Us page, but will be rolled out soon to other pages. JP showed us how this feature works. It was easy to use.

5.3 It was raised that some users need help setting up email accounts in order to have an Enfield Account. JP responded saying that digital champions will be available to help users set up emails.

5.4 It was raised that some users may also need ongoing support with the Enfield Account. JP will look into this. JP

5.5 RL asked if you could print out the Live Chat conversation. Unfortunately this feature is not yet available.

6. Housing Policy – Discretionary Housing Payment Policy and New Housing Allocations Scheme – Harriet Potemkin

6.1 HP presented the changes to two housing policies: The Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) (appendix 4), and the Housing Allocations Scheme (appendix 5).

6.2 The 2 documents were circulated previously and are open for feedback from the VSSG members.

6.3 JH asked whether the DHP part allows the client to explain why they haven’t done job seekers.

6.4 HP to circulate easy read and short versions of the documents. HP

6.5 It was suggested that this is presented to the wider VCS by holding either an event or seminar. In response, it was mentioned that Tina Uhrynnowycz (LBE) is working on doing an event for this.

6.6 There will be an online consultation for this between October and September 2016.

6.7 LW suggested that this is taken to the Learning Difficulties Partnership Board.

6.8 CB suggested that there should be an open day/stall set up in Community House for this.

6.9 PJ to publicize this to Community House Group. PJ

6.10 HP stated that this will be going to the Community Safety Board and
7. **Commissioning Update from HHASC – Doug Wilson**

7.1 As Adults Commissioning is currently short staffed as well as DW now taking on Children’s Commissioning, the VCS is not currently a priority. If Rosie Lowman doesn’t return from sick leave, then DW will take control of the VCS.

7.2 There was a message from Litsa Worrall which said that the uncertainty from Adults Commissioning is causing a lot of stress.

7.3 AW requested that DW circulates a revised timescale. **DW**

7.4 PJ pointed out that Children’s Commissioning is not consistent with Adults Commissioning. This should not be the case.

7.5 The Small Clubs Grant is continuing. DW to email SA the forms and information to be placed Enfield’s webpage. **DW**

8. **Enfield Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)**

8.1 RL informed the group about an update on the proposal from the NHS to reduce the number of CCGs for North London.

9. **AOB & News**

9.1 PJ announced that Graham MacDougall will be attending EVA’s AGM on 26th October.

9.2 JH announced that Enfield CAB will be opening up a charity shop.

9.3 CB announced that there is money for Awards For All which is available to anybody.

9.4 RM announced that Stroke Action submitted 6 projects which have been accepted for publication (appendix 6).

9.5 YB urged those who haven’t already done so, to sign the petition set out by the Over 50’s Forum.

9.6 TF informed the members that North Middx Hospital is coming together with 4 organisations to set up funding. Applications are expected to be received within a month. DW to investigate. **DW**

9.7 LW mentioned that the Community House lease was agreed. However, it looks different from the previous lease. RL asked NN to arrange a meeting with LW/YB to meet with Steve Jarman from Property Services. **NN**

9.8 HA announced that they ECYPS have their first International Sports Day for the Disabled. They have also helped 2 smaller groups to secure grants. They are holding a Macmillan Coffee Morning at Bountagu on Friday 30th September.

9.9 NN reminded that group that the 100 Hours Volunteering Awards Event is taking place on 10th October 2016.

9.10 RL mentioned that Graham MacDougall will be attending the next VSSG meeting.

9.11 CF announced that they have a new Mental Health application for building resilience which DAZU will be delivering. There will be new VCS contracts. SPOE is being reviewed. Solace is being recommissioned.

9.12 A hand written update from the CCG to follow. **GMD**

9.14 Date of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Monday, 12th December 2016 at Community House Room 1.
Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG)

Voluntary Sector Strategy Group
19 September 2016

www.enfield.gov.uk

EFLG - Background

- Enfield accredited ‘Excellent’ by the Local Government Association (LGA) in March 2013.
- Strengths include:
  - Committed leadership and senior management
  - Community engagement and partnership working:
    - E.g. Residents Priority Fund, Children’s services, youth services and support for the voluntary and community sector
  - Mainstreaming equalities through staff training, workforce recruitment and EQIAs

