

**For general release**

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE</b> <b>12 APRIL 2016</b>
<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>FINANCIAL INCLUSION</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Mark Fowler, Director of Gateway and Welfare</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Councillor Mark Watson, Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Justice</b>
<b>PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:</b>	<b><i>Mark Fowler</i></b> <b><i>Director of Gateway and Welfare</i></b>

<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	This item is contained in the Committee's work programme
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	Financial exclusion is the inability of an individual, household, or group to access appropriate financial services or products putting them at financial risk. The Council is working with residents to catch problems early and to help people become more prepared and better equipped for the future. Members will seek information about financial inclusion and how we plan to help our residents over the coming months.

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report confirms progress against the council's financial inclusion plan agreed at cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2015 and updates on activity and outcomes delivered so far, on-going work and next steps.

**2. FINANCIAL INCLUSION; BACKGROUND**

2.1 To support the wider welfare reform programme, a paper was heard at cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2015 detailing the principles around financial inclusion and its intended impact on the residents of Croydon.

The paper referenced the key principles and activities proposed that would help tackle the cost of living challenges being faced by residents.

2.2 Five key activity themes were identified and fed into the council's financial inclusion plan, see *appendix1*. The themes are:

- Enable our staff to engage effectively with customers regarding financial inclusion
- Undertake improvements to make tools and advice easier to navigate
- Promote the adoption of London Living Wage across the boroughs businesses
- Building 3rd party relationships to support financial inclusion
- Develop skills and opportunities for citizens to maximise income

2.3 The council committed to the following actions during the 2015/16 financial year:

- 50,000 customers will have access to budgeting support
- 1,500 vulnerable customers will have set up a bank account
- Provide a digital service that can be accessed by 145,000 households that will support residents to:
  - Budget and manage their cash flow and spend arrangements
  - Utilise online financial offers and savings opportunities
  - Identify employment opportunities and the skills required
  - Promote the availability of food banks and how to efficient cheap household items
  - Help them to utilise facilities such as the local Credit Union in order to try to save to future expenditure needs
- Be part of forums and community groups to support, assist and share ideas
- The Council will aspire to support 95% of its customers to be ready for Universal Credit and will have appropriate support in place for the 5% who are unable to manage the initial transition

### **3. PROGRESS TO DATE**

The progress made for each theme during 2015/16 is as follows:

#### **3.1 Enable our staff to engage effectively with customers regarding financial inclusion**

- Training has been provided to all staff within the following services to provide basic budgeting support to residents:
  - Enablement and Welfare
  - Service Development
  - Housing Needs and Assessments
  - Revenues and Benefits
  - Corporate Debt Recovery
  - Housing Income
- A staff tool kit has been developed and is shared across the above services containing a budgeting guide, budgeting tips, acceptable spend criteria along with cheaper alternatives
- Residents and all staff across the above services, our third and voluntary sector partners and our Job Centre Plus (JCP) co-workers now use one online budgeting tool

- Annual campaigns take place to promote financial inclusion to our residents:
  - Debt awareness week
  - 12 saves of Christmas

### **3.2 Undertake improvements to make tools and advice easier to navigate**

- The council's website was reviewed and all money management advice and tools are now located on one web page for easy access for our residents and staff at <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/advice/your-money>
- A Croydon branded budgeting tool was developed for both residents and staff. This went live on the council's website in May 2015
- In partnership with Croydon Plus (previously Croydon Credit Union), web access to accounts is part of its launch on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2016
- The council has worked with Croydon Plus to segment its residents and develop a variety of support offers to meet the varying level of need, see appendix 2
- The council has engaged with 10 local banks to clarify the criteria for basic bank accounts and identify financial products available. A factsheet has been developed and is located on the your money pages of the council's website at <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/advice/your-money-1> see appendix 3

### **3.3 Promote the adoption of London Living Wage across the borough's businesses**

- The council is an accredited London living wage employer
- It is also now a requirement for all new contractors to pay the London living wage and is working with existing contractors to make the transition

