

Henna Chowdry
Acting Assistant Head of Service
Corporate Resources Directorate
Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Haringey Council
48 Station Road
Wood Green N22 7TY

19 July 2013

EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Henna,

RE: Advice Providers Network (APN) – Complaint

There are some 150 members for the Advice Providers Network and approximately 30 provider, voluntary-community organisations, attend quarterly APN meetings.

The providers are concerned that whilst the need for advice provision has grown, due largely to recent benefits changes; the Council's Customer Services has become remote. Providers have complained that there isn't a dedicated council officer that they can speak with over the phone to resolve client queries - particularly in areas such as the new Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Without a dedicated officer resolving queries/problems over the phone, important enquiries are either delayed, through letter writing, or problems remain unresolved as people are put off pursuing a query without immediate help being available.

The APN members are concerned that a cost cutting exercise and virtually online system is, in reality, causing unnecessary distress and potentially slowing down the system. Vulnerable clients such as older people, the disabled etc are experiencing growing difficulty in resolving complex matters online or through office appointments. .

As frontline advisers, we believe that our expertise and experience should influence the council to re-think this change by ensuring that advice professionals have access to a named officer in the benefit system that will help to resolve queries over the phone.

Please ensure that HAVCO's CEO, Fitzroy Andrew and Peter Thompson the APN Chair, are copied in to your response to our request. Their email addresses are:

- Peter Thompson = pt.anythinglegal@gmail.com
- Fitzroy Andrew's email = fa@havcoharingey.org.uk

Please forward this letter to the correct senior officer, if you cannot resolve the issues we have outlined.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Regards



Pamela Pemberton
HAVCO – Service Manager

On behalf of Haringey's Advice Providers

Cc Pater Thompson – APN Chair
Fitzroy Andrew – HAVCO CEO
Sent to APN members with minutes for 30 July meeting