EFLG - Self – Assessment

Excellent level: making a difference

Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Political and executive (vision and strategic aims to incorporate equalities)
- Strategic Partnerships (working together)
- Evidence of organisational commitment (resources, engagement, compliance with duties)
- EFLG 7 elements: leadership, local vision and priorities, equality objectives, monitoring and scrutiny, communication, commissioning and procurement and fostering good relations

Responsive services and customer care
- Proactive in meeting the needs of local communities
- Targeting resources to deliver good equality outcomes long-term
- EFLG 5 elements:
  - Equality analysis and impact assessments
  - Mainstreaming into service planning and delivery
  - Integration in service procurement
  - Accessible services
  - Human rights (dignity and respect of residents)

LGA Peer Assessment – Document Submission

LGA requirements:
- Comprehensive Self-Assessment
- Case Studies (best practice examples covering a cross-section of services, activities and partners)
- Narrative of Enfield’s journey since 2013
- List of related documents – providing evidence
- List of individuals and organisations to interview

Further Information

Ilhan Basharan
CREST Manager
Ilhan.basharan@enfield.gov.uk
020 8379 3123.
**SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT**

VSSG 19th September 2016

Conor Cusack, Business and Economic Development Service

**CONTEXT**

- Current employment in Enfield
- Addressing unemployment and deprivation to ensure benefits all areas of the community
- What is the council doing?

**EMPLOYMENT IN ENFIELD**

- Total 128,000 jobs
- Some big names – Coca Cola, Sony, Siemen's
- 92% micro businesses
- 8% increase in total jobs in Enfield between 2013 and 2014 an extra 16,000 jobs
- Job density rose from 0.57 in 2013 to 0.61 in 2014 signifying increase in labour demand
- Increase in total jobs proportionally higher than London, England and statistically similar boroughs Barnet, Havering and Redbridge

**UNEMPLOYMENT SOCIAL INCLUSION**

Eastern wards suffer disproportionately high rates of deprivation – eg:

Upper Edmonton ward

Economically active residents 7,686 = 68.1% of resident population

Enfield = 73.4%

England and Wales = 76.8%

In employment 6,599 = 58.4% of resident population

Enfield = 65.7%

England and Wales = 71%

**GOALS FOR ENFIELD COUNCIL TO SUPPORT MEASURES TO ADDRESS UNEMPLOYMENT**

- Need to instill employability skills in all our residents
- Start through schools to develop a culture of lifelong learning, investing in the future
- Link employer needs to careers advice for all ages

**WHAT IS THE COUNCIL DOING?**

Development of business forums in key growth sectors:

- Construction
- Logistics/transport
- Health and social care
- Food
- Green/recycling

**COUNCIL ASPIRATIONS**

- Attracting businesses from inner London seeking affordable accommodation and growth space
- Building on Enfield’s reputation for innovation and enterprise
- Wider context of Enfield in London Stansted Cambridge Corridor
- Growth potential through CR2
- Developing arts and cultural industries

**EMPLOYMENT IN ENFIELD**

Where has the growth come from?

- Upward trend in total jobs due to 42% increase in self-employed jobs (7.4k) and a 6% increase in employee jobs (5.8k)
- 930 additional businesses in Enfield between 2013 and 2014, of which 895 were micro
ACCELERATING DEVELOPMENT AND INWARD INVESTMENT

• Development of a CRM enquiry handling and property database
• Workspace site identification (start ups)
• Town Centre Viability Studies

APPRENTICESHIPS IN CONSTRUCTION AND LOGISTICS

• Working with local employers and our large regeneration projects
• Making apprenticeships accessible to all by working with suppliers of traineeships to raise skill levels and work experience opportunities

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

• Schools, colleges, DWP and voluntary sector organisations - raise awareness of opportunities through regeneration schemes
• Better careers advice and guidance – increased links with FE sector
• Overall, to make improvements for residents and businesses through partnership

THANK YOU

Any Questions?
Online Services

- Enfield Connected account – personalised account
- Book births & deaths registration online
- Pay for services online – council tax, penalty charge
- Report a problem – missed collection, abandoned vehicle
- Submit a request – school admissions applications
- Check your council tax account
- Web chat – talk live to an advisor
- AskSARA - helps you find useful advice and products that make daily living easier
- Web site / social media is great for information sharing, competitions, customer engagement, campaigns & events

Online Services Manager
Julie Pocock

Coming soon….
- Homelessness Screening Assessment
- Flytipping mobile app
- Online Business Directory
- Entitled To Affordability calculator
- Sports pitch bookings

Will we be providing access and assistance?