### **3.4 Building 3rd party relationships to support financial inclusion**

- In June 2015, the council became a Universal Credit (UC) digital pilot site. In partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and JCP, budgeting support is provided to all residents migrating to UC
- The council meet bi monthly with our third and voluntary sector partners to promote services, support and products available to our residents
- A consistent approach to engagement and referral has been developed as well as monitoring of outcomes
- This work will continue to support the council's outcome based commissioning review and community empowerment agenda
- To improve their financial product offering the council has worked in partnership with Croydon Credit Union. It is being rebranded Croydon Plus and is being launched on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2016

### **3.5 Develop skills and opportunities for citizens to maximise income**

- The Gateway and Welfare directorate was established as part of the People Department in April 2015. Within the directorate, the Enablement and Welfare service provide holistic solutions for residents to prevent crisis. Financial stability is at the core and support provision includes:

- budgeting support
- income maximisation
- debt management
- employment support
- support in finding affordable homes
- Financial stability also supports 2 of the themes identified by Croydon's Opportunity and Fairness Commission (OFC); finding homes for all and supporting residents to better times. 1400 residents have been able to maximise their income through discretionary funding allowing them either to affordably remain in their home or move to an affordable home
- The council works in partnership with JCP to support residents into work. JCP are co-located within the People Department to work alongside Gateway and Welfare, Housing and the troubled families programme
- Croydon Healthy Homes is now in place; a project to provide energy efficiency / fuel poverty advice for vulnerable households in the borough with home visits for residents beginning in March

#### **4. OUTCOMES DELIVERED TO DATE**

- 4.1** The following are available to all Croydon residents (160,000 households) on the council's website:
- A self-serve budgeting tool
  - Money management and budgeting advice including how to reduce costs
  - Debt advice
  - Access to benefit entitlements and council tax accounts via MyAccount
  - Online applications for discretionary support and benefit entitlement
- Hits to the web pages increased from 89 per month to 179 per month since the re-launch in June 2015
- 4.2** 1,700 residents at risk of crisis have been engaged with to provide support in becoming financially stable and the following outcomes have been delivered:
- 162 residents have received accredited debt advice
  - 186 residents have been supported in finding affordable accommodation
  - 297 residents have received employment support with 25% now in work
  - 2240 residents have received discretionary financial support
- 4.3** All residents moving from claiming housing benefit from the council to Universal Credit (UC) from DWP have been engaged with regarding budgeting support. 27% of those residents claiming UC who also have housing costs have been identified to have higher support needs and have been supported by the Enablement and Welfare service with the following as at 29<sup>th</sup> January 2016. Universal Credit Digital rolled out within Croydon in June 2015 for CRO 4 and in November 2015 CRO 2. In March 2016 the remaining Croydon Job centre post code rolled out CR0 1, CR0 3, CR0 5, CR0 6 CR0 7, CR0 9, CR9, SE25 4 and SE25 5

<b>Support provision</b>	<b>Number of residents</b>
Budgeting support	45
Debt management	31
Income maximisation	17
Affordable homes found	6
Evictions prevented	12
School placements found	6
Food bank referrals	23

**4.4** All residents who pay their council tax by cash or who receive payment of housing benefit by cheque have been engaged with to open bank accounts and make payments by direct debit.

303 benefit customers who received payments by cheque have now been supported in opening bank accounts, receiving BACs payments and managing their money.

## **5. NEXT STEPS**

### **5.1 Enable our staff to engage effectively with customers regarding financial inclusion**

- Continue to develop effective customer insight to proactively engage with vulnerable customers
- Develop online learning for staff on financial inclusion to increase take up of our services

### **5.2 Undertake improvements to make tools and advice easier to navigate**

- In line with the council's digital inclusion plan and through its digital and enablement programme, continue expand the use of MyAccount, digital zones and online provision of financial inclusion information, advice and tools
- Continue to develop and promote self-serve tools

### **5.3 Promote the adoption of London Living Wage across the borough's businesses**

- Enforce the requirement for all new contractors to pay the London living wage
- Continue working with existing contractors to make the transition

