



In partnership with

**Louise Brownlow (she/her)****Job role:** Assistant Tenant Services Manager for Hillcrest Homes

I manage our Tenancy Sustainment Team across 6 different local authority areas. We work with tenants through all stages of their tenancy to ensure they have the essential items and benefits in place to move in and sustain the tenancy. We recognise that situations change with relationships, births, bereavements, children leaving school, health, members of the household reaching pension age and jobs ending, all of which impact finances and benefit entitlement of the households. We help our tenants look at income maximisation by accessing all relevant benefits, charity and local authority funds.

Before starting at Hillcrest Homes, I worked for over 20 years in Sales Management. After taking redundancy in 2013, I volunteered at my local food bank and Citizens Advice. I became aware of how difficult it was for individuals and families who were reliant on the benefit system and how agencies are crucial in supporting them. This led me to take on a role at Citizens Advice and subsequently Hillcrest Homes. I can see that the work I do has a significant and immediate impact on tenants' lives.

**Why do I think this topic is important?**

I have observed how difficult it is for those trying to improve their personal situation and this was evident more than ever during lockdown. Lockdown presented us with the challenge of providing a continuous service to our tenants during a period of great uncertainty and financial hardship. There was also the need to support my team who all had to work from home. This forced us to look at our working practices and caused me to acknowledge that whilst I didn't have all the answers, we could adopt new methods. Now that we are faced with a cost of living crisis, I have taken forward what I learnt in lockdown so that I can better support my tenants and staff through these challenging times.