



Title of meeting:	DWP LAA Steering Group
Date:	07 August 2013
Location:	Caxton House Room 6.03
Attendees:	<p>DWP: Andrew Parfitt (Chair), Mont Goldman (Secretariat), Huw Meredith, Mel Frankham, Steve Imeson (dial-in), Judith Hartshorne, Sylvia Haslehurst (dial-in) Sarah Ormerod, Manny Ibiayo, Yvonne Smith, Peter Haley, Malcolm Eadie (dial-in), Caroline Anderson</p> <p>Cabinet Office: Karen Cleale (dial-in)</p> <p>DCLG: Danielle Houghton</p> <p>GLA: Simon Cribbens</p> <p>Observers: Chris Kearney (LA Secondee), Durami Karim (LA Secondee), Alice Stretch (Intern) Lesley Cunningham</p> <p>LAAs: Rose Doran, Lesley Pigott, Colin Wallbank, Matthew Evans, Pat Durkin,</p> <p>Dial – in: Peter Meehan, Chris Gibbs, David Graaff</p>
Apologies:	John Swinnerton, Bill Hern, Valerie Pearce, Howard Mason, John Rosenbloom, Ann Cairns (Audit Scotland) Steve Carey Andrew Stevens

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.

The LAAs commented on the letter from Lord Freud in respect of HB Administration Subsidy 2014/15. They asked whether Administration Subsidy would be subject to any changes. DWP explained that the only impact on the subsidy was the efficiency savings mentioned in the Autumn Statement 2012 and the budget 2013; there would be no impact from Universal Credit.

DWP acknowledged the need for further discussions around the joint infrastructure costs which would need dis-aggregation once the migration to Universal Credit has been completed.

Action Points

The action points from July's meeting were cleared.

3. Updates:

Welfare Reform

DWP referred the meeting to the Urgent Bulletin and the 2 circulars recently issued on the removal of the spare room subsidy, DHPs and transition funding.

With regard to the additional DHP funding, the LAAs expressed a strong preference for an allocation process as opposed to the bidding process set out in the circular.

The LAAs noted that the circular and the press release had been issued simultaneously.

With regard to the bidding process, the LAAs were concerned about the timetable. They pointed out that a bidding process should be as straightforward as possible without any unnecessary micro-management.

With regard to the transitional funding, LAAs asked whether it could be used solely for DHPs. It was explained that the transitional funding is flexible funding to help claimants with the transition to the change and its use was not confined to DHPs.

Temporary Accommodation

DWP updated the meeting. They confirmed the amount for the Management Fee in Universal Credit would be a single rate.

Since discussions about the future of temporary accommodation began in 2012 more is now known about the rate of growth of Universal Credit in 2013-14. As the likelihood is that will be very few cases of temporary accommodation in the pathfinders in 2013-14, there are no plans for any new arrangements to cover management fee costs in this year. To do otherwise would be cumbersome and disproportionate. As UC expands DWP will look to see what arrangements are needed for 2014-15.

DWP intends to issue a circular in October 2013

The LAAs raised an issue of how claimants in receipt of UC will be identified as being in temporary accommodation. DWP will look at how this can be achieved.

Benefit Cap

DWP updated the meeting on national implementation:

Tranche one:

- The national rollout of the benefit cap commenced on Monday 15 July and capping is proceeding as planned.
- The IT is working well with no reported problems

- The accuracy of the referrals has been consistently good.

Tranche 2

- Tranche 2, involving 40 LAs with over 275 potential cases for capping is planned to commence on August 12th.
- For the first week, volumes will be low, with an average of 2-3 cases per day.
- Co-location has been agreed for 36 sites, with four sites content with current working arrangements.
- On 12 August the project will issue letters to all LA Chief Executives, setting out progress made on tranches 1 and 2.

DWP also informed the meeting that two sets of official benefit cap statistics have been published; one relating to the four London Boroughs who implemented the cap from 15 April 2013 and the other to national Jobcentre Plus activity with claimants identified as potentially impacted by the benefit cap.

DWP re-iterated previous agreements that any emerging issues arising from the benefit cap would be referred to POG as national implementation was proceeding.

Benefit Cap Best Practice Hub

DWP introduced a set of slides setting out:

- The objectives; to find a sustainable way of sharing experiences, best practice and lessons learned.
- The proposal to use a website/"hub"
- The scope of the project
- Examples of the content

The LAAs agreed in principle to a best practice hub, pointing out that it would need to be clear that this was for best practice and would not be prescriptive. They added that value could be added were it to broaden the scope to include the wider aspects of welfare reform.