- Libraries equipped with customer access to PC’s & including free Wi-Fi
- Digital Champions’ to guide and support customers in our 4 main hub libraries, Civic Centre and John Wilkes House.
- Enhanced digital champion training being developed for staff
- We can offer support for IT issues at locations to run Enfield Connected

Web chat

- Improve communications and customer service
- Chatting to a ‘live’ advisor
- Web chat is quick, responsive and the team will guide you and support you to the right web page to use for your enquiry

Translation & Interpreting Service

We are now piloting a BSL video link at the Civic Centre on every Monday 9am-5pm
First Friday of every month we always provide a face to face BSL interpreter 9am-3pm at the Civic Centre
How Can You Help?

- **Encourage** – Inspire others to use self serve
- **Promote** – Word of mouth is quicker!
- **Educate** - Explain to others how effective it is, help and guide them

Awareness Sessions

- Familiarise yourself with Enfield Connected
- Digital training sessions
- Support for IT at your location to help with Enfield Connected account

Please pass names to Niki Nicolaou if you are interested

Twitter & Facebook

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VSSG 190916 Minutes, Version 1.0
This is a CONTROLLED document. Any Printed copy must be checked against the current electronic version prior to use
DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS (DHP) POLICY

1. SCOPE

1.1. This policy sets out our approach to awarding Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). It applies to how we award payments to all applicants of DHP in the London Borough of Enfield.

1.2. This policy makes reference to other discretionary payments such as the Emergency Support Scheme; Council Tax Support Scheme; and Free School Uniforms Grant. However, the detail of our approach to awarding these payments is set out in their respective guidance documents.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. The DHP scheme allows Councils the discretion to top up awards of benefit in certain cases. It is largely subsidised by the Government, up to a capped level each year. Above this, Enfield does not receive subsidy and the authority has to fund the excess expenditure itself. The total amount of DHP Enfield can pay is also capped. Enfield is committed to managing its DHP awards in accordance with the principles set out in the Government’s Best Practice Guide1.

2.2. Our policy is to make DHP awards to pay shortfalls in Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance in certain cases that meet the criteria set out in this policy. The purpose of this policy is to specify how Enfield Council’s Assessment Services will operate the scheme and to indicate the factors which will be considered when deciding if a DHP award can be made.

2.3. The DHP Fund is a short-term emergency fund, awarded whilst the customer seeks alternative solutions. The main features of the Fund are that:

- DHP awards are discretionary
- Customers do not have a statutory right to an award
- The DHP covers shortfalls in housing costs only
- It is a cash limited fund
- Housing Benefit must be in payment in the week in which a DHP award is made
- We may decide that a backdated DHP award is appropriate; which could then settle rent arrears. This would be the only circumstance where the DHP could be used to facilitate payment of rent arrears. A DHP in this circumstance may only be considered for a period where the linked HB is (or was) payable.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1. In awarding DHP, we aim to:

- safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- prevent homelessness
- alleviate poverty

• support individuals or families who cannot move immediately for reasons of health, education or child protection
• promote good educational outcomes for children and young people
• help people through personal and difficult events
• support young people in the transition to adult life
• support families coping with illness or infirmity within their household, including by helping disabled people to remain in adapted properties
• support carers, including foster carers
• support domestic violence victims who are trying to move to a place of safety
• support those leaving or working in the British Armed Forces
• encourage and sustain people in employment
• provide support to those affected by the Government’s welfare reforms where they are taking positive steps to resolve their financial situation.

3.2. Each case will be treated on its own merits and all applicants will be treated fairly and equally in the accessibility to the Fund and also the decisions made with applications.

3.3. Both the amount and the duration of the award are determined at the discretion of the Council and will be done so on the basis of the evidence supplied and the circumstances of the claim.

4. ELIGIBILITY FOR DHP

4.1. In order to be eligible, applicants must be the Housing Benefit claimant and have made application for and secured an award of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit that includes a housing element.

4.2. Where a customer is not claiming a Council Tax discount or exemption to which they may be entitled or a welfare benefit or additional financial assistance, they will be advised, and where necessary assisted, in making a claim to maximise their income, before their claim for DHP will be decided.

4.3. DHP is awarded for housing costs. Housing costs include rental liability, rent in advance, deposits and other lump sum costs associated with a housing need such as removal costs.

