

Appendix B – Growth Impacts

Job Role	Impact of not securing growth															
1. Lettings Advisor																
<p>In 2019 we complete a full scale Housing and investment Business Unit review in which we looked at current service provision and systems that could be implemented to assist in effective service delivery. The lettings services at that time had 4 posts and as part of the BUR the proposal was to reduce this to 3 posts after 18 months when Northgate Housing Online was implemented and in place.</p> <p>The unforeseen challenges faced by the services during the pandemic have meant that we are not as far forward with Housing Online as originally proposed. The system is also not offering the service delivery improvement expected and the team are actually spending a huge amount of time dealing with processing enquiries.</p> <p>Since the 1st of August 2021 we have received 635 applications. 229 were registered onto the housing register and 266 were rejected. We currently have about 140 applications pending within the 28 day KPI. On Average we receive 150 applications a month so 7.5 per working day that require processing.</p> <p>Of the past 240 rejected application, they were rejected for the following reasons:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="73 1339 1174 1731"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #00b050; color: white;">Number Rejected</th> <th style="background-color: #00b050; color: white;">Rejection Reason</th> <th style="background-color: #00b050; color: white;">Percentage of Rejections</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>125</td> <td>Completion Error</td> <td>52%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Homeowners</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>79</td> <td>No Local Connection</td> <td>33%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>33</td> <td>Not Eligible</td> <td>14%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Half of those rejected have to resubmit their applications. We have been working with Housing IT to amend some of the wording on the online application to see if we can reduce the errors. This is evidence of the system not working in the anticipated way and we are some 17 months after the implementation of Northgate Housing Online.</p> <p>We are currently considering alternative software solutions for our Housing Options services and whether we can introduce an alternative allocations module with this also.</p>	Number Rejected	Rejection Reason	Percentage of Rejections	125	Completion Error	52%	3	Homeowners	1%	79	No Local Connection	33%	33	Not Eligible	14%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications for the housing register will not be processed within the 28 day KPI leading to an increase in complaints and member enquiries • Applications for part 6 accommodation in the register will not be processed correctly due to the lack of resource leading to applicant obtaining accommodation they should not otherwise access • Properties will not be let within the 6 working day KPI leading to additional void loss which is already projected to be an additional £190k for the remainder of the financial year plus the current £500k loss. • Staff will leave due to the intense pressure on the very reactive service being unmanageable
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Below is the number of applicants on the waiting list in 2015/2016 compared to this financial year which shows a 54% increase over a 6 year period;

Financial Year	Number on the Housing Needs register
2015/2016	2263
2021/2022	3486

This is an average of a 9% increase per year however it is important to note that we are due to commence an Allocations Policy review this financial year which may reduce number of the housing register. This review of the Allocations Policy will in turn lead to further work requirements such as a full scale review of the housing register where we will not have capacity to reduce existing resource

The team consists of 4 officers managing offers of SBC owned stock and the nominations process for registered providers, managing the lettings and monitoring of voids throughout the voids process and housing register enquiries and processing.

Below detailed the total lettings completed per year out of our total SBC owned stock

	Number of Lettings	Percentage of total stock let
2018/2019	356	5%
2019/2020	445	6%
2020/2021	270	3%
2021/2022 (To Sep 21)	161	2%

In 2020/2021 we let a lot less properties due to the pandemic restrictions where all non-essential lettings were delayed during the periods of national restrictions in order to stop the spread of COVID.

There is a backlog of 80 void units currently and when properties returns needing re let within 6 working days. Void rates have been 3x the anticipated amount which does not suggest that lettings numbers will increase drastically from 2020/2021 and therefore there will not be any capacity to reduce staffing in this team in the near future.

Following the Business Unit review there had been 0.5 of the Lettings team's

- Without effective software and sufficient resources this will increase complaints, cause a lack of staff retention and lead to low staff morale and cause delays and ineffective application of our duties under part 6 of the Housing Act

original resource redirected to the Specialist Support team to assist with ILS lettings. The work within this team has also seen an increase and as part of the Allocations Policy review the proposal will be to direct let ILS units and remove from CBL.

