



**DWP/LAA Steering Group  
Meeting –15 January 2013  
Caxton House**

**Summary Minutes**

The DWP Local Authority Associations (LAA) Steering Group met on Wednesday 15 January 2013, those attending were:

DWP		LAA's
Andrew Parfitt	(Chair)	Rose Doran
Mont Goldman	(Minutes)	Lesley Pigott
Bill Hern		John Wright
Jonathan Bottomer		Valerie Pearce
Dean Blower		Nigel Minto
Manny Ibiayo		Ben Dixon
Huw Meredith		Lesley Pigott
Mel Frankham		Colin Wallbank
Andrew Jennings		Matthew Evans
Claire Cooper	DCLG	Howard Mason
Danny Rothberg	DCLG	Andrew Stevens
Anne Cairns	Scotland	Pat Durkin
Dial in: Roger Lines		Dial in: Peter Meehan Chris Gibbs

**1. Welcome and Introductions:**

Andrew Parfitt opened the meeting and introductions were made. Apologies were received from Steve Carey and Debra Levison.

Andrew welcomed Rose Doran who has succeeded Mike Heiser as the lead representative for the LGA.

On behalf of the Steering Group, Andrew thanked Mike for all his hard work and cooperation. As this was also John Wright's last meeting, Andrew thanked him for all of his efforts on behalf of the Steering Group.

**2. Matters Arising**



## Department for Work & Pensions

### Minutes

LAA members commented on the December minutes with regard to their stated views on DWP and DCLG policy with regard to the impacts of the Benefit Cap which they felt could lead to claimants migrating between London boroughs.

### Action Points

The two action points from the December meeting were cleared. With regard to the paper on uprating, DWP explained that the calculation of eligible rent for a claimant renting in the social and private sectors is not affected by the uprating of benefits.

### Benefit Cap

The LAAs pointed out that the change to the implementation of the Benefit Cap as set out in Bulletin G21/2012 had created difficulties for LAs in engaging with claimant groups and also council Members.

The LAAs commented on the levels of activity from JCP in respect of contacting households affected by the Benefit Cap, and suggested that DWP should adopt a more targeted and proactive programme of interventions.

It was also agreed that the Benefit Cap Project will be invited to attend February's Steering Group meeting for an agenda item.

### Circular S2/2013

DWP explained that the circular confirmed the amount of additional funding for new burdens for IT Changes for:

- Size Criteria.
- Implementation of the Benefit Cap.
- The ending of transitional protection for the reforms to LHA.

### **3. Updates:**

#### Temporary Accommodation (TA) Sub-Group

DWP explained that the TA sub group meeting scheduled for December did not go ahead, and that the next meeting is scheduled for 24 January.



## Department for Work & Pensions

A full report from this meeting will be given as an agenda item for February's Steering Group meeting.

### Universal Credit (UC)

#### Governance:

- The internal changes to the UC governance and senior personnel have been affected by the sad death of Philip Langsdale, the recently appointed Senior Responsible Officer.
- The UC Programme Director has been in discussion with the LAAs regarding representation in the UC governance structure.
- The External Relationships Director will be meeting with Paul Raynes (LGA) to discuss terms of reference with a view to securing a more effective voice for local government.

#### Localised Claimant Support Taskforce:

- A document baselining resources and service planning for LAs for phase 2 of the UC rollout will be issued in early 2013.
- This represents Mark 1 which will look across the board, including face to face support and other local support services, and is intended for immediate planning purposes.
- Mark 2 will be issued around October 2013 to baseline planning for 2014/15.
- The Taskforce is currently co-ordinating a LA Reference Group which includes the LAAs, DCLG, Scottish and Welsh Governments and other LA representation including the pathfinders.
- The purpose of the Reference Group is to review and challenge input into the framework documents.

#### Business Change Impact Analysis

- A schedule of workshops with all LAs is nearing completion.
- The aim of the workshops has been to gather as much definitive information as possible about business change impacts on LAs.



## Department for Work & Pensions

- This information will be collated by the end of February.

### LA-Led Pilots

- Workshops with the participating LAs will take place on 31 January and 1 February.
- The purpose of the workshops will be to look at how the pilots can be evaluated and to examine the risks and issues.