4.4. DHP cannot be awarded for the following circumstances:

• Where full rental liability is being met by Housing Benefit.
• Where we consider that there are unnecessary expenses or debts which the customer has not taken reasonable steps to reduce.
• To reduce any Housing Benefit recoverable overpayment.
• Where there is a shortfall caused by a Department for Work and Pensions sanction or suspension being applied because the customer has turned down work, an interview or training opportunities.
• When Housing Benefit is suspended.
• To cover Shortfalls in Council Tax Support or any other shortfall which is not housing related.

5. MAKING A CLAIM
5.1. The application form must be fully completed and supporting information or evidence provided, as reasonably requested by us. In cases of exceptional financial hardship applications must include sufficient evidence of financial hardship and personal circumstances that justify a DHP award.

5.2. In most cases the person who claims the award will be the person entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. However, a claim can be accepted from someone acting on another’s behalf, such as an appointee, if it is considered reasonable.

5.3. All applications should be made by the claimant or his/her advocate or appointee online on the Council website at https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/benefits/discretionary-payments/.

5.4. Receipt of a Council Tax Support Scheme award for all or part of the current financial year for the property that is the subject of the DHP application will be taken as persuasive in demonstrating evidence of financial hardship.

6. THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

6.1. When considering a DHP application, we will refer to the objectives of this policy, set out in 3.1 above.

6.2. Applicants will be assessed on the basis of demonstrable exceptional financial hardship. Applicants will need to demonstrate the need for short term assistance to allow time to resolve their financial hardship (for instance finding work, moving home, completing examinations or treatment programmes) or one-off funds to move to affordable accommodation or meet unforeseen costs such as bereavement costs.

6.3. DHP is a limited fund, and the Assessment Service will prioritise awarding funds to applicants whose circumstances show that they are taking certain defined steps to resolve their housing difficulties. This means that the following cases will be prioritised:

   a. Private Rented Sector households who have a shortfall between their Housing Benefit and rent and who are genuinely threatened with homelessness and who, should they be made homeless, would likely be owed the full homelessness duty.

   b. Applicants who will take action to resolve their housing problems whether by finding work and/or moving home and/or re-prioritizing their expenditure and/or making applications for benefit to which they are entitled. For example, DHP is more likely to be awarded if the applicant has shown good compliance with his job seeker requirements in the past and/or will do so in the future.

6.4. DHP will be awarded for a time limited period, usually of between three to six months, to give applicants time to sort out their financial and housing circumstances. The intention remains that those affected by the benefit cap/LHA reductions/bedroom tax will take efforts to resolve their situation in the longer term.

6.5. There are exceptions to this, where the applicants’ particular circumstance mean that the transitional nature of DHPs may represent an inappropriate form of assistance for applicants with an enduring need. For example, cases where the property has been substantially altered as a result of an occupier’s disability, an extra room is needed for disabled occupier or foster child or where there are shared care arrangements...
and domestic violence safe rooms. In these cases, DHP will be awarded for a longer period of up to 12 months.

6.6. The Council’s Assessment Service will assess and decide whether or not to make a DHP award, how much any award might be and for what period of time. When making this decision we will consider the following:

6.7. **The shortfall in housing costs**
- The shortfall between the Housing Benefit/Universal Credit housing cost element and the rental liability
- The reason for the shortfall
- Shortfalls due to non-dependant deductions which are unlikely to be considered for an award
- Whether the property was affordable at the time of the tenancy starting.

6.8. **The circumstances of the households (with reference to the objectives of the policy set out in 3.1)**
- The personal circumstances, age and medical circumstances (including ill health and disabilities) of the customer, their partner and any dependants and any other occupants of the customer’s home
- The difficulty experienced by the customer which prevents them from being able to meet the shortfall, or to secure alternative, more affordable accommodation
- The exceptional nature of the customer and/or their family’s circumstances that impact on finances.

6.9. **The steps taken by the customer to reduce their shortfall**
- Steps taken by the customer to establish whether they are entitled to other welfare benefits.
- The income and expenditure of the customer, their partner and any dependants or other occupants of the customer’s home (All income will be taken into account, including those elements of it which are disregarded when awarding Council Tax Support)
- How deemed reasonable expenditure exceeds income
- Any savings, capital or other financial assets that might be held by the customer or their partner or any other person living in the dwelling
- Any deposits due to the tenant
- Other debts outstanding for the customer and their partner
- Whether the customer has already accessed or is engaging for assistance with budgeting and financial/debt management advice.
- The length of time they have lived in the property
- Whether any move is reasonable and the tenant is moving to an affordable property.