There is no capacity within the Lettings team to support work in the specialist support team due to increasing workload.

2. Strategic Complaints Managers

There are currently 3 Strategic Complaints Managers for Housing and Investment “H+I” for each area; Providing, Managing and Investing in Homes.

The Providing Homes Strategic Complaints Manager “PHSCM” started in this role in January 2020 after the need was identified for additional resource to focus on this area of work following high levels of customer contact, complaints and feedback. Since introducing the role there have been no complaints escalated to stage 2 or 3 showing a clear improvement in case handling by introducing a consistent response across the teams. The below figures evidence that in the previous year there had been case escalations.

Escalated cases

	Investing in Homes	Managing Homes	Providing Homes	Corporate
April – October 2021				
Stage 2 complaints	6	13	0	54
Stage 3 complaints	4	3	0	12
2020/21 full year				
Stage 2 complaints	17	21	12	63
Stage 3 complaints	9	3	5	15

The work undertaken for the PHSCM has included the implementation of the 10 working day turnaround for communication across H+I, liaison with the CSC on wording of complaints to be in the customers own words, writing feedback for the newsletter and ensuring a consistent approach across H+I for customer contact, complaints and feedback.

Taking into account the success of the PHSCM and the introduction of the White Paper consultation confirming requirements for Housing providers and the number of contact for Housing there were complaints managers

- Complaints will not be dealt with in a consistent approach
- The level of complaints and contact received within H+I is unmanageable for team managers to complete alongside the ever increasing pressures of the day to day operational work they are required to deliver.
- The pressure of this additional work will cause managers to look for alternative jobs- we are not seeing the calibre of candidates requires applying for specialist Housing roles meaning there are gaps and leads to a further issue with staff retention

introduced in Investing and Managing Homes. The 2 additional Complaints Managers started their roles in August 2021 therefore as they are relatively new in post there has not been the opportunity to see such dramatic results as there has been for Providing Homes who has had the role for 10 months.

Below shows the level of complaints received in Q1 2021/2022 for the 3 areas of H+I and complaints received corporately. The below figures evidence that there 361 complaints received corporately and for H+I making up 40% of total number of complaints received with is reflective of the size of H+I in comparison to other services areas. Similarly 37% of the total number of member enquiries made are to H+I. It is also important to note the sheer level of member enquiries into the Providing Homes services.

Customer Complaints closed Q1					Member Enquiries closed Q1			
	IN	OUT	TOTAL	S/L	IN	OUT	TOTAL	S/L
Investing in Homes	29	15	44	65.91%	24	2	26	92.31%
Managing Homes	28	29	57	49.12%	22	23	45	48.89%
Providing Homes	46	0	46	100%	90	0	90	100%
Corporate	150	65	214	70.09%	229	39	268	85.45%

Taking into account the level of members enquiries received and that all were processed within time with very positive feedback this is evidence of the success of the role. The feedback received from members has been;

From The Leader - *Thank you Caroline. A great response.*

Also from the Leader - *Thank you so much for dealing with this so quickly Caroline.*

From Cllr Jeanette Thomas - *Your response to the resident is brilliant and I hope she takes the apology and the hope it gives well.*

From Cllr Myla Arceno - *Thank you for your prompt reply as always, and the detailed information for our learning.*

In Q2 2021/2022

Customer Complaints closed					Member Enquiries closed			
	IN	OUT	TOTAL	S/L	IN	OUT	TOTAL	S/L
Investing in Homes	39	9	48	81.25%	27	4	31	87.10%

- Complaints and member contact will be delayed due to the operational service delivery needing to be prioritised along with the pressure of taking on more distributed work following the distribution of work from corporate work areas that having functionality reduced eg; Human Resources

- We will not be compliant with the White paper demands as teams do not have capacity to simply manage complaints let alone additional duties to be introduced.

