

Money Advice Policy

1. Introduction

Bolton at Home's Money Advice service has been set up to support customers experiencing financial difficulties. Bolton at Home acknowledges the impact of ongoing welfare reforms and increasing financial constraints on low income families and households. The service aims to support customers in overcoming these.

2. Purpose

Our aim is to maximise a household's income by providing advice and assistance on housing and welfare benefits, whilst supporting with debt management. This will enable customers to manage their finances and reduce their debt therefore enabling customers to stay in their homes, and have a positive impact on their wellbeing.

Our free and confidential service is available to all customers of Bolton at Home and members of their household who may be experiencing financial difficulty.

3. Scope

The policy applies to all Bolton at Home customers who require debt and money advice. Customers are offered this service giving them the opportunity to successfully manage their tenancies and become financially sustainable.

Customers already getting assistance from another agency will not be excluded from the service but as it is not good practice to advise at the same time, customers will need to decide whether to accept Bolton at Home's service or remain with their current advisor.

4. Policy

The service is set up to:

- Provide money advice to customers assisting them in the management of their tenancies.
- Maximise customer income (e.g. through welfare benefits or debt reduction/write offs)
- Support customers with reducing rent arrears and other liabilities owed by the customer.
- Reduce court actions due to rent arrears and other liabilities.
- Reduce tenancy failure.
- Help reduce homelessness.
- Create financial sustainability.

As well as adhering to Bolton at Homes general service standards, the Money Advice team will support with:

- Arrange a home visit to customers where necessary
- All customers will receive an allocated Money Advice Officer
- Money Advisors will contact creditors to offer payments based on available income. They will also request any interest or charges are frozen until a payment schedule can be ascertained

- Advise and support with entitlement to Welfare and Housing Benefits
- Help customers to complete Housing Benefit claim forms
- The officer will advise customers of suitable strategies to resolve debt problems and prepare a plan of action for customers on matters relating to money/and or debt
- Provide details of other agencies that can help, such as Aperture
- Signpost and link customers into other relevant services

All of the above is provided with the customers permission

5. Equality analysis

Equality analysis completed on 31st January 2019.

6. Responsibility

The Money Advice Manager will ensure this policy is appropriately and fairly applied, with staff having individual and collective responsibility to implement the policy.

Financial Services and Markets Act (FSMA) 2000 ensures that all financial activities have to be regulated by the FCA. Bolton at Home currently have an approved license with the FCA.

7. Consultation

Consultation was carried out with a sample of customers who have accessed the service. Feedback received was extremely positive however a small number of responses identified that some customers didn't achieve a reduction in their rent arrears. This has been picked up as a process improvement within the service, ensuring more support is provided around rent arrears and other priority debts.

8. GDPR

In line with Bolton At Home's regulations, all internal processing of personal data, and external / Third Party Data Sharing agreements, are compliant with the requirements of the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. This is assured by means of regular mandatory training for all staff, and relevant clauses in any contract specification.

9. BH related policies

Allocations
Revenue Services
Complaints
Information governance

10. Monitoring, review and evaluation

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

Date approved	26 February 2019
----------------------	------------------