



Hillcrest
Homes

Tenant Services OUR TEAMS

Tenant Services consists of the following teams:



Financial Wellbeing Team

Similar to welfare rights and available to all Hillcrest Homes tenants.



Social Wellbeing Team

Available to Hillcrest Homes tenants in Dundee and Angus and Hillcrest Enterprises tenants in any area (the HE service is a part-time pilot funded by the Hillcrest Foundation).



Hillcrest Energy Advice Team (HEAT)

Available to all Hillcrest Homes tenants.



Hillcrest Enterprises Tenant Services Officer

A blend of financial and energy advice for Hillcrest Enterprises tenants.



Helping Our People Engage (HOPE)

A Dundee city-wide service linking up services in the community.

Targets and actual outcomes

Tenant Services to achieve **£2,430,000** of financial gains in 2024/25

Tenant Services achieved **£4,757,650** of financial gains in 2024/25



Financial Wellbeing Team

Financial gains target - £1.7 million

Actual financial gains - £3,106,382.80



Hillcrest Energy Advice Team (HEAT)

Financial gains target - £530,000

Actual financial gains - £1,002,548.44



Hillcrest Enterprises Tenant Services Officer

Financial gains target - £200,000

Actual financial gains - £648,718 (broken down as)

- Energy gains - £188,873
- Financial gains - £459,845.81

Campaigns

Two large pieces of targeted work were undertaken in 2024/25 to support our most vulnerable tenants. All of our Tenant Services teams took part in this.

Pension Credit take up campaign... more than just money!

The Winter Fuel Allowance was withdrawn from many pensioners, leaving them with the possibility of a very cold Winter. We sprang into action knowing that we only had a short space of time to contact our 1,200 tenants, who were of pension age, to offer a benefit check with a view to getting as many as possible onto Pension Credit. This would allow them to then access the Winter Fuel Allowance. We were able to work additional hours to increase the capacity to deliver this by using external funding from Octopus Energy.

Here are some example of how this helped:

1. A mother and daughter were of pension age with no Pension Credit entitlement and had lived in the property since 1994. They were living very sparingly and just making do.

A heating demonstration and energy advice were given while at the visit. Warm Home Discount was applied for and a payment of £150 from the Octopus energy funding was made, giving them a total of £300 towards their fuel bills.

Repairs were arranged to fix the windows which were draughty.

Housing Benefit and Council Tax benefit claims were made and awarded, with the Housing Benefit being over £100 per week alone!

Around £8k of financial gains was made for the tenants in total, and they have advised they are more comfortable in their home and are financially more stable.

This is a great example of joint working. Without the Pension Credit calls taking place, the tenants would not have been aware they would qualify for this, they were very grateful of the help.

2. A pension age couple who had lived in Germany for years then returned to Scotland and thought they could not apply for anything as the lady had a German State Pension alongside a UK State Pension. We visited her at home and it was apparent that she was struggling with her health. We helped her apply for Attendance Allowance which she was awarded. She was awarded £72.65 per week and £475 backdated money, amounting to £4252.80 per year. This in turn enabled her for entitlement to Housing Benefit. She was awarded £2,074.80 Housing Benefit in total for the year. The case is still on-going as we have applied for underlying Carers Allowance which may entitle her to more Housing Benefit. So although she did not qualify for Pension Credit, we have been able to greatly improve her financial situation.
3. A pension age tenant with health issues was contacted and needed help from both HEAT and FWT.

HEAT did a home visit to provide energy advice and arranged six energy top-up vouchers, which were of a value of £49 each.

FWT visited the tenant and submitted an Attendance Allowance claim which was awarded at the higher rate of £108.55 per week. The impact of this increased her Housing Benefit entitlement by £20 per week. She is also now eligible for Pension Credit of £42 per week. This means overall her financial situation has improved by £172.55 per week. She is now also eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment of £200.

She is extremely grateful for the help provided by both teams and has said this has made a significant difference to her financial and physical wellbeing.



Young people with electric heating campaign - more than just energy advice

1. The tenant was a student, aged under 25, who was door knocked after working hours by HEAT and FWT.

The tenant was initially reluctant to engage, and had not engaged with either team before, but was happy to do this after it was explained what each department could do to assist them.

