

LA LOGO HERE

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT 2006/2007

BETWEEN

THE VALUATION OFFICE AGENCY

AND

**.....HOUSING BENEFIT
DEPARTMENT**

LA LOGO HERE

Housing Benefit

Model National Service Level Agreement between Local Authority Housing Benefit departments and The VOA 2006-07

PURPOSE

This model national Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been drawn up in accordance with the DWP National framework agreement. It has the approval of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Its purpose is to provide a framework for good working arrangements between local housing benefit (HB) departments and the VOA.

The primary aim of the SLA is to ensure Housing Benefit claimants are receiving efficient and cost effective services with as little delay as possible. The SLA is also designed to improve communications and contact between both sides through liaison meetings, open days, training and exchange programmes.

The agreements will be displayed prominently in both offices, so all staff are aware of the service they are expected to provide and what is expected of them.

To supplement this agreement the VOA publishes a Good Practice Guide which contains a detailed explanation of how rent officers make determinations within the statutory framework of their Order. This guide also provides details as to how the relationship between local authorities and local valuation teams should work.

THE VALUATION OFFICE AGENCY WILL

HB Determinations (without inspection):

- Determine 94% of Housing Benefit cases (without inspection) within 3 working days of receipt
- Determine 95% of Housing Benefit cases (without inspection) within 5 working days of receipt

HB Determinations (with inspection):

- Determine 94% of Housing Benefit cases (with inspection) within 15 working days of receipt
- Determine 95% of Housing Benefit cases (with inspection) within 25 working days of receipt

Pre Tenancy Determinations:

- Determine 94% of PTD cases within 4 working days of receipt
- Determine 95% of PTD cases within 5 working days of receipt

Redeterminations:

- Determine 94% of Redetermination cases within 15 working days of receipt
- Determine 95% of Redetermination cases within 20 working days of receipt

Identifying reference number:

Determinations by the VOA will show the local authority's reference number but will not identify the claimant by name.

Potentially violent people

In line with DWP guidance, the VOA will give the authority details of Housing Benefit claimants or other relevant members of the public whom it considers to be "potentially violent" or to be a risk to its staff.

Liaison Contact:

_____ will be available on tel: _____ between the hours of _____ and _____ Monday to Friday, to deal with specific queries. *

Liaison Meetings:

Hold, a minimum of, quarterly meetings to review the performance of the agreement, to involve appropriate staff at all levels

Monitor Performance:

At quarterly meetings, monitor the performance of the VOA and the HB office, and discuss the quality of service each provides.

Errors in rent officer determinations:

Provide automatic substitute determinations in cases where a rent officer determination contains an error which relates to inaccurate property-related information being provided on the referral.*

Complaints:

Within 5 working days reply to any complaints from claimants or others about the VOA which have been passed on by the HB office.

Create Awareness:

Through staff exchange programmes and open days create opportunities for staff to meet and get a greater understanding of each other's roles.

LA LOGO HERE

HOUSING BENEFIT DEPARTMENTS WILL

The following percentages and figures are produced as a guide. the VOA does not monitor the figures and therefore cannot produce performance statistics for these suggested figures. They are published as a guide and as a recommendation that both the local authority and the local VOA office can adhere to. The figures provide a base to show that both LA and the VOA are providing a best value service to their customers and that the HB claim process is working as efficiently as possible.

HB Referrals:

- Refer ___% of cases within 3 working days of receipt
- Refer ___% of cases within 5 working days of receipt

Pre-Tenancy Determinations:

- Refer ___% of pre-tenancy determinations within 1 working day of receipt

Redeterminations:

- Refer ___% of redeterminations within ___ working days of receiving the request
- Refer ___% of redeterminations within ___ working days of receiving the request

Identifying Reference Number:

Provide a unique, identifying reference number for all referrals (including PTDs).

Potentially violent people

The authority will provide the relevant information to the VOA about "potentially violent people" (PVPs) that they identify and whom the VOA staff are likely to come into contact with.

Claimant's National Insurance Number:

Endeavour to provide the claimant's National Insurance Number in all cases*.

Claimant's telephone number:

Endeavour to provide the claimant's telephone number in cases where it is known, to enable the VOA to resolve minor queries and make appointments to inspect.

Landlord's name and address:

Endeavour to provide the landlord's name and address in all cases.

Errors in rent officer determinations/redeterminations:

Accept automatic provision of substitute determinations in cases where a rent officer determination contains an error which relates to inaccurate property-related information being provided on the referral. *

Complaints:

Within 2 working days pass on any complaints about the VOA (apart from redetermination requests) to the VOA for a reply.

Liaison Contact:

- _____ will be available on tel: _____, between the hours of _____ and _____ Monday to Friday to answer your questions. *

Liaison Meetings:

- Hold quarterly meetings to review the performance of the agreement and to involve appropriate staff at all levels

Create Awareness:

Through staff exchange programmes create opportunities for staff to meet and get a greater understanding of each other's roles.

Joint Signatories to the agreement:

**Valuation Office Agency
Valuation Team Manager**

Housing Benefit Manager

**Valuation Office Agency
Redetermination Unit Manager**

Date:

*NB: * Subject to local agreement*