



APPENDIX A

DRAFT Homeless Prevention Pot Framework

1. Background

The Council's Homeless Prevention Service works with customers who present as homeless, are homeless or are threatened with homelessness in the next 56 days. The service will work with customers to create a Personal Housing Plan (PHP), which will include actions for the customer and the authority to take to prevent the person becoming homeless.

There will be times where it is not possible to resolve homelessness without a package of tailored financial assistance.

This documents sets out the framework for this assistance, taking into account other packages of support that may be available.

2. Aims

The aim of this framework is to provide guidelines in relation to eligibility, allocation and the scheme of delegation for awarding such assistance.

Early intervention in this way should in turn prevent homelessness, increasing the tools available to support the Prevention Team. Prevention should reduce the numbers of households requiring temporary accommodation in the future.

The Council has duties and powers under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to provide advice and assistance to anyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness

3. Prevention measures

The Council aims to provide a sustainable solution to addressing the housing need. Financial assistance is one of the tools available to support this.

The prevention pot could be used to:

- Top up rents for 6 to 12 months, provide bonds/ deposits and clear rent arrears
- Cost of replacing key identity documents
- Access to training/ employment related expenditure
- Travel costs
- Repairs to property where damage has occurred

- Other payments to allow people to remain in their homes eg covering interest payments under a mortgaged property. Such payments would be considered on a case by case basis.

4. Eligibility

Where the customer is eligible or in receipt of Housing Benefits, then the customer could seek financial assistance from Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) prior to considering assistance from the prevention pot.

The Prevention pot will apply where the customer is not eligible for DHP, or the nature of expenditure falls outside of this funding stream. Further details on DHP can be found at: <http://www.coventry.gov.uk/dhp>. It is not possible for a customer to apply for funding under this framework directly, the Prevention Officer would determine if it was appropriate for a recommendation of support under this framework to be considered.

- The household must have a personal housing plan in place where they are actively working with the authority to implement the actions that have been agreed.
- The household must have a local connection to Coventry within the definition of Part 7 of the Housing Act and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- The household must meet the criteria for a priority need within the definition of Part 7 of the Housing Act
- Where there is no other source of funding reasonably available.

5. Funds

The Prevention Pot is a limited funding allocation. Availability of funding is dependent on the budget allocation. The Head of Customer Services in conjunction with the Director for Customer Services and Transformation may withdraw or temporarily suspend the scheme without notice.

Financial assistance will be paid directly to landlords, letting agents and other partners as appropriate depending on the nature of assistance. The Prevention Officer will arrange for the expenditure required to be paid by BACS where possible, with cash only being paid out as a last resort.

6. Approval Procedure

This procedure applies if an offer of assistance is deemed as required following an interview with the Prevention Service or Housing Options Team.

- a) An income and expenditure form (Appendix A) needs to be completed to determine the financial shortfall and possible assistance required and if required, how repayments will be made for certain payments eg deposits/ bonds etc . The Prevention Officer is responsible for undertaking any due diligence required and for obtaining any evidence to confirm the customer's situation, including but not limited to information to support their income and expenditure position, bills, previous address history for five years.
- b) Decisions will be made collectively by the Senior Housing Officer, Operations Manager and Head of customer Services. Once agreed an authorisation form is completed with details of the nature of the assistance required, other actions to be agreed with the customer to ensure they are able to sustain their tenancy (Appendix B). The form should be signed in line with the delegations below.

- c) Evidence may be required to support where payments have been made by BACS that they have been received and used for the purposes they were intended for.

Table 1: Scheme of delegation to approve assistance from the Prevention Pot

Total assistance requested			
Amount	Up to £500	>£500 <£1000	>£1000
Approval	Team Manager for Prevention Team or Housing Options	Operations Manager (Customer Services)	Head of Customer Services

- d) Payments will be paid via BACs where possible. If this is not possible cash alternatives will be paid. Cash payments will not be made to customers.
- e) The award of assistance is at the sole discretion of officers in line with this framework. As payments are made based on the recommendations of the Prevention Officers and not directly by the customer, there is no right to appeal the decision.
- f) It is not possible for customers to make a direct application for the Prevention Pot. An application is only possible on referral by the Prevention Officer.
- g) The council can recover any overpayments made.

The Council is committed to the prevention and detection of fraud and the protection of public funds. Cases of suspected fraud will be investigated and this may result in criminal proceedings being instigated.

Monthly monitoring will take place on the resources awarded, with quarterly reporting to the Strategic Housing Board and Cabinet Member for Community Development to determine the impact of the scheme.