### **5.4 Building 3rd party relationships to support financial inclusion**

- Build on relationships with local banks to enable easier access to financial products for residents
- Simplify the process of verifying identity and residency
- Following the re-launch of Croydon's Credit Union, develop financial products to meet local resident's need. Initial ideas for jam jar accounts and flexible loans have been discussed. A timeline and approach is now to be agreed with a view to launch during 2016/17
- Agree approach to providing advice, be this signposting or working in partnership with the 3rd sector

- Deliver new operating model, agree measures, monitoring and timings to review

### **5.5 Develop skills and opportunities for citizens to maximise income**

- Join up our customer insight on residents seeking employment with our economic regeneration policies
- Link CALAT provision to the skills gaps identified for our residents
- Enhance our links with provision already available in the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector
- Contribute to the council's commissioning review to support outcome based commissioning

### **5.6 Universal Credit**

- A major part of Government's reforms is the centralisation of all means tested welfare benefits under one title, universal credit (UC). As a result, residents who are entitled to more than one benefit and currently receive multiple payments from different sources will be assessed through a single assessment and single payment mechanism.
- Residents will receive a single payment into their bank accounts each month, which is paid monthly in arrears
- The council recognise the need to support residents through this transition and the impact that this may have on their financial stability
- The Council have worked closely with (JCP) and developed a referral system, where it aims to identify vulnerable residents with medium or high support needs. These are residents who could be at risk of eviction, be in arrears, in debt or need assistance in financial management
- A team of personal budgeting support officers are in place to support residents and prevent crisis. Officers work with the whole family to deliver a tailor made, holistic support package on a variety of issues. Achieving financial stability includes support in opening and managing a bank account, budgeting support and debt advice as well as pathways to employment (cases studies are contained within appendix 4)
- The remainder of the borough will roll out in April 2016 with the CR2, CR3 0, CR3 5, CR5 1 CR5 2 CR5 3 CR6, CR8 CR7 and SE25 6.
- For the period January 2015 to March 2017 DWP estimate that 10,800 customers will be in receipt of Universal Credit of which 6,912 customers will be receiving help with their housing costs.

---

**CONTACT OFFICER:** *Mark Fowler, Director of Gateway and Welfare*

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:** None

#### **Appendices**

1. Financial Inclusion plan
2. Credit Union products and services
3. Bank account factsheet
4. Case histories







# Customers

- Approximately 2000 of our vulnerable customers do not have a bank account. They are likely to require intensive support in opening a basic bank account, which would as a minimum have the facility to set up direct debits and have access to a debit card.

Customer characteristic	Number of customers	Intensive support	Mild/Moderate support
Learning disability	250	30% (75)	70% (175)
Homeless	1,875	25% (469)	75% (1406)
Physically disabled	2,758	33% (910)	66% (1848)
English as second language	1,206	10% (121)	90% (1085)
Mental health	2,000	25% (500)	75% (1500)
Multiple complex needs	600	5% (30)	95% (570)
In temporary accommodation	2,887	10% (289)	90% (2598)
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,783</b>	<b>2,393</b>	<b>9,390</b>

## Mild/Moderate support

**need:** typically relates to a blend of services, with a focus towards savings and/or debt consolidation. Could be comfortable to engage digitally or through face to face contact.

**Intensive support:** typically relates to a blend of services biased towards money management and budgeting support. This is likely to require face to face contact to support form filling and/or jam jar accounts, to create financial stability.

# Analysis of customer characteristics

Nb. Data relates to access to products; customers are assumed to need to pull down on one or more product	Desired Products								
	Bank account	Additional savings account	Budget management & tools	“Jam-jar” accounts	Debt consolidation	Short term loans	Credit card	Pre-paid cards	Insurance
<b>Misc.</b>	2000								
<b>Learning disability</b>	50	100	100	75	25	50	50	75	25
<b>Homeless</b>	300	1000	1000	470	180	750	200	300	1500
<b>Physically disabled</b>	500	750	750	600	250	500	500	750	250
<b>English as second language</b>	20	1000	120	200	120	240	240	360	120
<b>Mental health</b>	500	750	1000	500	200	400	400	600	200
<b>Multiple complex needs</b>	30	200	200	100	60	120	120	240	60
<b>In temporary accommodation</b>	300	1500	750	600	290	580	580	960	290
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>3700</b>	<b>5300</b>	<b>3920</b>	<b>2545</b>	<b>1125</b>	<b>2640</b>	<b>2090</b>	<b>3285</b>	<b>2445</b>