The prepayment meter had less than £5 on it and they were waiting for their bursary to be paid so they could top up.

Two fuel bank vouchers, worth £49 each, were arranged and give to the tenant within 24 hours.

A further application was made and within five days a further six vouchers (all worth £49 each) were sent to the tenant.

Advice was given by FWT regarding budgeting, and possible support from the college they attended in regards to their rent. The tenant has also decided to get a part time job to subsidise their bursary for their housing costs.

The tenant advised that without this advice from FWT, he would have stopped studying and got a full time supermarket job instead.

Financial Wellbeing Case Studies

1. The tenant was referred to us by the Housing Officer for help with benefits after a visit regarding her hoarding identified that she was possibly not receiving the correct rates. We organised an appointment and visited the tenant at home. She had transferred from Personal Independence Payment to Adult Disability Payment a few months previously, and although she had reported changes in her health, her award had not changed. We assisted her to complete a late redetermination for her Adult Disability Payment and gather the medical evidence to support this request. She has now received an increased award which has been backdated. The tenant is hoping to use the extra money to pay for a service she has used previously that she found really helpful, but struggled to afford. The service helps her declutter her house a couple of times a month, which helps improve her mental wellbeing.



2. This was a new Hillcrest tenant, EU national, who had been living with her son in homeless accommodation after fleeing domestic abuse. The tenant has health issues meaning she couldn't deal with the tasks involved with setting up a new tenancy, however her son helped with interpreting. Her son was very tearful and overwhelmed when we spoke to him, as they initially moved into the property without furniture/bedding and were sleeping on the floor.

We collected a Starter Pack to give them the basic pots/pans/ bedding/towels and curtains. We also provided them with a £100 Argos starter pack e-giftcard which they were able to buy a vacuum cleaner and curtain poles for the tenancy. The Community Care Grant awarded partial flooring, beds, sofa and white goods which were delivered within two days of them moving into the tenancy. We were able to get the hall flooring from the internal Helping Households Fund.

The tenant had been having issues setting up a bank account since moving to the UK five years ago. We worked closely with them to gather supporting evidence and find a suitable bank account. This has also allowed them to sign up for Wi-Fi as they can now set up Direct Debits. We also helped them to update their benefit claims.

The tenants are now settled in their property and are happy and extremely grateful for the help received.

Social Wellbeing Case Studies

1. A referral was received for a lady who was being served with an eviction notice based on anti-social behaviour. When we met with the tenant, we discovered the anti-social behaviour was due to domestic violence with an ex-partner who knew where she lived. She could not stop him attending her property and she was scared to call the police as neighbours were complaining about police attending. The tenant had poor mental health and felt trapped in her property as she was being judged by neighbours.

We managed to get the tenant involved and organised support from Women's Aid. They were able to get the tenant in touch with a counsellor for assistance with mental health.

We worked with the tenant and housing team to get her a management transfer to a new property. This allowed her a fresh start and a safe place where the tenant's ex-partner would not know where she was.

A referral was done to the FWT who assisted with applications to welfare fund for removal costs and floor coverings for new property.

The tenant is now settled in her new property and has said she is the happiest and most settled she has been in years. Her mental has significantly improved, and her family relationships have been mended. She has even stated she feels she will be able to get herself into employment sometime soon.

2. A referral for an elderly lady who was convinced her upstairs neighbour was stealing her electricity.

From having a few meetings with the tenant, it was clear that her mental health wasn't good. She had suffered a massive bereavement in the loss of her sister, who she cared for, and was becoming paranoid about all of her neighbours in her block.

We gently suggested a visit to the GP to discuss some of the feelings and intrusive thoughts the tenant was experiencing. This led to a mental health assessment.

We supported the client to appointments with a psychiatrist who prescribed medication for the tenant for her mental health. It was discussed for the tenant having a CPN and the possibility of a move to better accommodation. The tenant wanted to live closer to Broughty Ferry as she had a brother who could give some family support. We worked with the housing team, and we got the tenant moved in to sheltered housing where there were social activities and support for her. On our final visit with tenant and CPN, the tenant was feeling well, managing her tenancy successfully, and doing well with her mental health and medication. The tenant expressed her gratitude for changing her life.