6.10. **Other assistance already received from the Council**
• Whether a DHP has previously been awarded to meet a shortfall in rent
• Any other assistance provided by the Council towards deposit costs
• Any other assistance proved by the Council via other discretionary funds, including the Emergency Support Scheme; Council Tax Support Scheme; and Free School Uniforms Grant.

6.11. Our ability to make an award in any given case is necessarily dependent on the continued availability of funding for that purpose in the financial year concerned.

6.12. An award from the DHP Fund does not automatically mean that a further award will be made at a later date, even if the customer’s circumstances have not changed.

6.13. A DHP award may be less than the shortfall in housing costs (ie the difference between the Housing Benefit/UC award and the amount of rental liability).

6.14. The award may be made direct to a third party such as a landlord.

7. REVIEWS

7.1. We will agree the time period over which the DHP will be awarded (generally three or six months unless in exceptional circumstances) and will arrange to review the applicant’s case prior to the expiry of that award.

7.2. The purpose of the review will be to determine whether a subsequent payment will be made and the level of any subsequent payment.

7.3. DHP is more likely to be awarded to applicants whose circumstances show that they can take certain defined steps to resolve their housing difficulties and during the period of the award, evidence that they are doing so. If the tenant has failed to take reasonable actions to resolve their housing difficulties, their DHP is less likely to be renewed at their Review Date.

7.4. Applicants will be deemed to be taking action to resolve their housing problems in the longer term if they are taking steps to find work; are looking for cheaper accommodation; are taking steps to maximize their welfare entitlements; and are paying what rent they can afford while taking reasonable actions to resolve their housing difficulties.

7.5. Review meetings will make it very clear to applicants what they need to do to retain their DHP payment and the probable effect on any homelessness application they may make if they do not take such action. A further DHP payment may be granted during which time the applicant will need to demonstrate action they have taken to resolve their housing problems. The applicant will be made aware of the effect that failure to act is likely to have on their DHP and thus their ability to meet their rental obligations.

7.6. In exceptional cases where the transitional nature of DHPs may represent an inappropriate form of assistance due to an enduring need, the review period will be annual and the decision to renew the award will be based on evidence of the enduring need. This will include cases where the property has been substantially altered as a result of an occupier’s disability, an extra room is needed for disabled occupier or foster child or where there are shared care arrangements and domestic violence safe rooms i.e. cases where the transitional nature of DHPs may represent an inappropriate form of assistance for applicants with a an enduring need.
7.7. If it is agreed to renew the award, the Assessment Service may revise the amount of DHP awarded following the Review, where the applicant’s circumstances have changed which either increases or reduces their Housing Benefit/Universal Credit entitlement or other income sources such as employment.

7.8. Our ability to make a further award at the Review in any given case is necessarily dependent on the continued availability of funding for that purpose in the financial year concerned.

8. DUTIES OF THE CUSTOMER

8.1. A person claiming a DHP award is required to:

- Provide us with the information we require in order to make a decision
- Tell us of any changes in circumstances that may be relevant to their ongoing claim.
- Deliver any actions agreed as part of the DHP award to alleviate their financial situation such as to find work or find more affordable accommodation
- Provide us with any other information we may require in connection with their claim.

9. EQUALITIES

9.1. The DHP Award Scheme assists us with meeting our obligations under the Equalities Act. The Act requires the Council to have due regard to eliminating discrimination and harassment and supporting people with protected characteristics including age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership.

9.2. We recognise the importance of protecting the most vulnerable people in our community and also the impact that welfare reform changes could have on these groups. We have created a Policy that seeks to ensure that we protect and support those most in need with assistance in cases of extreme financial hardship in relation to housing costs.

9.3. We will collect equalities data on applicants for the DHP Award. We will undertake analysis of this data in order to ensure that any necessary amendments can be made to the Policy, or to how we communicate and implement the Policy, to ensure we continue to meet our obligations under the Equalities Act.

10. PUBLICITY

10.1. The Council's Assessment Service will publicise the DHP Fund. We will raise awareness through promotion on the Council website and by raising awareness with staff across the Council, relevant voluntary organisations, advice agencies, landlords and other partner organisations. A copy of this policy will be available on our website.