Managing Homes	36	49	85	42.35%	34	39	73	46.58%
Providing Homes	42	0	42	100%	109	0	109	100%
Corporate	183	127	310	59.03%	242	62	304	79.61%

For Q2 the highest level of complaints has been received by Managing Homes which is reflective of the pressures faced by the services with staff retention and complex casework. Bearing in mind that there has been double the amount of complaints received for Managing Homes than Providing Homes the Complaints Manager has closed a similar number of cases within time which is reflective of the good work from the Managing Home Strategic Complaints Manager "MHSCM" and to date there is no backlog of cases. There has also been a similar number closed by Investing In Homes in this quarter.

The level of member contact is again the highest for Providing Homes yet again all responded to within target due to the effective management from the PHSCM.

Channel shift will not stop the need for a physical officer to deliver this work taking into account the requirements in the white paper to be more transparent, consistent and effective.

3. Income posts

As part of the Business Unit Review we carried out late 2019/20 we based the staffing numbers on the world we were living in at that time and being able to implement a number of IT solutions to aid income collection.

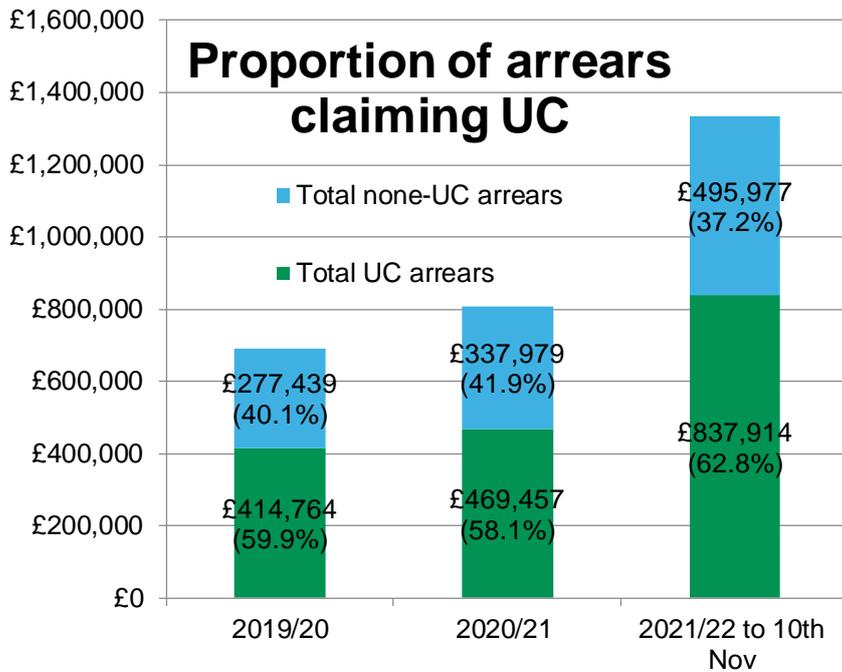
The world that we worked in changed just before implementing the Business Unit Review and we very quickly noticed an increase in arrears due to the pandemic, increase in Universal Credit applications and produced an arrears recovery plan. As part of that plan additional posts were requested to support the income recovery work.

Whilst we have been working through the arrears recovery plan, there are a number of areas which have not been able to be progressed, some of which are around the IT solutions. This has been held up due to development needed from the corporate IT side.

We have also seen the impact of the pandemic and Universal Credit being realised and changing the way the team need to work. For the past 18 months the team have been very reactionary due to workload demands supporting those on furlough, job retention schemes and those made redundant. Also spending time with people who have not claimed benefits before and educating them on budgeting.

The team will not be able to focus on:

- Proactively targeting those experiencing financial difficulties especially as this is the highest cost of living since a decade with the increase in energy and fuel costs (petrol is up by 25p per litre, Gas up by 28%, Electricity up by 19%)
- Invest more time on early intervention for new debtors and UC applicants and



The level of contact has continued to shift from direct incoming call and service request to emails. The customers' have adapted to the new ways of working and responding. We are experiencing an increasing level of email use. The figures for last Q2 are as follows;

- 36 on average telephone calls received per week
- 45 Av Service requests received per week
- 122 Av Emails received per week

The number of people using Housing On line for income related matters has increased. In Q2 they received 1536 compared to Q1 when they received 1252.