# Customer Characteristics

- **Mild to moderate support need customers typically exhibit the following requirements; the difference between mild and moderate would be length of intervention.**
- A more in-depth explanation of products and services at the initial face to face interview with an emphasis on the need to have an accessible savings account and access to affordable credit
- An assisted self-serve approach to accessing services for the first time (i.e shown how to set up and access an online account or use the telephone banking system)
- Close budgetary monitoring for a minimum of 3 months with regular reviews agreed during the initial interview (could be weekly or monthly initially)
- An expectation that the customer would, after the initial period be able to self serve.

*“ Typical customer could be a single parent who has been made homeless as a result of a parental eviction so has no previous experience of accessing financial products or managing a household budget but has and can use a smartphone”*

# Customer Characteristics

- **Intensive support need customers typically exhibit the following requirements:**
- A detailed explanation of products and services at the initial face to face interview.
- A hand held approach to accessing services for the first time and subsequent visits as required (i.e. forms filled out, assistance with transactional processes such as withdrawals and deposits and monitoring of the account)
- Close budgetary monitoring for a minimum of 6 months with regular weekly reviews
- An expectation that the customer would, after the initial period be able to move to the mild to moderate support need category

*”Typical customer could be a person with mild to moderate learning difficulties who lives independently with support from family, friends or the local authority. This customer would not necessarily have access to IT products so would traditionally access the service face to face”*

# Customer Characteristics

- **Customers needing to access affordable credit typically exhibit the following characteristics:**
- The mean age of a payday loan customer: 35 (online: 35, high street: 38).
- 60% of lenders are male
- Customers who access High street payday lenders have an average median income £3,700 less than the National average of £17,100 p.a.
- 64% of all payday lenders repay their loan in full, either early or on time (usually within 30 days), the remainder will usually roll the loan over for a further 30 days incurring further charges.
- *“Typical customer could be in need of a short term loan to assist with an unexpected expenditure. This customer would require budgeting support and a savings account to help manage their money in the future”*

# Credit Union Products required

Intensive Support Customers	
Basic Bank account	Jam Jar Account
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Acceptance of BACS payment</li><li>✓ Payment of bills through direct debit</li><li>✓ Free withdrawals</li><li>✓ Money Management tools &amp; guidance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Bills paid before money can be withdrawn</li><li>✓ Money management tools &amp; Guidance</li><li>✓ Pay bills on time</li><li>✓ Set savings target</li><li>✓ Improve credit rating</li></ul>

# Mild to moderate needs customers

Choice of Basic account or Jam Jar account– as well as;

