



Summary Minutes

Title of meeting:	DWP LAA Steering Group
Date:	03 July 2013
Location:	Caxton House Room 6.03
Attendees:	<p>DWP: Julia Sweeney (Chair), Mont Goldman (Secretariat), Bill Hern, Jonathan Bottomer, Huw Meredith, Mel Frankham, Manny Ibiayo, Jenita Chelva, Yvonne Smith, Mark Cramer, Sarah Ormerod Ann Cairns (Audit Scotland)</p> <p>GLA: Simon Cribbens</p> <p>LAAs: Rose Doran, Lesley Pigott, Colin Wallbank, Matthew Evans, Andrew Stevens, Pat Durkin, Val Pearce, Howard Mason, David Graaff, Ben Dixon. Paula Holland, Steve Carey, Valerie Pearce</p> <p>Dial – in: Peter Meehan, Chris Gibbs, and John Rosenbloom</p>
Apologies:	Andrew Parfitt, John Swinnerton
<p>1. Welcome and Introductions:</p> <p>Julia Sweeney opened the meeting and introductions were made round the table and for those dialing in.</p> <p>2. Matters Arising</p> <p>Minutes</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.</p> <p>Action Points</p> <p>Action points April 02 and May 01 are to remain open.</p> <p>The remaining action points were cleared.</p> <p>3. Updates:</p> <p>Benefit Cap</p> <p>Nine events have taken place across the country in preparation for national implementation. The events were attended by 75% of LAs and focused on co-location and working in partnership with JCP. Feedback so far has been positive.</p> <p>With regard to national implementation, weekly teleconferences are taking place with the JCP single points of contact, and a readiness checklist has been produced, and an inbox for queries has been established.</p>	

A Steering Group member who had attended one of the events pointed out that the presentation from JCP had been impressive, and asked whether the successful models for engagement and employment outcomes as presented at this event would be replicated by JCP across the country. DWP noted that while JCP across the country were all subject to the same performance expectations about supporting claimants in to employment, it would not seek to dictate the model used locally due to varying volumes, and that this should be agreed between JCP and the relevant LA. The Project were ensuring however that best practice examples were shared across the country, and that the model of co-location wherever volumes justified it was being encouraged.

It was agreed that the best way to disseminate “best practice” would be through a structured “lessons learned”, along with some guidance.

Steering Group members asked whether employment outcomes for larger families would be included in the evaluation.

LA Transition Working Group (LATWG) and UC

LATWG

The update covered key areas of interest:

The UC Director attended the meeting to continue the positive conversation started by the UC Director General, when he met LA representatives on 5th June.

The UC Director explained the Department is working to deliver, in the next few weeks, some important messages about plans for UC.

The outputs from the review of the UC Programme, the draft Strategic Intent Document, including risks and assumptions, will be shared, exemplifying a commitment to collaborative working.

As part of this commitment, and in respect of working with social landlords, DWP was looking to see whether there was a more dynamic way to include LAs to make best use of their local knowledge and existing networks to input into decisions on alternative payment arrangements.

The 3 key principles arising from the review were:

- A single service approach where work services and benefit payment will be as one single claimant experience.
- The household principle will remain but will recognise the reality that many households split each month. The household relationship will remain but the system will need to reflect the reality.
- Integrity of the system, to turn the secure service concept into reality.

In recognition of the complexities around housing costs, representatives from Housing Delivery Division along with a LA secondee will be joining the UC design team. The team has started to look at more complex cases.

The Steering Group queried whether those claimants in receipt of Working Tax Credits would be prioritised on migration and whether RTI from HMRC was on track.

No firm decisions had been made, but that in the Pathfinder, RTI had been successful in identifying UC claimants who had not fully declared their earnings.

UC Written Update

The Steering Group noted the update paper circulated prior to the meeting.

DWP outlined some of the actions generated from the meeting with the UC Director General attended by Steering Group members, including:

- Increased LA representation in the design work.
- More formal LA representation in the UC governance structure.
- Discussions with the Devolved Administrations around passported benefits.