The enquiries and contacts regarding income, arrears and benefits have become increasingly more complex and demanding and will continue to remain complex in nature. The time spent on dealing with customer contacts has increased. Previously the officers spent on average 2- 5 minutes dealing with telephone enquiries and this has steadily increased to 35 – 50 minutes over the last year with follow up work taking up approximately 1.5 hours (this does not include all other contacts).

For example one such typical call involves the following;

- running through current account status
- Running benefit awards and payment
- Running through income and expenditure ,
- if the household has children over 18 years , then most likely will have a non-dependant charge which means that they will not receive housing costs to cover the charges in most cases educating tenants on maximising money from within the households towards rent and council

keep up with the employment status and impact on ability to pay rent.

- Offering intensive support to UC cases to ease the adjustment to the new benefit and maintain payments.
- More Intensive management of high level arrears case as Court intervention is taking so long which stalls the arrears recovery process.
- Effort on reviewing arrangements in place and all the cases for all those in receipt of UC following the deduction of £20pw and those who have historically been in receipt of DHP as this funding pot has reduced and is expected to reduce further.

The team will receive more complaints as they won't be able to deal with the level of enquiries coming into the service from tenants and leaseholders

The team will not have capacity to deal with the eviction cases needing to be taken to court including the backlog.

Tenants and leaseholders will not get the intense support needed to pay their rent, service charges or arrears as staff will not have time which will mean a

- negotiating repayments

greater increase in arrears.

The follow up work after the call;

- Liaising with DWP/Benefits Services in terms of any UC/HB issues
- Applying for APAs
- Applying for Third Party Deduction for water rates on most cases where they have applied for APAs
- Making referrals for further support for those who need this

Former tenant arrears will not be collected and the amount will increase.

The MRC billing enquiries and payment actions will not be dealt with on time due to demands on other workloads.

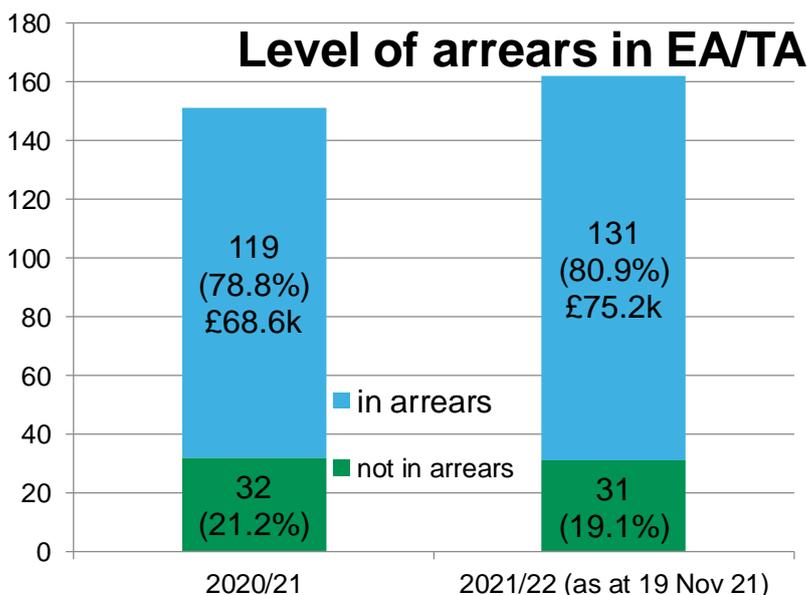
This involves officer intervention and cannot be automated.

The team have set up 1468 arrangements with tenants since March 2021.