11. PAYMENT OF AWARD

11.1. Any DHP award will be added to the Housing Benefit entitlement and paid in accordance with the existing payment arrangements.
12. **OVERPAID DHP PAYMENTS**

12.1 If it is decided to recover a DHP award this will be done by way of an invoice.

13. **NOTIFICATION OF AN AWARD**

13.1 We will notify the outcome of each application for DHP in writing, including details of the amount and duration of the award.

14. **THE RIGHT TO A RECONSIDERATION OF A DECISION**

14.1. There are no statutory appeal rights concerning the refusal of DHP awards, but we will reconsider any cases where new information subsequently comes to light or where we have made an error. The route of Judicial Review is available.

14.2. If the customer is not satisfied with the decision in respect of an application for a DHP award, a decision to make a reduced amount of DHP award, a decision not to backdate a DHP award or a decision that there has been an overpayment of a DHP award, they must write to us setting out their grounds for a request for a reconsideration within 28 days of being informed of the decision that has been made.

14.3. We will reconsider the decision and the review will be carried out by someone other than the person making the original decision. We will respond in writing within 28 days of receiving the appeal, setting out the decision and associated reasons for the decision. Any request for a reconsideration must be made within 28 days of the date of the notification letter notifying the original decision.

14.4. Any complaint about how we have applied our operating procedures in handling an application will be managed through the our Complaints Procedure (available on the Council website).

15. **FRAUD**

15.1 We are committed to protect public funds and seeks to ensure funds are awarded to the people who are rightfully eligible to them.

15.2 A customer who tries to fraudulently claim a DHP award by falsely declaring their circumstances or providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application may have committed an offence under The Fraud Act 2006.

15.3 Where we suspect that such a fraud may have been committed, this matter will be investigated as appropriate and may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.

16. **LEGISLATION**

16.1 The regulations covering DHPs are The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001. The legislation which specifies the overall limit on expenditure is Article 7 of The Discretionary Housing Payment (Grants) Order 2001.

17. **POLICY REVIEW**

17.1 This policy will be reviewed on a three yearly basis, or more frequently if legal or policy changes require it. The policy will be updated as appropriate to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
Housing Policy: Discretionary Housing Payment Policy and Housing Allocations Scheme review
Briefing for Voluntary Sector Strategy Group, 19th September 2016

Introduction
We have an ambition to make Enfield a better place to live and work, and access to good quality and affordable housing is a vital part of this vision. The severe shortage of affordable homes across London combined with Government policies to reform welfare provision mean that achieving this vision is one of the biggest challenges facing the Council.

There is a severe shortage of social rented homes in Enfield. This means we need to prevent more people from becoming homeless, support people to find settled homes in the private rented sector and ensure efficient practice in how the small number of social rented homes in Enfield are allocated and managed.

To help us achieve this, we are reviewing two important policies:
- Discretionary Housing Payment Policy;
- Housing Allocations Scheme.

The voluntary and community sector in Enfield is playing a vital role in supporting communities in Enfield who are impacted by rising housing costs and decreasing incomes. Your participation in the review of these policies is therefore invaluable in helping us tackle the housing challenges over the coming years.

1. Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

The Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Scheme allows Councils the discretion to top up awards of benefit in certain cases. Our policy is to make DHP awards to eligible residents so that they can pay shortfalls in Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance.

The existing policy was drafted in April 2014. This is being reviewed in light of new DWP Guidance published in May 2016 and as a response to rising pressure on the fund due to increasing homelessness acceptances and rising numbers of tenants in temporary housing in Enfield. The new draft policy is included with this briefing paper, for members of the VCS Strategy Group to review.

The new Policy is intended to help the Council make better use of the limited DHP funding available to mitigate the effects of welfare reforms by supporting as many tenants as possible for a time limited period, as opposed to making ongoing longer-term payments to fewer tenants.

It gives clearer guidelines on prioritising certain types of applications by introducing a mechanism whereby DHP will be prioritised on applicants who agree to take action to resolve their housing problems in the longer term. The policy makes clear what has to be done to maximize one’s chances of a successful award and/or in what factual circumstances an award would be more likely to be successful. For example, DHP is more likely to be awarded if the applicant has shown good compliance with his job seeker requirements in the past and/or will do so in the future.

The policy makes an award for a limited period of time after which the case will be reviewed before another DHP is awarded. Any subsequent award is more likely to be granted if the applicant has, for example, shown good compliance with his/her job seeker requirements during the period of the first grant. This is a significant change in emphasis from Enfield’s current DHP policy which states a second award is unlikely even if circumstances have not changed.

