



Summary Minutes

Title of meeting:	DWP LAA Steering Group
Date:	10 April 2013
Location:	Caxton House Room 6.03
Attendees:	DWP: Andrew Parfitt, (Chair), Mont Goldman (Secretariat), Bill Hern, Steve Imeson, Manny Ibiayo, Huw Meredith, Mel Frankham, Audit: Ann Cairns DCLG: Kerry MacHale GLA: Simon Cribbens LAAs: Rose Doran, Lesley Pigott, Matthew Evans, Colin Wallbank, Howard Mason, Andrew Stevens, Pat Durkin, David Graaff, Dial – in: Peter Meehan, Chris Gibbs, Ruth White and Steve Carey Observers: Caroline Wedmore, Deepak Rawal
Apologies:	John Swinnerton, Gordon Jackson, Valerie Pearce

1. Welcome and Introductions:

Andrew Parfitt opened the meeting and introductions were made round the table and for those dialing in.

2. Matters Arising

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Action Points

The action points for March were cleared.

The Steering Group asked about Judicial Reviews around the removal of the spare room subsidy in the social sector, and in particular the increasing number of disabled adults seeking review.

It was agreed to include a specific update on the removal of the spare room subsidy in the social sector, along with supported exempt accommodation and temporary accommodation for the May meeting.

3. Updates:

LA Transition Working Group (LATWG); April meeting / Universal Credit Update

DWP updated the meeting, highlighting key areas:

LATWG:

Pathfinder:

- Pathfinder will start in the Manchester and Cheshire areas at the end of April.
- LATWG discussed testing, evaluation and areas for scrutiny.

Direct Payments Demonstration Project:

- A presentation was delivered. TWG discussed possible new burdens around rent collection.

Local Support Services Framework:

Discussion around:

- Activity and outcomes.
- Funding.
- Implementation.
- Analysis of the consultation.

DWP added that Mark 2 of the framework which will inform LA planning for 2014/15 will be produced in October 2013. Mark 2 of the framework will take into account responses and feedback on mark 1, including from LAAs. Mark 1 will not be reissued but more urgent work by the task force will aim to tie up any loose ends arising from Mark 1 such as the funding questions.

With regard to the consultation, DWP explained that approximately 200 responses had been received. It was suggested that an overview of the analysis should be presented to the May Steering Group meeting.

The prospectus for DWP's digital strategy is now available. Steering Group members referred to National Audit Office publication on digital strategy.

Universal Credit:

DWP referred the meeting to the written update, circulated prior to the meeting.

DWP outlined recent developments in engagement:

- David Pitchford from the Cabinet Office was appointed for 3 months as Chief Executive of the Universal Credit Programme.
- David has been re-examining the risks and assumptions, planning and Terms of Reference to set a clear framework through the transition period.
- Howard Shiplee will replace David Pitchford in May 2013.
- Work is underway to develop a blueprint for transition.
- This work includes discussions with LAAs, DCLG, and the devolved administrations.
- A meeting with local government members of TWG will be convened to walk through the high level iteration of the blueprint, for review and challenge.
- The Partnership Forum will continue to meet as planned; the next meeting is scheduled for 14 May. Membership of the forum includes 5 LA Chief Executives, DCLG, and the devolved administrations.

The Steering Group asked whether there was any information on the date for publishing the detailed migration plan. They emphasized the importance of communicating the detailed migration plan as soon as possible as this had significant implications for LA planning and resources.

DCLG - Localising Council Tax Support

DCLG referred the Steering Group to the update paper circulated prior to the meeting.

The Steering Group noted the paper and raised the following points:

- Clarification is needed around the regulations for voluntary attachment to earnings.
- Whether the modeling for data sharing included applicable amounts for Council Tax reduction.

Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS)

DWP referred the Steering Group to the update paper circulated prior to the meeting.