The ratio of Housing Benefit claimants to Universal Credit claimants has shifted. As at end August 2021 there were 34% of total current tenants on Housing Benefit which has decreased significantly.

There is still a backlog of Court cases due to eviction cases being on hold. We have only been able to progress 2 so far in 2021. This involves a lot of work by the team to ensure we pursue more in the coming months but are facing delays in getting hearing dates.

There has been an increase in Emergency (EA) and Temporary Accommodation (TA) demand due to high levels of homeless presentations.



4. Specialist Accommodation Lettings Officer

This area of work is too much work load for 1 person.

The complex cases that are coming through require time and attention and a single point of contact. The assessments are complex and require a very special skill set to have sensitive conversations.

This post is far more than just a letting co-ordinator, it requires the specialist skills to complete the complex assessments and liaise with families and professionals which can sometimes be more challenging than the client themselves.

This post would also manage the assisted bidding and co-ordinating of removals enabling the Accommodation and Complex Needs Officer to work on the pro-active elements of this role, the different projects, managing the incentive scheme once finalised, marketing and promotion of independent living schemes etc.

Ultimately we are aiming to reduce our voids and have an active waiting list (49 applicants to date) so that when a property becomes available we are working with individuals on the waiting list preparing them to move.

This is an example of how many lettings have taken place over the number of voids received each month to demonstrate the work being carried out by the post holder.

Month 2021	Lettings	Voids
November	18	6
October	9	7
September	10	6
August	9	3
July	8	10
June	10	8
May	16	7
Total	80	47

On 27 April 2021 and we had 85 voids in total. This has reduced to 42 as at 29th November 2021 due to the intense work from the post holder.

Voids will increase due to the level of complexities that are coming through as there is only 1 person working in this area. People are unlikely to move without support to do this. This will form part of the downsizing incentives scheme and is also in the Housing for Older People Strategy.

We would not be able to pro-actively contact the red flag referrals we receive from aids and adaptations – these are residents that require aids and adaptations to their current home. If we can get in there early we can talk about a possible move which would potentially save money for aids and adaptations but also release family homes back to general needs.

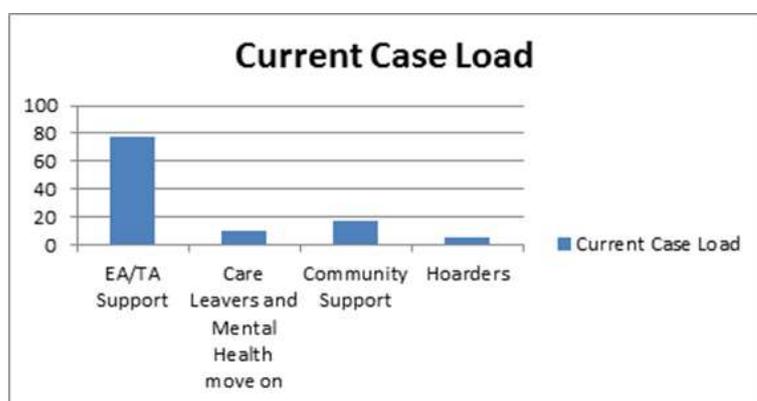
The post holder wouldn't have time to work with environmental health to support older residents that are privately renting possibly in poor housing conditions that need to move.

Without the additional role we would not be able to do the proactive work of contacting all existing council tenants over 55 and introducing them to the services and to support them to move if they wish

which could potentially release family accommodation back into general needs.

The additional role is also needed to support Independent living properties coming out of the Choice Based Lettings system.

5. Specialist Support – Homeless and communities



This on-going support case load is split between 3 Specialist Support Officers (2 permanent and 1 transitional post). The level of support required is medium to high and can change from week to week depending on the individual and their circumstances.