The change in policy should encourage private rented sector tenants to resolve their own housing benefit shortfalls rather than choose to approach Enfield as homeless and rely on temporary accommodation. This is an important way in which to avoid escalating temporary accommodation costs.
Temporary housing tenants will also be encouraged to take action to resolve their housing benefit shortfalls, pay rent they can reasonably afford, find work or find alternative accommodation, rather than become dependent on DHP in the long term. Enfield will find it easier to make a cessation of duty decision in exceptional and appropriate cases, where the tenant is failing to engage with support and advice and take steps to reduce their shortfall. This will help the Council avoid escalating costs of uncollected rent.

Tenants with enduring need are the exception to the above. Where the transitional nature of DHP is not appropriate because of an enduring need, the award would continue for the longer term, subject to the availability of the DHP fund.

Feedback from the VCS
We would like members of the VCS forum to review the policy document, and let us know:

- anything further you feel the Council needs to consider to ensure that all parts of the community are aware of steps they need to take in order to be prioritised for awards and are supported in this regard
- any further information you would like from the Council so that you can advise your service users on this new policy (where relevant to your area of service delivery).

Following consultation with relevant voluntary sector organisations, we will submit the final policy for approval by the Council’s Portfolio Holders responsible for finance and efficiency, welfare reform and housing.

2. Housing Allocations Scheme

Our housing allocation scheme sets out how we prioritise the allocation of social housing and how we will support households to find settled accommodation in the private rented sector.

We are reviewing the Scheme in order to:

- Continue to prioritise applicants fairly
- Continue to meet all our legal duties
- Develop how we prevent homelessness
- Continue to effectively manage estate regeneration and temporary housing pressures
- Make the way we allocate socially rented homes clearer for everyone to understand
- Act on the commitment we made in 2012 to review the Scheme.

From the start of October, more information on the new Scheme and a questionnaire will be available at www.enfield.gov.uk/consultations. The consultation will close on Friday 23rd December 2016.

We will be inviting everyone to take part in the consultation. People can participate by:

- reading our new scheme, which will be available from 3rd October on our website;
- telling us what they think about the changes we’ve made by completing our survey, also available on our website;
- emailing us to tell us their views at consultation@enfield.gov.uk or writing to us Consultation and Resident Engagement, PO Box 61, Silver Street, Enfield EN1;
- taking part in a focus group. We will be holding three focus groups: one for registered providers/ housing associations; one for the general public; and one for the voluntary and community sector. Invites will be sent out to relevant organisations. Should you not receive an invite and you are interested in attending, please contact Tina.Uhrynowycz@enfield.gov.uk

Feedback from the VCS
We need to ensure that all parts of the community have the opportunity to take part in this consultation. We would like to discuss with members of the VCS Strategy Group how we can support your service users to give feedback on the new Scheme, including by responding to our questionnaire.

Officers from the Council would like to visit community settings during the consultation period, to talk to people who live in Enfield or in surrounding boroughs, about what they think of the new Scheme. We would like you to let us know:

- whether you would be able to facilitate a visit from a Council officer during the consultation period, so that we can support your service users to respond to our questionnaire.
- any further ideas or feedback you have on how we can make our consultation accessible to all parts of the community in Enfield.

We would also like to encourage all relevant organisations to attend our VCS focus group on the new Scheme, which will take place during October.
WORLD STROKE ORGANISATION (WSO) UPDATE FOR VSSG MEETING: Sept 2016

RM has won the 2015 World Stroke Day (WSD) Achievement Award for her stroke advocacy work. She will be receiving the award at the 10th World Stroke Congress (WSC) to be held in Hyderabad, India in October 2016.

The WSO invited Stroke Support Organisations (SSO) around the world to submit case studies of their work around:

- Stroke Advocacy
- Health, Wellbeing and Self-management

Stroke Action made 3 submissions under each category highlighting its proactive strategies for collaboration and partnership with stakeholders, and, benefits to stroke survivors and carers. All the six submissions made by Stroke Action have been accepted for publication as follows:

1. Global Stroke Advocacy TOOLKIT to be launched by the WSO on WSD at the 2016 WSC
2. Stroke Hobbies Exhibition to be launched at the 2016 WSC.

RM has been invited to join the 11 member committee that will pilot the Toolkit.