From the paper on SFIS Organisation, DWP highlighted:

- SFIS had taken steps to ensure LA views were represented in all of the options, and that more guidance was contained in the SFIS newsletter.
- The priority has been given to how the staffing will look, with differing views to be taken into account.
- Early feedback from the pilots indicates that they are progressing well.
- SFIS is working closely with Oldham, the next SFIS pilot.
- The next SFIS pilots will be Cardiff Cornwall Southampton.

4. Benefit Cap Project

DWP updated the meeting:

Go-Live 15 April:

- The four London LAs are fully prepared.
- The IT, including the LAIT suppliers is in place.
- An extra week of end to end testing has taken place.
- All processes are in place, including governance around ramp up.
- The four LAs will be included in all daily calls around IT and business performance

National Rollout:

- There is some flexibility to manage the capping of cases from 15 July until the end of September 2013.
- The project has received views from LAs outlining various preferences, including receiving capping data over several days or in some cases several weeks.

Lessons learned from phased rollout will also feed into the final decision.

- The project has retained flexibility within the implementation approach to accommodate variations around the national implementation approach within a set of fixed parameters and in principle could accommodate a “mix and match” approach.

It was agreed to set up a working session with the Steering Group to work through the risks, issues and variations for national rollout to achieve consensus, if possible, by the end of May 2013.

The meeting also discussed evaluation for the four phased rollout sites, particularly from a Jobcentre Plus perspective. DWP explained that a set of lessons learned will be shared across the districts as well as through Best Practice events with LAs and in due course the Steering Group would be updated. DWP provided assurance that lessons learned were already being shared across Jobcentre Plus in preparation for national rollout.

5. DHP Annual Subsidy Update

DWP updated the meeting:

- A meeting with HMT and DCLG took place on 13 March to look at the assumptions underpinning funding for HB admin for 2014/15 and 2015/16.
- For 2014/15 and 2015/16 DCLG and the devolved administrations will be responsible for funding the CTB element.
- The key assumption for HB is around the impact of the UC migration schedule.
- The timeline for agreement with HMT is the end of June 2013, in line with the Spending Review.
- DWP has included the devolved administrations at all stages of the discussions.
- Once the figures are set, an options paper will be shared with Steering Group, with the aim of issuing the circular by September 2013.

The Steering Group pointed out that the separation of the CTB element will affect a major proportion of claims as they will be joint HB/CTB, and that the methodology will need to take this into account. They added that there was a need to revisit the weightings.

DWP explained that there were 2 strands of work:

- i) HB admin subsidy.
- ii) Cost modeling for UC new burdens, led by the Cost Modeling Taskforce.

It was agreed to invite members of the Cost Modeling Taskforce, DCLG and the devolved administrations to attend the next Steering Group for an agenda item.

Draft Subsidy Circular

DWP explained that payment of this additional funding would be made on 25 April 2013.

Commenting on the draft circular, the Steering Group pointed out that paragraph 5 needed further clarification.

[*Note: subsequent to the meeting, Subsidy Circular HB S4 2013 was issued on 12 April.*]

An action point was taken for DWP to check the additional funding for 2014/15.

6. LAA Engagement (Steering Group Terms of Reference)

Andrew Parfitt introduced the discussion item. He explained that the Terms of Reference were in need of a refresh.

He went on to say that in the wider context the Steering Group has 2 roles:

- i) The forum for DWP to carry out its statutory obligation to consult with local government.
- ii) A broader role for stakeholder engagement.

The discussion focused on where the group fits in at present, in a changing environment and with a growing number of sub and working groups.

It was agreed that consultation on HB would be ongoing, but at a diminishing level.

It was agreed that Andrew Parfitt and Bill Hern will review the current Terms of Reference and circulate a revised version.

7. AOB

With regard to the proposed change GSI to PSN, and in particular, data sharing, whether this will be a change of platform or of processes.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 08 May 2013, Room 6.03 Caxton House, usual start time of 11.30.

Contact:	Mont Goldman
Email:	Mont.goldman@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
Direct line:	020 7449 5327