DCLG referred to the Direct Payments Demonstration Projects Learning Network, which is jointly run by CIH, DCLG & DWP.

The group agreed to provide any feedback on the hub proposal by Thursday 15th August.

Universal Credit

DWP referred the meeting to the written update.

In addition, DWP referred the meeting to the recent announcement on the roll out, explaining the implications for the Local Support Service Framework, which will not be nationally applied until 2015/16. The document setting out consolidation and progress will be issued in October 2013, and the definitive update for the framework will be issued

in autumn 2014.

Local Authority Transition Working Group (LATWG)

DWP updated the meeting on the recent LATWG meeting.

The main topic of discussion was the draft Strategic Intent Document (SID). DWP explained that a dedicated Design and Build team has been established, and a LA secondee will be added to the team. The team will give regular updates to the LATWG.

The LAAs commented on the timetable for migration, which was now compressed, creating a steeper trajectory, and that the SID was more focussed on the end point.

Another area for discussion at LATWG was around alternative payment arrangements. DWP explained that following Lord Freud's announcement in June, collaborative working with social landlords with a commitment to include LAs, was ongoing.

Visits to four or five LAs are planned.

The LAAs queried the impact on LA budgets for the Local Services Support Framework. DWP pointed out that the October iteration should provide more clarity.

DWP said that more pilots are under consideration and expressions of interest have been received from LAs. The LA Led Pilots had asked for an extension.

The LAAs commented that the roll out plans and migration strategy to 2017 was critical for planning. DWP explained that it had made a commitment to provide more detail in the autumn.

Fraud and Error: Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS)

DWP referred the meeting to the written update. In addition to the update paper, DWP explained that the future organisational structure for SFIS was under discussion and recommendations will be put before the Permanent Secretary and Ministers.

The LAAs raised an issue around joint working with LCTS & DWP benefits, pointing out the implications for disclosure. They requested a separate meeting with Fraud Investigation Service (FIS).

AP Aug 01 2013: DWP agreed to arrange a meeting with FIS and the LAAs to discuss issues around joint working with LCTS & DWP benefits, including the implications for disclosure.

DCLG

The Steering Group noted the written update from DCLG.

The LAAs asked about uprating for pensioners on Council Tax Support.

AP Aug 02 2013: DCLG agreed to issue a note clarifying the position for uprating for pensioners on Council Tax Support.

4. Third Party Deductions (TPD)

DWP led the meeting through a set of slides.

The slides set out:

- The scope, showing the benefits from which deductions can be taken.
- The priority order.
- The changes to deductions from contributory benefits
- The electronic delivery of applications through Excel spreadsheets
- The priority order for Universal Credit third party deductions
- The priority order for enforcing social obligations, and further social obligation deductions
- Ways of ensuring recovery of benefit debt

AP Aug 03 2011: The LAAs asked whether the rates for Contributory ESA and JSA and Universal Credit can be circulated along with the Excel spreadsheet.

The LAAs asked whether any consideration could be given to changes to legislation regarding ongoing liability to prevent further debt accruing. DWP said that this would be highlighted to Strategy colleagues for consideration. The policy behind the scheme is to prevent further debt accruing as well as discharging the arrears.

5. Payment Deductions Programme Overview

DWP led the meeting through a set of slides.

The slides set out:

- The background in relation to of existing HMRC, LA and DWP debt which will be no longer recoverable from legacy systems as cases migrate to UC
- The design principles, with DWP responsible for recovery
- An illustration of the operating framework
- The status of the programme, pathfinder and progress towards automation
- The Art of the Possible, which is a design review to consider ways to simplify and innovate.
- A series of next steps.

The LAAs noted the presentation.

6. Public Services Network

DWP referred the meeting to the information paper, and introduced a colleague from the

Cabinet Office, PSN lead for LA migration.

The LAAs asked whether there are any contingency plans for LAs which end up being disconnected. DWP explained that existing arrangements are limited and DWP is currently looking at options and potential impacts on operations. DWP and Cabinet Office are working closely with any LAs that have been identified as in most danger. Remedial action plans will only be accepted where the end point is untrusted; communication on that issue has been issued to all authorities.

It was confirmed that DWP is also subject to Cabinet Office conditions for compliancy.

7. LA Engagement

DWP updated the meeting on the new senior stakeholder engagement group.

8. AOB

It was agreed that the rationalisation of the remit for the Steering Group in light of the changing landscape should be discussed at the September meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 04 September 2013, Room 6.03 Caxton House, usual start time of 11.30.

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