

Performance Report
as at 31st October 2014

Benefit news

ARP participated in a quarterly IRRV Forum held to discuss benefit changes and to share good practice. Current issues including Welfare Reform and DHPs were discussed. ARP continues to work with customers affected by Welfare Reform as well as partner stakeholders, to identify and assist customers with DHPs; we are on profile to spend our budget allocations, indeed our current spend is greater than this time a year ago.

On 6 August and 6 October ARP hosted further liaison meetings with Housing Associations; this forum provides opportunities to understand impacts for shared customers to enable delivery of the best possible service.

In September ARP attended a quarterly DWP Benefit forum; this forum includes various departments within DWP and other stakeholders and Agencies. This is a useful forum where the DWP explain their working practices and also a chance for stakeholders to discuss any issues. This meeting is held in all the ARP areas and we take it in turns by Authority to attend. The next forum is scheduled for December.

Further meetings have been held with Jobcentre Plus, now they are located in the Mildenhall office. This initiative is working extremely well and has proved a great opportunity to work closer together. We continue to discuss ways to make this a seamless service for customers to receive Benefits and to secure employment, and are continuing job shadowing to help each other understand processes to streamline our services. From September, CAB have been located in the Mildenhall office, providing increased opportunity for good customer service, including debt advice.

Ongoing meetings have been held with the Financial Inclusion team within Suffolk County Council, where for example, supported accommodation and the claim process for DHPs, especially for vulnerable persons, was discussed.

On 11 September ARP attended a SNAP (Support and Needs Project) meeting comprising various voluntary and charitable groups.

On 6 October ARP attended the annual IRRV to hear various Government and national speakers on current and planned matters affecting the future delivery of Revenues and Benefits.

On the 9 October the ARP hosted a further liaison meeting with stakeholder groups including for example, CAB, YMCA and various customer representative groups.

ARP has meetings scheduled with local DWP Jobcentre management to discuss the roll out of Universal Credit and its impacts for our customers.

Benefits performance has been affected by vacancies which had to be retained during the staff restructure and also by Benefits Subsidy work with External Audit. Both these projects have been completed with corresponding improvement in the work position which will ensure targets are met.

Council Tax News

The first round of Empty Property reviews with the Housing Teams has resulted in an increase in work load which has had an impact on the process levels. We have had a large response to the information issued to the public and by making this a rolling review future activities will not have the adverse impact on processing that we have experienced this time.

The further recovery team has already collected £85,347.74 against further recovery actions since 1st April, which includes 7.59% (£21,763.86 as at 11.08.14) of the cases raised in 2014/15.

The Council Tax team have identified all processes for alignment across the extended partnership and work is due to commence during September on the process review.

National Fraud Initiative - Single Person Discount (SPD) review has been completed for the five ARP Authorities.

The impact of moving to 12 instalments is being reviewed to assess the impact on collection profiles across the ARP West.

NDR News

Following the completed investigations into the first set of potential new businesses data provided from our data analysis programme. No significant findings have come from the investigation – indicates our system was already up to date.

We continue to work with VOA to get remaining ATM'S into rating.

We shall review criteria for discretionary rate relief to harmonise across the wider partnership.

HBOP News

Having made real progress on the collection of overpayments with two additional members of staff, the Operational Improvement Board have agree to extend the 2 temporary contracts.

The new processes designed by the team have helped the team maintain collection levels however; the identification of cases suitable for each recovery option will pick up pace again and we will be able to maintain collection and be ready for the additional cases expected from the HMRC data matching exercise.

Projects

The significant project migrating the Revenues and Benefits Fenland Data hosted by West Suffolk IT was successfully undertaken during the weekend of 31st October. This work included the Core revenues and Benefits System (Capita) and the imaging data (Information@work) and followed an extensive period of testing by IT staff, Systems Admin staff and assessment staff. This has now enabled access for staff to work from any of the Anglia Revenue Partnership sites.

The printing and mailing contract awarded to Document Outsourcing Ltd (DOL) is now dealing with all the daily batch output from Revenues and Benefits by all the partner authorities, with the exception of Fenland. Following migration of the Fenland data, the daily batch output is now being set up with DOL.

The result is improved value for money on all mailing and includes the merging of Benefits Letters with Council Tax Bills to go out under one cover, on a daily basis.

Work on the redesign of letters for Council Tax and Benefits is continuing and is linked to the printing and mailing contract. The systems Administration team are using Pro-Print software to redesign the look and feel of our letters and bills, with an added benefit of complete control of content and design in house.

Learning and support

All managers have received one-to-one training and with the completion of the re-structure any outstanding one-to-ones will be completed during September. Appraisals will be completed by the end of November.

Six members of staff have now signed for the Level 3 IRRV professional qualification across the partnership, with a two year examination based distance learning course. The staff will be supported by the Anglia Revenues Partnership Training officers during this time.

Customer Survey

There were 410 total responses, of which 223, or 54.39%, state they have contacted us within the last 6 months at the time of completing the survey.

- 63.58% of contact has been in respect of Council Tax enquiries
- 57.31% of customers used email or online forms to contact us
- 70.34% of the people surveyed felt that the information given by a member of staff was clear or very clear.
- 49.33% of the people who contacted us online found the process straightforward or easy
- 73.38% of those completing the survey said that they would be most likely to contact us using email or online forms in the future
- 55.13% of customers

In summary the survey is providing valuable information concerning how we can improve customers' experience when they engage with the Revenues and Benefits Services.

Continuing to record data for a period of time we enable us to monitor customer satisfaction and ease of access to services.