A decision had been made to extend the direct payment demonstration projects to December, and an extension for the LA-Led pilots was under discussion.

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SFIS

An update paper had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The paper set out the organisational changes for the Fraud and Error Programme, which has now been integrated with the Debt Transformation Programme, and the Payment Deduction Programme to form the Fraud and Error Debt Programme. The IRIS project has been moved into a new Departmental Security Design and Delivery Team within the UC Programme.

With regard to prosecutions, the first SFIS prosecution has proceeded successfully to sentence, with a further 10 cases proceeding through the courts.

Steering Group members asked for members of the Payment Deduction Programme to attend the July meeting for an agenda item. They are anxious to know how LAs can transfer their current HB overpayments that are being recovered from ongoing HB payments when HB ends.

AP July 01 2013: DWP agreed to ensure that Payment Deduction Programme forms part of the July agenda for discussion.

4. Fraud and Error National Statistics

A set of slides on the Fraud and Error National Statistics had been circulated prior to the meeting. The slides set out:

- The background to the statistics.
- The estimated overpayments (preliminary) in 2012/13, summarising the levels of fraud and error across all benefits.
- The estimated underpayments (preliminary) in 2012/13.
- The total estimates of benefit overpayments due to fraud and error, illustrating the percentage changes from 2000 -2012/13, for fraud, claimant and official error.

- A breakdown of percentage changes for fraud, claimant and official error.
- Breakdowns of percentage changes by benefits; JSA and Pension Credit, (both notable for a significant drop in official error), and HB, (notable for a significant rise in claimant error).
- A breakdown of the causes of HB overpayments, showing claimant error for earnings/employment as the major cause of overpayments.
- The final slide questioned the reasons for the significant increase in HB overpayments caused by earnings.

In the discussion that followed, the meeting looked at the factors for the increase in HB overpayments,

5. Spending Review Overview

DWP gave an overview of the Spending Review, explaining that the Review was concluded on June 26 following detailed discussions. The review was broken down into 3 key areas:

1. Efficiency Levels:
2. UC Migration:
3. The split between HB and CTB:

In detailed discussion the LAAs expressed their concern that there were anomalies around the split which could have implications for resources and for netting and capping.

It was agreed that the starting point for HB administration grant allocation should be around workloads, and that any anomalies could be addressed through capping and netting.

Julia Sweeney stressed that DCLG and the Devolved Administrations now have responsibility for allocating Council Tax Support/Reduction administration funding and the LAAs would need to engage with DCLG in order to influence the allocation methodology.

Principles Paper for 2014/15 HB Administration Subsidy

DWP referred the Steering Group to the paper on the methodology for distributing the 2014/15 HB administration grant allocation, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The paper set out the background, assumptions and proposals for 2014/15 distribution.

The Steering Group agreed the methodology set out in the paper.

As in previous years a further paper will be submitted to the October 2013 Steering Group meeting detailing various options for allocating the HB administration grant.

6. Temporary Accommodation in UC

DWP referred the meeting to the information paper issued in June.

There were two key issues:

1. Management Fee:

2. Managed Payments (by default) to landlords:

With regard to Benefit Cap cases, the LAAs asked whether DWP could look again at taking the current management fee out of the cap.

It was noted that the management fee will, at a future stage, need to be discussed with the software suppliers.

Until a case is migrated to UC, it will be treated under the current housing subsidy rules.

7. UC Landlord

DWP informed the meeting that the Frequently Asked Questions for UC landlords is expected to be placed in the public domain in the next 2 months.

8. AOB

The LAAs commented on the “below the line” paper on the transition to Public Services Network (PSN), and in particular whether there is any alternative regarding the timetable for compliance. It was agreed that PSN should be discussed at the August Steering Group meeting.

The LAAs commented on the changes to the Housing Policy enquiries inbox. They noted that they had not been informed, adding that this change could cause LAs difficulties when dealing with tribunal cases.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 07 August 2013, Room 6.03 Caxton House, usual start time of 11.30.

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