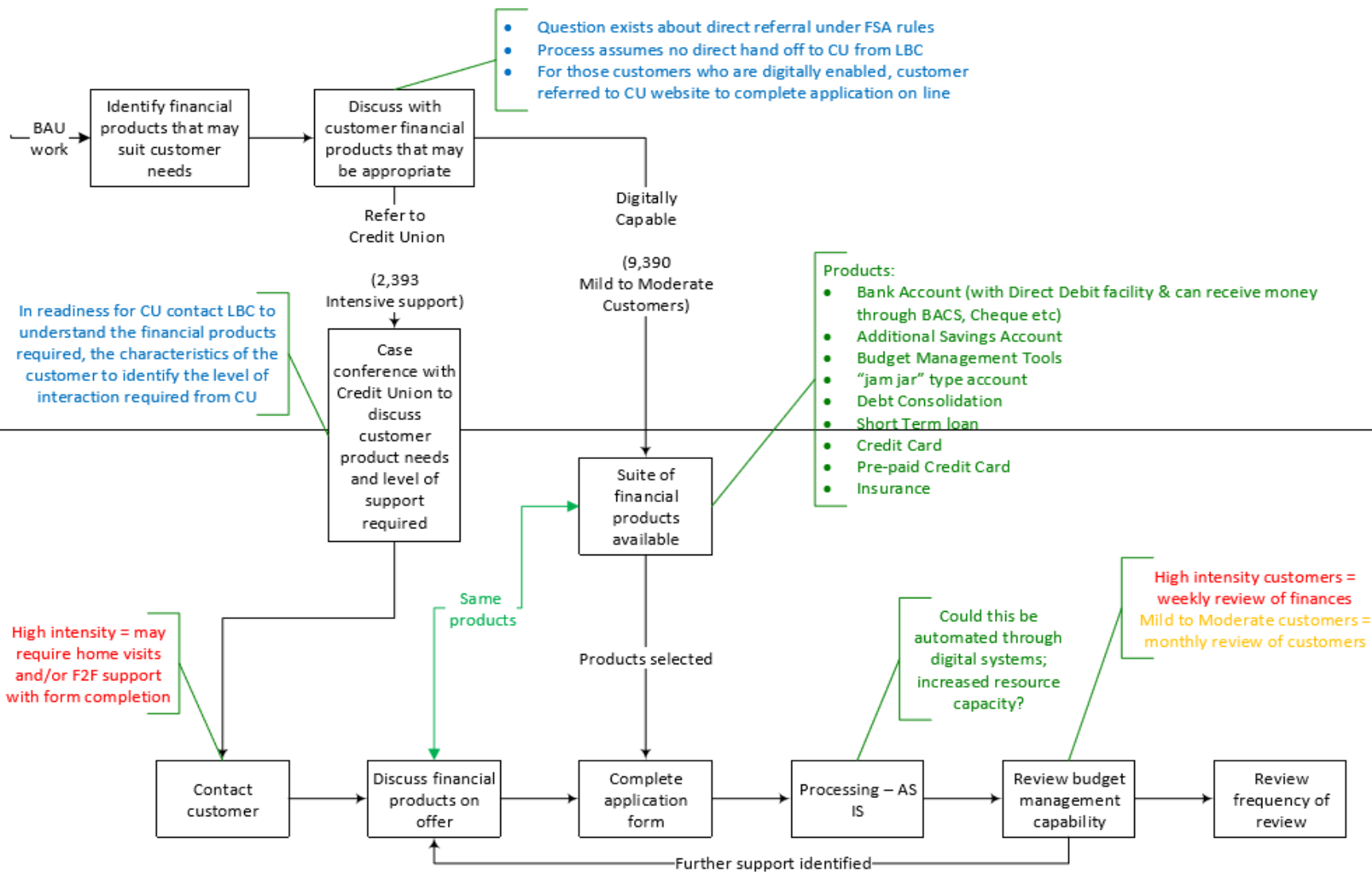
Flexible saving products with easy access	Loan products	Visa Debit card	Insurance products
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Competitive return</li> <li>✓ Ability to deposit cash &amp; cash cheques in person</li> <li>✓ Regular standing order arrangement</li> <li>✓ Pay point payment</li> <li>✓ Free Life insurance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Quick decision No hidden costs</li> <li>✓ Fair assessment of ability to pay back loan- by knowing customer not credit scores</li> <li>✓ Flexible payments- weekly, monthly or fortnightly repayments- no penalties for additional payments</li> <li>✓ Affordable –interest charged only on decreasing balance</li> <li>✓ Competitive interest rates grouped by product &amp; amount being borrowed not customers “Risk”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Load money in credit union or online</li> <li>✓ Check balance &amp; recent transaction history online or over the phone</li> <li>✓ No monthly or annual fee</li> <li>✓ Free purchases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Competitive contents, life and motor insurances</li> </ul>

# Credit Union – Overview of Process

Phase

LBC

CU





2,300 customers categorised as requiring intensive support; assumed c.30 per month requiring the following support:

	Weekly Volume	Hours	Total Time
Estimate of Intensive customers	30		
Contact Customer	30	0.25	7.5 hrs
Discuss Financial Products	30	0.50	15 hrs
Supported Self Service	15	0.25	3.75 hrs
Hand Hold Application	5	2.00	10 hrs
Face to Face	10	1.00	10 hrs
Process Application (s)	30 + digital direct	0.20	10 hrs
Review of Products	20	0.25	7.5 hrs
			63.75 hrs