### Demonstration Projects

- The projects are half way through their life cycle.
- A media pack was issued on 17 December.
- A learning report will be issued at the end of January.

The LAAs asked about the treatment of non-dependent deductions in UC. They pointed out the potential for elective migration, and the consequential impact on the UC migration strategy.

An action point was taken for DWP to clarify the position around elective migration.

### DCLG – Localised Support for Council Tax

Changes to senior personnel within DCLG will mean that the Localising Support for Council Tax Reference Group will now be chaired by Katy Willison or Jessie Hamshar, who are Acting Directors for Local Government Finance on a job share basis.

- The Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme Regulations, and the Associated Uprating Instrument, have been made. The remaining regulations remained on track.
- The Local Government Finance Settlement has been published. This includes LA allocations for principal funding and new burdens for 2013/14. Indicative new burdens allocations to individual LAs for 2014/15 were also included.
- The approach to allocating funding to individual LAs remained as set out in the technical consultation on business rates.
- Administration funding beyond 2014/15 would be subject to the spending review.



## Department for Work & Pensions

- The devolved administrations were responsible for considering appropriate new burdens funding for LAs in the other nations.

An action point was taken for DCLG to provide a summary of what regulations had been made when, and the timetable for remaining regulations to be laid.

DCLG noted that the approach to allocating new burdens funding had been discussed with the Local Council Tax Support Reference and Delivery groups, and agreed to provide a note on how the figures were calculated.

DCLG confirmed that the Transition Grant funding will apply for 2013/14 schemes only.

The LAAs asked about the requirements for information sharing and whether any progress had been made with DWP. DCLG noted that LAs' views on the data they would require had been sought and these requirements were now being considered through the "Elaboration" stage.

DWP noted that information sharing arrangements from "legacy" benefits would be in place for April 2013 and would remain the same as the current data flow for CTB.

An action point was taken for DWP/DCLG to clarify the timetable for work on data sharing requirements to support Localised Support for Council Tax. DCLG would provide some signposts to the relevant information included in the Local Government Finance Settlement documentation.

### LA Transition Working Group (LATWG)

DWP updated the meeting on the January meeting of the LATWG:

- Presentations included Localised Claimant Support, Direct Payment Project, LA-Led Pilots and Pathfinder.
- The working group asked for clarity from DWP concerning the timeline for all phases of the Universal Credit rollout.



- The group asked for clarity around impact assessments for all of the welfare reforms.
- LA representatives asked UC Communications to consider producing a communication tool for use by local politicians to deal with the wider welfare reform changes.

#### **4. LA Funding Streams 2013/14**

DWP referred the meeting to the paper circulated prior to the meeting.

The paper itemised the funding streams, showing the amount for each one to give a picture of the overall funding for 2013/14. The amounts for policy initiatives were absolute and the amounts shown for new burdens were estimates.

##### **Benefit Cap**

The LAAs pointed out that in respect of new burdens for the Benefit Cap, more than the four LAs for whom the funding has been allocated could be affected as there is potential for claimant migration to other London authorities, or outside London.

DWP explained that the methodology for new burdens will be presented to the next Steering Group meeting.

The LAAs asked for clarification on how the funding for LA IT changes had been calculated.

#### **5. Local Welfare Provision**

- Discretionary Social Fund will be abolished in 2013.
- LAs in England will take over responsibility under the title of Local Welfare Provision.
- LAs in Scotland and Wales will have the same arrangement under a different title.
- The required legislative change to the Scotland Act will be passed to the Privy Council in February for their sign off.
- Discussions with colleagues in the Welsh Government are ongoing.
- Start up funding was issued to LAs in December.



- LAs have given DWP a list of their data sharing requirements and internal discussions are ongoing, and a further update on this will be given to the next Steering Group meeting.

The Steering Group pointed out that Jobcentre Plus will continue to be responsible for Budget Loans.

**6. AOB**

The LAAs asked for an update on Supported Exempt Accommodation for the next meeting.

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the DWP LAA Steering Group will take place on Wednesday February 13 at 11.30am at Caxton House.