



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council

[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

## **Benefit Take Up Strategy**

### **Revenues and Benefits Section**

#### **Financial Services**



**February 2007**

## **Benefit Take Up Strategy**

### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 Bromsgrove District Council's Benefit Take Up Strategy demonstrates the Council's commitment to improve customer service and reputation of the Council by ensuring;

- Income is maximised for all residents within the District which benefits the local economy
- Entitlement is correctly assessed based on information provided by the customer
- Working in partnership with other organisations enables customers to access all welfare benefits and to provide information for their claims in an efficient way
- The Council pays the right amount of benefit to the right people at the right time
- Residents entitled to benefit can look to improve their quality of life with access to the financial resources available to them
- Information to be available in formats that are accessible to all sections of the community

1.2 In addition the strategy is key to delivery of a high performing benefits service and to improve customer satisfaction.

### **2.0 Reasons for having a take up strategy**

2.1 The reasons for developing this strategy are

- To meet the Council's priorities of customer satisfaction, performance improvement and a sense of well being.
- Encouraging take up potentially improves the quality of life for those customers who are eligible
- Increasing the income of customers has a direct impact on spending in the community
- Residents who are entitled have full access to all benefits available to them
- Improved welfare benefit take up provides extra assistance to some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

2.2 Take up of benefit is a key government objective for tackling poverty and the effects of poverty eg Health and Social Service issues

2.3 Maximising take up improves the ability of:

- tenants to pay rent
- owner occupiers to meet housing costs
- tax payers to meet their liability
- all to reduce debt levels generally

### **3.0 Why people do not apply for benefits**

3.1 Recent research shows the reasons for not claiming benefit as complex and include pride and stigma, but there are other reasons:

- Lack of awareness despite the information and encouragement to claim
- Poor perception of the gains in money terms that claiming can make
- Difficulties or perceived difficulties in claiming benefits, makes people reluctant to claim.
- Lack of information in formats accessible to all sections of the community

3.2 A personal approach to claiming welfare benefit is the most satisfactory and where possible if claiming more than one benefit can be linked ie the different agencies can work on behalf of one another the more likely people are to claim all that they are entitled to.

3.3 Age Concern stress the need for assisting pensioners with claims, preferably with home visits as they are generally confused with the provision of welfare benefits.

3.4 In 2003 there were 11.2 million pensioners resident in the UK with 2 million living below the poverty line. One third of pensioners do not claim basic welfare benefits which includes Housing and Council Tax benefit.

3.5 Bromsgrove District Council has made a positive commitment to encouraging and helping people to claim benefit by:

- Appointing a welfare benefits officer who visits claimants to explain claims and collect information.
- Partnering with other organisations such as Pensions Service and Social Services – third age project
- Arrangements with Housing Associations to collect benefit information
- Home visits
- Talks and presentations
- Advertising
- Questionnaires and consultation
- Publicity material
- Annual take up leaflets for Council Tax Benefit
- Interpreting and translating information

### **4.0 Targeting Take Up**

4.1 In the Government's document 'Tackling Social Exclusion' target groups were defined as:

- Pensioners
- Minority ethnic Groups
- Disabled people and disabled people with high dependency needs
- Lone Parents
- In Work/Low Income Claimants

- Claimants in Hospitals

4.2 A range of approaches is needed to target these groups and we aim to provide general advice on the take up of the following benefits:

- Attendance Allowance
- Carers Allowance
- Child Tax Credits
- Council Tax Benefit
- Council Tax discounts/disregards
- Council Tax disability relief
- Disability Living Allowance (for both adults and children)
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Extended Payments for Council Tax and Housing Benefit
- Guardians Allowance
- Housing and Council Tax Benefit
- Income Support
- Job Seekers Allowance
- Pension Credits
- Second Adult Rebates
- Working Tax Credits

## **5.0 The way forward**

5.1 The approach to take up will depend on the target group. Some may be specific activities such as attending pensioner groups or clubs or events etc. We have identified a number of information sources that are to be used

5.2 We will ensure that we provide clear, accessible and up to date information in formats suited to our target groups. We will seek to ensure that this information to will be made available in formats that accessible to all sections of the community.

5.3 These information sources are:

- Leaflets
- Posters
- Website, including a benefit calculator and guidance on other benefits
- Targeted mail shots to specific groups
- Newsletters
- Landlord Forums
- Council Magazine

## **6.0 Monitoring Effectiveness**

- 6.1 Where it is possible to identify take up as a result of a particular campaign we will estimate the value of additional benefit claimed. This will usually be as a result of targeting a particular group of people.