

## **Manna Centre: Report on Telephone & Email Activity – w/e 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

Inbound Calls (from clients)	70
Outbound calls (on behalf of clients)	59
Clients emails answered	113
Client emails inbound	145

### Brief synopsis of activity

- a) Preparing clients for appointments in centre
- b) Placement of 3 clients in accommodation
- c) Hostel referrals
- d) Advice on approaches to local authorities re: registering for social housing
- e) Arranging telephone appointments for clients with external services such as law centres
- f) Booking and maintenance of schedule
- g) Support documents for rent payments to landlord
- h) Support of council tax debt queries with local authority
- i) Grant applications for financial support for potential housing placements
- j) Negotiation of rent to maintain personal allowance

### Key Issues arising

#### The benefit cap

- a) A key issue is that we will find ourselves in discussion with landlords as to affordable rents for clients. This year has seen an increase in local housing allowances that landlords can charge. However, there has not been any increase in the benefit cap (the total amount that a benefit recipient can receive monthly), which stands at £296.35 per week for a single adult in Inner London)
- b) It has also been compounded in that the Government has given a 12 month increase to the personal level of benefit. Therefore, the rise in benefits announced for this year originally was 1.7%, which would have seen a rise from £317.82 to £323.22 a month. However, a temporary increase for a 12 month period was introduced raising the standard allowance by £20 per week to cope with the coronavirus raising the standard allowance rate for a person over 25 to £409.89 a month
- c) Landlords who are commercial businesses would expect to raise their rents in line with the increased local housing allowance rate which was brought about to assist those in rented accommodation to pursue properties that were a little more expensive
- d) The unintended consequence is that landlords have gone forward with raising rents, Universal Credit recipients have received this temporary uplift in benefit to cope with the increased costs of utilities, council tax etc). However, this has meant that people in private rented accommodation are in some cases are now being asked to pay towards their increased rent from their personal allowance which is meant to cover outgoings such as food, travel costs, utilities, contributions to council tax
- e) We have already had 2 cases and have been lucky enough to negotiate the rent down for both clients. In one case, the client's personal allowance will not be impacted at all. In another, there is still a gap which would mean the client would have to make a significant contribution – discussions there are still ongoing.

## **Housing Offers**

It also raises another issue – where local authorities have taken responsibility for re-settling clients from hotel accommodation, some of the housing offers being made do not take account of the cap and calculations do not appear to be being made as to the potential financial impact on the standard allowance

Margaret Shapland – Advice and Welfare 29/06/20