

HOW DO I HELP TENANTS INTO WORK?

A key aim of welfare reform is to make sure that no one is better off on benefits than they would be if they worked. Measures like the bedroom tax, the benefit cap, localised council tax benefit and below-inflation benefit rate increases are designed to 'incentivise' people to find work, additional hours, or better paid work. This is also supported by the move to universal credit, under which claimants benefits will be withdrawn at a slower rate as their income from employment increases, compared to the previous system.

All of this means that working-age benefit claimants are now experiencing serious financial hardship, particularly as most are affected by several of these measures. With around a third of workless households living in social rented homes, landlords can lead the way in helping them into training and paid employment.

While welfare reform may have provided an added driver, as we will see in the examples below, many landlords have already recognised that, by investing time and resources in this area of activity, they enhance not only the quality of life of individuals but also the sustainability of the communities they live in.

WE CAN WORK IT OUT – HINTS AND TIPS

- It's important not to judge – people will be out of work for a wide range of reasons and it's extremely rare that they will have chosen this
- People are starting from different places – some may never have worked before, while others will have – so you will need to tailor your approach
- Aim to build confidence – recognise that becoming unemployed is a real blow to self-esteem and people who have never worked will feel that they having nothing of value to offer
- Be patient – for some people, becoming job ready will be a long process and, for others, it may just not be a realistic aim
- Help people to recognise the range of skills and experience they have to offer, whether it's been gained through paid or unpaid work, for example, resident involvement activities, and hobbies
- Talk positively to people about finding work – some landlords now cover this as part of their pre-tenancy activities with prospective tenants
- Give people a feel for what a day at work is like – some may never have experienced this
- Recognise that there are costs involved in going out to work – talk to people about expenses such as travel, lunches, child care, and clothing as well as rent and council tax so that they can work out a realistic budget
- If your organisation doesn't provide any employment support itself, find out what's available locally and what the referral arrangements are so that you can sign-post your customers to those services.

IDEAS INTO PRACTICE

- **Connect Housing's** £s Positive service works with customers to make sure that they are on a good financial footing as part of becoming 'job ready'.

IDEAS INTO PRACTICE

- **Kettering Borough Council's** LifePlan service takes a holistic, client-centred approach to helping vulnerable people into employment, training and volunteering opportunities. The LifePlan Advisor works with clients to identify their skills, build their confidence and motivate them to make positive changes to their lives
- **Nottingham City Homes** launched a Tenant Academy in February 2013. Over 70 people completed sessions in the first six months on employability skills, confidence building, apprenticeships, volunteering, food safety and other relevant skills with a number of tenants also joining their new customer panels. Partnership working has been key to the success of the Tenant Academy
- **Eastlands Homes'** employment support officer works alongside the financial inclusion team, making referrals easy. Support offered includes one to one sessions to develop CVs, advice on preparing for interviews and guidance/help with job applications
- **Wolverhampton Homes'** Learning, Employment and Achievement Programme (LEAP) is targeted at unemployed tenants, leaseholders and their immediate family members. It includes:
 - pre-employment skills training - including confidence building, introduction to the internet and email, CV writing, interview skills and basic literacy and numeracy qualifications
 - an eight week work experience programme – participants continue to receive benefits plus travel expenses and personal protective equipment

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU

CIH has produced a range of useful resources on welfare reform exclusively for CIH members including:

Briefings

- [What you need to know about welfare reform](#), and a range of further '[what you need to know about](#)' briefings on specific aspects of the changes, such as the bedroom tax, the overall benefit cap and the uprating of benefits.
- [Welfare reform: Practical approaches](#)
- [How do I...tell tenants about welfare reform?](#)
- [How do I...make sure tenants pay their rent?](#)
- [How do I...help tenants move to another home?](#)

Webinars

Watch recordings of our recent webinars online, including:

- [Understanding the latest changes to housing and council tax benefit](#)
- [Practical responses to welfare reform](#)

For the full range of resources that are available visit www.cih.org/welfarereform