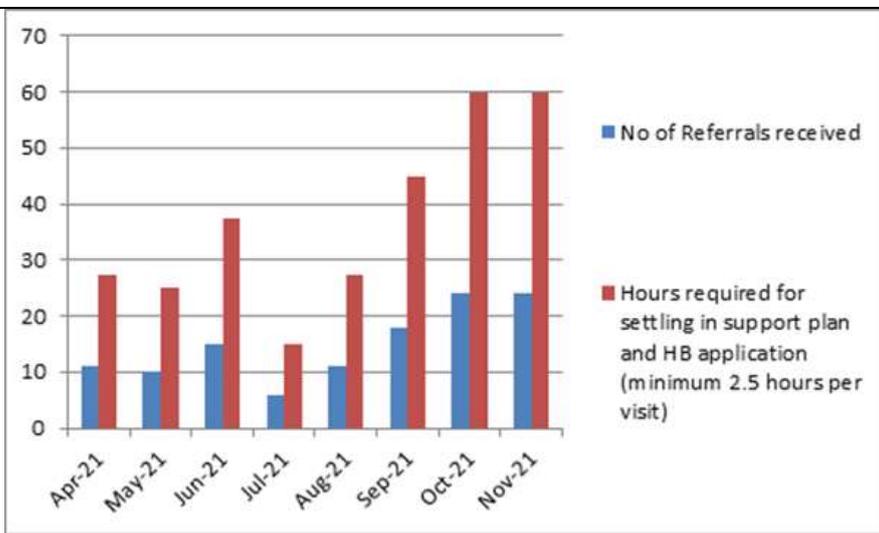
The team are predominantly supporting those in EA/TA. The graph below shows the number of referrals received and the minimum number of hours spent on their initial settling in visit to complete a support plan and housing benefit form.

In terms of unmet demand, the team have just started to take on hoarding cases which is a minimum of 6 months support and is intensive support that requires dedicated time with that individual. There are at least 30 hoarders that resident and estates team have flagged that need intensive support as well as other residents in general needs requiring extra support.

Following the pandemic, but also with the various works going on in flat blocks, it is highlighting more and more residents that need extra support to maintain their tenancy.

The team currently have a very high case load each and cannot maintain the level of demand.

The waiting list will be



so long there will be a lot of people not receiving the right support which could lead to evictions or a fire risk (hoarding).

The number of new referrals has been increasing which has led to 60 hours of the team's time being spent just on the initial visit to complete the support plan to identify support needs and housing benefit forms. This is in addition to the on-going support provided.

The team also support care leavers and mental health move ons which involves a lot of time liaising with Hertfordshire County Council and the mental health supported accommodation provider and then supporting once the person moves in.

The 3rd post is needed permanently to ensure we are able to deliver the intensive support to as many tenants/EA/TA people as is needed acknowledging that there will be a waiting list due to the demand on this area of work.

6. Housing Officers

Housing Officers are dealing with an increased case load of complex cases each week that usually involve other agencies or teams. They are spending at least 70% of their time on casework which includes work such as progressing changes of tenancy, successions, terminations etc.

Right to buy applications are delayed and miss the statutory deadlines.

The time needed on these cases take away the officer's time on other areas of work such as Right to Buys, tenancy audits and flat block inspections as they cannot achieve the numbers needed each month.

Increased backlog of flat block inspections. Health and safety risk.

For Right to Buys there is roughly 10 new applications received each month each requiring at least 6 hours – processing the application; interviewing tenants; reviewing the document; auditing the property; liaising with legal. It needs dedicated resource to carry out these functions as we have a statutory timeframe to work in.

Increased backlog of tenancy audits

There is a high level of hoarding cases (around 50 that we are aware of) ranging from low level to severe which require a significant amount of officer time weekly/biweekly. The more severe cases need to be referred to Specialist Support but they do not have the capacity at present to take these

Tenants could lose their tenancies if they do not have the support.

Complaints increase.

<p>on.</p> <p>Tenancy audit KPIs at full capacity would be 10 accessed visits per months – this is aside from tenancy auditing properties with ongoing change of tenancy applications etc. At the moment, there is not capacity and on average 2/3 are being carried out per month.</p>	<p>Staff leave due to increased workload.</p>
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