

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

Councillor Mary Jones
City & County of Swansea

Please ask for:
Gofynnwch am:

Councillor June Burtonshaw /
Councillor Mark Child

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Our Ref / Ein Cyf:

JEB/MC/VHD

Your Ref / Eich Cyf:

Date / Dyddiad:

3rd September 2014

If you require this or any other information in another format e.g. Braille, audio tape or a different language, please contact me

Dear Councillor Jones

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND FINANCE SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL – 17TH July 2014

Thank you for your letter dated 6th August 2014 regarding the above.

We set out below detail as requested in relation to your specific information requests:

F1 – *How much money has been provided to the Local authority through commuted sums and what use has been made of this ?* - The total receipt to date of Commuted Sum is £1,805.096; this is being used to support a range of new affordable housing developments in the City and County built via local RSLs

F1 – *At what stage is an affordable housing unit included in the figures ?* - An affordable housing unit is included in the figures once the property is completed.

E1 – *What percentage of staff have received welfare rights/benefits training across Social services and Housing and is there an ongoing training programme ?* -The figure referred to in the Improvement Plan provides the total number of people trained and this figure also includes those working in partner agencies.

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The % breakdown of those receiving benefit specific training is as follows:

Service Area	% of staff who have received training
Social Services	26.8%
Housing	12.3%
Community Regeneration	9.3%
Culture & Tourism	2.3%
Education	8.3%
Other Departments	0.42%

An annual training programme outlining all Welfare Rights/benefits courses is circulated around the Authority and to partner agencies by the Welfare Rights Unit and is available on the intranet;

Available places on courses are advertised; as are any additional courses / seminars that the Unit provide in addition to the annual training programme.

F3 – Has the council made use of the DWP fund for Discretionary Housing Payments to assist Council tenants who are in arrears due to Housing Benefit Changes, if so how many have been helped and what amount of funding has been accessed ? The Housing Service is proactive promoting the use of DHP's for tenants affected by housing benefit changes, many of whom are experiencing increasing rent arrears. Rents Officers have a specific role in identifying tenants who may be eligible for DHP funding and assisting them in accessing the fund. In addition a dedicated Financial Inclusion Officer in the Rents Team works with tenants who have more complex financial difficulties, giving money advice which includes assistance in accessing DHP funding. In the 2013/14 financial year, the Council received £474,871 from the DWP and an additional £100,320 from the Welsh Government, a total of £575,191, for DHP funding. Of this funding £338,020.46 was paid to Council tenants who were claiming housing benefit and considered to be in financial hardship. This includes those affected by the recent changes in relation to housing benefit.

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F3 – Has the Council made use of its power to request that Housing Benefit is paid directly to it as a landlord in cases where tenants have gone into arrears and been unable to manage their finances ?, if so in how many cases has this occurred ? At present in relation to Council tenancies housing benefit is paid directly to tenants rent accounts. Looking ahead to the full implementation of Universal Credit, this will in all probability result in tenants (of working age) having their housing benefit paid directly to them. When this happens the Council will, when appropriate, request direct payments. In line with existing DWP regulations this will apply to tenants who are 8 weeks or more in arrears or if a tenant is considered to be vulnerable.

I trust that this response provides the information that you requested, but if you require any further detail, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR JUNE BURTONSHAW
CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE**



**COUCILLOR MARK CHILD
CABINET MEMBER FOR WELLBEING**

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**COUNCILLOR/Y CYNGHORYDD
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