

# Housing and Worklessness Project

## Quarterly update January to March 2017

Welcome to the latest update on the work of the Royal Borough's Housing and Worklessness Project.

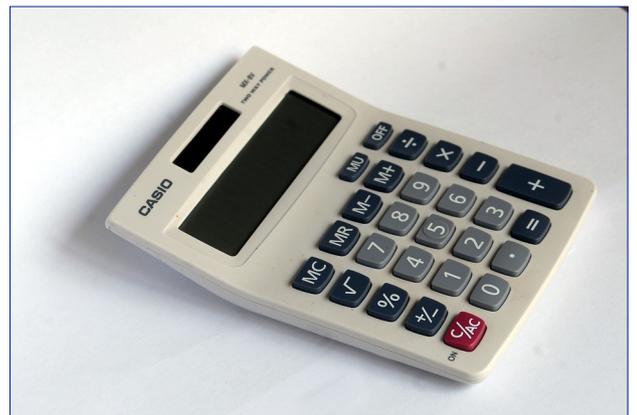
### Residents seek help to mitigate effects of the Benefits Cap

The Housing and Worklessness Project has been a point of call for residents, across all tenures, hit by the lower benefit cap implemented from November 2016 in Kensington and Chelsea. Residents have contacted us directly and been referred to us by their landlords and other organisations. We can provide advice and support to help them to understand the impacts of the Benefit Cap, and what options they have to become exempt.

One Viridian tenant, 63 year old Peter, got in touch in August 2016 after receiving a letter from the Royal Borough's housing benefit department. Peter, a single man with no family nearby, was on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in the Support Group at the beginning of the year and was moved to the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG). He has multiple medical issues, regularly has to attend hospital appointments, and was waiting to have surgery.

Peter was potentially facing a cap from December and was very distressed at the thought of having to find the money to cover the shortfall.

Based on Peter's health conditions, we suggested an appeal against the decision of being placed in the ESA WRAG. However, in the long term it would be better for Peter to apply for Pension Credit. This would mean that he does not have to attend the required Work Capability Assessments to maintain his eligibility to be placed in the ESA Support Group. Peter was happy with this course of action, as he worried about how he would attend the assessments. The last one was in Bromley, which was difficult for him to get to.



As Peter is an EEA national, he had to provide details and dates of his work history and where he lived in the UK from his arrival in 1982. He also had to provide proof of his qualifying pension years to apply for Pension Credit as part of the habitual residency assessment. Peter found it difficult to recall or provide any evidence, which posed another obstacle. Project staff contacted the HMRC and Pension Service who were able to provide the necessary information and this was sent off to complete Peter's application for Pension Credit.

When Peter was hit by the Benefit Cap in December, we helped him to secure a Discretionary Housing Payment as we awaited the decision on his Pension Credit application. In January 2017, Peter was awarded Pension Credit. We were able to arrange the start date so that there would be no gap in his usual fortnightly payment. Peter was delighted at the result and said:

"Thank you for your help, I had no idea what to do and so glad I don't have to worry about the Benefit Cap".



## 140 residents attend KCTMO Live Roadshow in Chelsea

On Saturday 18 March, the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation held its final TMO Live Road Show of the 2016-17 series at the Flashpoint Playground on World's End Estate.

The event was very successful with 140 residents and children in attendance. Feedback from the Royal Borough's Mayor Cllr Mrs Elizabeth Rutherford, KCTMO board members, residents and staff has been very positive.

KCTMO departments and a range of local services were on hand to offer advice, information and support including the Royal Borough's Housing and Worklessness Project, Portobello Business Centre, Volunteer Centre K&C, Your Credit Union, Health Trainers and Principles in Finance to name a few.

The Housing and Worklessness Co-ordinator sits on the KCTMO planning committee for the road shows, and a new series is already being planned.



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## New TA Benefit Cap team get cracking

In the last newsletter, we reported on the expansion of the Housing and Worklessness Project to run a pilot project. This offers ongoing support to residents placed in temporary accommodation, both in and outside of the borough, that are impacted by the new cap.

Three employment support officers (ESOs) started work on supporting a caseload of residents placed in temporary accommodation to explore two options of Benefit Cap exemption. One is to secure work that meets Working Tax Credit rules, and the other is to secure a health related exemption benefit such as ESA Support Group, Personal Independence Payment or Carers Allowance.

The team is receiving on-going training and support to help them to provide a high quality of support to tenants. In their first quarter of working with households, they have made contact with just over 100 tenants and engaged with 71 through the initial one-to-one appointment. So far they have helped to exempt seven households from the Benefit Cap, with three going into work, another securing health related exemption benefits, and one moving to cheaper accommodation.

**For more information on the Housing and Worklessness Project, please email [Charlene.Hallal@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:Charlene.Hallal@rbkc.gov.uk)**

**Next update will be at the beginning of July 2017.**

**Check out the Royal Borough's [training, skills and jobs web pages](#)**