- Assuming resource operating 37 hours per week with utilisation rate of 60% would equate to FTE resource need of c.2.87 *(nb. Excludes review of accounts for light touch customers)*

## Getting a bank account

### Why you need a bank account

- Setting up a direct debit to pay your bills automatically can often save you money as you may get a discount for paying this way (most gas and electric companies offer a discount)
- You will find it easier to manage your money as you can spread costs like winter heating over 12 months and arrange for payments to go out as soon as your earnings or benefits enter your account.
- Universal Credit, which will replace jobseekers allowance, income support, housing benefit, working tax credit, child tax credit, and employment and support allowance from 2015, must be paid into a bank account

### Get a basic bank account

Most banks offer a basic bank account (or equivalent) for everyone, including people with poor credit records. Overleaf is a summary of the terms of bank accounts offered locally. Most include free automated payments like direct debits and a cash card to access your cash free of charge at cash machines. Most basic bank accounts do not give you a cheque book or overdraft.

### To open a basic bank account

- Contact a bank directly to open an account. You can telephone or drop into your local branch.
- To open a basic bank account you will not be asked to put money into the account.
- The bank will ask you for proof of your identity (ID) and your address. This is to prevent fraud. The spelling of your name and address on the documents you provide must be exactly correct.
- Every bank has its own policy on the proof needed, but those below are likely to meet their needs:

#### ***Proof of ID (one of the following original documents; no photocopies)***

- Full and current passport (UK or Foreign) - must not have expired
- Non-UK National Identity Card (photo style) - must not have expired
- Current UK Photo card driving licence - full or provisional
- Current UK Paper full driving licence
- Benefit Entitlement letters (dated within last 12 months) - includes pension, Child Benefit, Family Tax Credit, Income Support, JSA
- HMRC tax notification or assessment letter issued in last 3 months/valid for current tax year

#### ***Proof of Address (one of following original documents, not used as proof of ID)***

- Current UK Photo card driving licence or UK full paper driving licence with current address
- Utility Bill-gas, electricity, water, cable TV, telephone (not mobile)
- Council tax Bill (dated within last 12 months)
- Bank Statement (less than 3 months old)
- Tenancy Agreement from council, housing association or recognised letting agency
- Benefit Entitlement letters (dated within last 12 months)
- HMRC tax notification or assessment letter issued in last 3 months/valid for current tax year

### Benefits and bank accounts

- Housing Benefit and other benefits can be paid into your bank account by BACS transfer.
- When you have opened an account, contact the Benefits Service on 020 8726 7000 or email [Croyhben@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Croyhben@croydon.gov.uk) for further information.

### Rent payments and bank accounts

You can arrange for your rent to be paid by direct debit. If you are a council tenant we will give you a one-off payment of £15 when you set up a rent direct debit. For further details and a direct debit form, please ask your income officer. If you are a housing association tenant, please contact your housing officer.

### A summary of the terms of basic bank accounts offered by local banks

	Barclays Cash Card Account	NatWest Basic	Co-Op Cash minder	Halifax Easy cash	Lloyds Cash	Metro Cash or Current Account	Nationwide Cash card	HSBC Basic	Santander Basic Current Account	Post Office Basic
Who can open an account?										
Can I open an account if I was bankrupt in the past?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Cash account only	✓	✓	✓	✓
Can I open an account if I have a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individual voluntary arrangement to pay off debts</li> <li>• debt relief order or</li> <li>• debt management plan?</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Subject to credit check	x	✓	Subject to credit check	✓
Can I open an account if I have a record of Fraud?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Minimum Age	18	18	16	16	18	Current a/c: 18 Cash a/c: 11	18	18	16	18
<b>Services and charges</b>										
Direct Debits allowed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Current account only	✓	✓	✓	X
Debit Card provided	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
What will I be charged if there are not enough funds in my account to pay a Direct Debit?	£8.00	£6.00	£15.00	£10.00	£10.00	£10.00	£15.00	£0 Account closed after 3X	£0	N/A
How can I access my account?	Branch	Branch	Branch	Branch	Branch	Branch	Branch	Branch	Branch	Branch
	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone
	Online	Online	Online	Online	Online	Online	Online	Online	Online	
Support with online/ phone banking offered	✓	✓	X	✓		✓	✓	✓	Only to set up	X

