

Rightfully Yours Response

Financial Health of the Borough

Rightfully Yours provides a benefits advice and income maximisation service to Southwark's vulnerable. We offer information, advice and support to enable our customers to claim benefits for themselves and their household. We aim to ensure more benefits are paid 'right first time' and offer casework support for more complex issues.

- We provide face to face appointments at the Lister Primary Care Centre and Aylesbury Health Centre, and scheduled drop in services and appointments at Southwark One Stop Shops.
- We provide a home visit service for housebound customers
- We offer any resident assessed for or offered a Social Services care package the opportunity for a benefit/income maximisation check.
- We provide an integrated outreach advice service for people with mental health needs who are accessing a SLAM service.
- We supply advice, training and support to community groups/professionals that may have to engage with the welfare benefit system to support their clients.

In the year 2013/2014 Rightfully Yours assisted 3639 customers and raised over six million for our customers through income maximisation. 1252 had issues directly related to a disability related benefit such as Disability Living Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance or Personal Independence Payments.

Since April 14 we have received close to 1,500 referrals, and raised almost 5 million mainly through application for benefits. We have also assisted customers to access a range of other services such as disabled travel permits aids and adaptations, emergency support from SESS and discretionary housing payments.

Welfare Reform

Welfare reform issues have had a significant impact on our client group in particular.

- Delays in processing Personal Independence payments. There is an average wait of over 35 weeks for an assessment with some cases taking as long as a year.
- Delays in Employment & Support Allowance assessments including Mandatory reconsideration issues

- Increase in referrals for housing related debt and rent arrears issues.
- Benefit restrictions for persons from abroad.

There is a significant body of evidence that has established a link between poverty and health. The majority of the referrals we receive are categorised as vulnerable on the basis that they have a significant illness, long term disability or are terminally ill.

Partnership

In conjunction with the CAB and other partner agencies we have attended monthly welfare reform information and advice events across the Borough to provide welfare benefits advice. A number of our key partners are:

- Social Care departments
- Parent partnership
- Hospital Discharge team
- Housing Income

Outreach

Rightfully Yours, conducts outreach surgeries at Lister Health Centre and Aylesbury Health Centre. We have found that access to advice within GP surgeries or health centres is model beneficial to our customers.

Health professionals are frequently involved at the point where customers experience significant life changes that may affect their current income such as illness, disability or pregnancy. Early intervention can enable customers to claim appropriate benefits at the point of change.

Adequate and timely welfare benefit provision for customers with long term conditions and/or disability (both mental and physical impairment) can benefit all local parties including:

- Affected individuals and their families (e.g. increased income/reduced poverty).
- NHS services (eg reduced referrals).
- The Council (eg reduced referrals for social care support).

Closer working partnerships with health professionals and provision of advice within health care settings may increase access to services for customers who experience barriers accessing entitlement to benefits such as age, health, literacy or cognitive functions. It would also provide support to health

professionals who wish to support patients with benefit issues, particularly around provision of evidence or information relating to claims and would be likely lead to a reduction in time spent by health professionals managing welfare related issues.