

Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) update 30 June 2018

The Homeless Reduction Act came into force on 3 April 2018. In the previous HRA update we advised that the new Act would have implications for Dover District Council which included an increase in workload for staff as we anticipated that there would be:

- more applications
- more decisions
- changes in case management requirements
- an increase in review points
- a new Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government data collection requirements
- a new focus on prevention, to help households to retain their accommodation, where it is safe to do so.

A number of reports have now been created on the Locata system and we are able to determine how many referrals come into the team and track the status of a case.

Between 3 April and 30 June 2018 there have been a total of 413 referrals into the Housing Options team. Of these, 201 moved from either the initial triage stage or the prevention duty into the relief duty. These cases are classed as homeless applications.

During the same period we accepted a full housing duty to 17 households. Of these, 15 were 'legacy cases' where the homeless application had been made prior to April.

In the same period of 2017 there were 78 homeless applications and 38 acceptances.

Staffing:

Staff have embraced the changes within the HRA Act however since its introduction they have been one member short. This officer recently decided to take ill-health retirement and we are in the process of recruiting to his post. This means that we expect to be fully staffed ahead of the Duty to Refer being introduced on 1 October 2018.

We have reconfigured some roles within the team and now have a dedicated officer with responsibility for, amongst other things, managing the temporary accommodation and raising invoices and ensuring our income is maximised.

In addition to the above we have applied for an apprentice within the team. The purpose of the role will be to manage all of the new triage referrals that come in, gathering all of the relevant information and preparing the Personal Housing Plans (PHP). Taking this time-consuming administrative process from the Options Officers will enable them to concentrate or prioritising the cases they are working with, allowing them to focus on prevention work where appropriate.

Data reporting:

Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC), the reporting tool which tracks live data showing a customer's journey through the homelessness process,

has now been made available by MHCLG. The majority of Local Authorities have successfully uploaded their data, although the deadline has been extended for a fortnight.