## **Enablement, welfare and prevention case studies**

**Seth** approached the statutory homeless service with his daughter with who he recently had become carer of. He was subletting a room in shared accommodation from his friend who explained that it was no longer suitable for him to remain in now that he had his daughter in the premises. It was identified that he needed to claim benefits for his child in order to maximise his income otherwise he would not have any money for living costs after paying rent if he was placed in emergency accommodation. He and his excluder agreed that he would remain in the accommodation for a longer period of 2 months while a referral for the appropriate benefits were made and subsequently in payment. Together with his housing needs officer a budget planner was carried out on his new income and the maximum rental income he could pay was identified. He was encouraged to be creative in his search outside of Croydon given that he was unemployed and had no family ties in Croydon. He found a property within the local housing allowance in Enfield through his church contacts. A deposit and rent in advance was paid to secure the property. The collaborative approach between the officer and customer is an example of a clear action plan, sound advice resulting in a targeted search, and recognition that properties can be sourced from different contacts.

**Sally** had received a notice seeking possession from her landlord and needed to leave her home. From a discussion about her circumstances it was established that one of her children was in receipt of higher rate Disability Living Allowance, disturbed sleep and medical equipment and that under those circumstances the family would be entitled to a four bed rate, compared to the three bed rate she thought she was entitled to. Through reviewing her budget she determined that it would be affordable for her to rent a property above the Local Housing Allowance rate for the area. Sally was offered advice about switching utility providers as her, previous bills were very high, she also changed her broadband and TV package. Sally has now moved into a four bed property which meets the needs of all of her household, whilst she is also able to manage her weekly income & expenditure, both changes providing overall stability.

**Miranda** applied for discretionary support as she was in significant rent arrears and was facing eviction. Her household included her younger sister, dad and her son. Customers housing benefit claim had high non-dependent deductions so was advised to supply the correct documentation so that claim could be reassessed. This resulted in her shortfall being reduced and a backdated credit for £700 being sent to the landlord to reduce the arrears. Miranda also had a high council tax debt with a bailiff which was withdrawn from the bailiff enabling an arrangement to be set up to clear the Council Tax arrears. We also assisted Miranda to apply for child tax credits and working tax credit and she can now afford her shortfall. Part of the arrears has been paid which has secured her tenancy while we continue to work with her to manage her new council tax bill.

**Sisa** contacted the Enablement and Welfare service due to council tax arrears of £2700. This was caused by a benefit change. A budget planner was completed and it was identified which included rent arrears of £2500 and an HB overpayment £9600. Whilst working with the customer to develop a sustainable solution it was evident that the Housing benefit claim should be reassessed as the partners hours had been cut. The customer provided payslips and a reassessment of entitlement was carried out. This created an underpayment of £1193 for the customer to reduce the rent arrears and cleared the HB overpayment; we will assist with the remaining rent arrears once in receipt of a rent statement. The re-assessment of her benefit has increased her rent entitlement from £188 per fortnight to £173 per week and significantly decreased her 2016 council tax bill to a much more affordable amount.

**Violet** has a severely autistic son who had become increasingly physically violent and aggressive, this meant that Violet was no longer able to cope with him at home and he was placed in a supported care unit. Violet was suffering severe anxiety after the placement of her son and in addition became affected by the single room subsidy, because of financial hardship she had received an eviction notice for rent arrears, had a housing benefit overpayment and council tax arrears. Violet was working but was in receipt of a zero hour contract so it was difficult for her to budget as her housing benefit entitlement changed weekly. After being encouraged to speak to her employer to explain the impact of the zero hours contract Violet was offered a 36 hours per week contract enabling to manage her finances much more effectively. She was awarded a discretionary housing payment to assist with rent arrears and a payment arrangement for council tax was put in place. Violet although still affected by the single room subsidy is now managing her finances and is able to make up the shortfall in her rent and is much less anxious about the future.