Hillcrest Enterprises Case Studies

1. When the tenant first moved into her tenancy she was working in the care sector and was able to pay her monthly bills and rent.

She unexpectedly found herself pregnant and had to leave her job due to domestic abuse from the baby's father.

Although she quickly got a new part-time job, she was not entitled to any occupational or statutory maternity pay. Her income was now very low and her outgoings remained high.

We helped her to apply for Universal Credit, Discretionary Housing Payment for her rent shortfall and we worked together on budgeting, so her finances became manageable.

We got her food vouchers from our Food and Fuel project whilst waiting for Universal Credit, then a Tesco voucher from our Helping Household fund for working clothes and a winter coat whilst pregnant. We also used charities to obtain some baby items.

Now she is a new mum, we were able to refer her to Barnardo's who offered her support, and vouchers for food and baby clothes.

We supplied £150 of Octopus funding to help her have extra heating in her home for her and her newborn baby.

She is now working with Women's Aid, her home is secure and she is able to live financially comfortable whilst on maternity leave.

2. A tenant and her two children were living in Aberdeen, and had been building rent arrears since July 2024.

She was in touch for support, but was reluctant to disclose information on her finances or her current situation.

She gave minimal information making it difficult to see how to best support her. A Notice to Leave was served on the tenancy due to high arrears with no agreement.

She sent an email complaining about services and lack of communication.

We called her and discussed her complaint, apologising (where required) on behalf of HE then explained staff's different roles and setting out clear guidance on what we would do moving forward to ensure we could help her.

From the next appointment, the tenant explained she has lost her well-paid job and was very scared to lose her home with her children. She was openly upset after being honest about her change in circumstances.

We got Universal Credit in place including childcare costs, we applied for a Discretionary Housing Payment which was then backdated for the shortfall from rent. We also agreed a manageable amount to pay the rent arrears off monthly.

We provided her help with a high energy bill and advice on how to best reduce her bills going forward.

She got £150 octopus funding to help during the winter, £50 food voucher to allow her to get through the school holidays.

She has since sent us an email thanking staff for the help and support. We are now looking at charities or grants that may suit the tenant's work history.



HOPE Case Studies

1. A tenant recently lost his job, his marriage ended and his kids moved in with his ex wife. His kids did not want to visit him due to how cold his home was, and he had no spare money to take them out to do activities. He was also recently diagnosed with ADHD and Autism.

We chatted on the phone as he had been suffering from low mood with nothing to do. He had previously enjoyed going to the gym and to martial art classes.

During the calls, we dicussed him going to his GP for a “prescription to health”, which allows him free gym access for 12 weeks, then a reduced rate of £1 per week for a futher 12 weeks.

We also referred the tenant to Dundee Connections, a new service for anyone that identifies as Autistic. We are currently putting together a list of the community cafes/venues where he could go with his kids, free of cost. We also discussed HOPE Point as he was not aware of this service. We have offered to meet him at HOPE Point, so we can look at other ways for him to positively fill his week. We have also contacted him with times and venues for Men’s Shed and Andy’s Man Club.

The tenant was so impressed that Hillcrest could offer all of this help and support.



And there's more...

In addition to supporting tenants, staff have also received support and advice from the Tenant Services teams during 2024/25. The teams have delivered training to frontline staff across Hillcrest and in the last year, two training modules have been created for staff to access online.

The teams have been lucky enough to support a modern apprentice since October 2023 and have facilitated work placements from local schools.

What's coming up in 2025

Octopus Energy are so pleased with the work we delivered with their funding and as a result of this, they now class us as a trusted partner. We will continue to receive funding at an increased rate this year to enable us to help those who are most vulnerable.

- We are contacting tenants who may have an RTS meter that needs to be replaced – however tenants do need to contact their supplier to arrange this.
- We are delivering a number of new initiatives funded by the Hillcrest Foundation.
- A door knocking exercise will take place in Aberdeen with hard-to-reach Hillcrest Enterprises tenants.
- We are to undertake three social value exercises - social value is a way to quantify how different interventions affect people's lives, the overall impact on people's wellbeing, or their quality of life. It is a way of measuring the positive benefits work has on both individuals and communities.