

Peter Turner  
Director of Finance  
London Borough of Bromley  
Civic Centre  
Stockwell Close  
Bromley  
BR1 3UH

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> July 2012

Our Ref: AIF/GT

Dear Peter,

As we approach the July Executive & Resources PDS meeting where we consider and review the performance of the Benefits service, we take this opportunity to write to you with Liberata's assessment of the performance of this critical high profile service that we provide to London Borough of Bromley (LBB) and its citizens.

This summary covers performance for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012.

## **1. Current Status of the Benefits Service**

The Benefits caseload, which measures all households receiving Housing and/or Council Tax Benefit at the end of March 2012 was 23,657. This equates to a 1.25% increase in the previous rolling year. There continues to be a sustained increase in the volume of incoming documents and associated claims primarily due to the economic climate and the introduction of Atlas.

### **1.1 Claims and Work Outstanding**

I am happy to confirm that the volume of outstanding work has now stabilised and are below agreed targets.

As at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012, 2878 documents were awaiting review and possible action and a further 1,420 items were pended awaiting information from the claimant and/or third-party.

## **1.2 Right Time Indicator**

In terms of our current position for the nationally recognised Right Time Indicator, we are pleased to confirm that we achieved our target of 13.00 days for 2011/2012, with annual performance being recorded as 12.68 days.

## **1.3 Quality**

In terms of the accuracy of processing we are happy to confirm that we have maintained our consistent performance in this high profile area and March's figure of 4.20% confirms that we have been within the monthly target figure of 5% through out the year.

We firmly believe the improvement in this area has been a direct result of Liberata's investment in its employees, including the continuation of training and mentoring and the close partnership working with the Client Monitoring Team.

## **1.4 Overpayment Strategy**

The creation of overpayments is a natural by product of the administration of Housing & Council Tax Benefit, however, in the current climate with increased caseloads and volumes of work this has become an ever increasing challenge.

Whilst we acknowledge these challenges we are also aware that overpayments have a detrimental effect on some of our most vulnerable citizens, therefore, we strive to minimise the creation of unnecessary overpayments, and the associated required recovery of these with the introduction of ongoing initiatives and enhancements. On a daily basis we monitor the overpayments created to ensure that we have considered all alternatives prior to their creation.

New initiatives have significantly contributed to the increased underlying trend of 83.03% for the 2011/12 financial year. This exceeds the agreed target of 81%. Blameless Tenants Recovery, which permits the authority to recover outstanding housing benefit overpayments from another of that landlords tenants housing benefit award, commenced from September 2011. The Landlord is then responsible for crediting the Blameless Tenants rent account to prevent arrears arising. This has played a major role in ensuring that we have effectively secured the debt for recovery. In addition to this, a partnership has been formed between Liberata and a solicitors firm that specialises in debt recovery and they have already secured the granting of 12 County Court Judgements out of the 15 submitted to the Court for the 2011/12 financial year.

## **2. Call Centre & Customer Services**

The number of customers seen in customer services totalled 46,789 for the financial year 2011/12. Performance in this area remains excellent with a figure of 95% of customers seen within 15 minutes against a target of 85%.

During the financial year the Call Centre (Help Line) received 206,387 calls with 97.2% of calls answered. Callers have had an average queue time of 0.11 seconds before being answered by an officer.

### **3. Service Developments**

Liberata's goal is to continue to improve and enhance the services provided to LBB and its citizens through the introduction of innovative and effective solutions.

Examples of current year initiatives;

- Continuation of Blameless Tenant recovery for Overpayments.
- Using the County Court to secure CCJ's on debtors to allow further recovery actions to commence
- Using an independent solicitor's firm to aid our recovery of overpayments
- Increasing the resource on the Overpayments Team to increase our recovery potential
- Investment of continued training to our existing Overpayment Team for effective recovery techniques

### **4. Investment in the community**

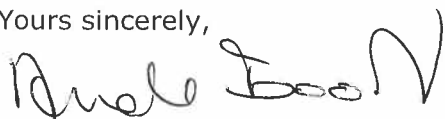
Liberata is keen to play an active and constructive part in the Bromley community. We have been working in collaboration with the London Borough of Bromley on events including:

- In December 2011 we worked with the United Reformed Church, to provide Christmas presents to approx 180 people who attended the lunch held at the church on Christmas day. The organisers were grateful for the co-operation, support and gifts at what can be a difficult time of the year for the vulnerable people in the community

In summary, Liberata is extremely pleased to report that despite the recent downturn in the economy we have continued to improve performance in this financial year.

Liberata remains firmly committed to delivering an outstanding service to the London Borough of Bromley and its citizens.

Yours sincerely,



Amanda Inwood-Field  
Contract Director