



Summary Minutes

Title of meeting: POG

Date: 01 October 2014

Location: Caxton House Room 6.03

Attendees: DWP: Geoff Scammell (Chair), Mont Goldman (Secretariat), Barry Dennett, Steve Fail, Aisling Fox, Michelle Heath

Dial in: Lesley Gordon, Dawn Singer, Alex Suswillo, Beverley Winnemore, Carole Pearson

LAAs: Paul Ellery, Mark Gilmore, Gwyn Thomas, June Deans, Frankie Cartwright, Chris Boylett

Dial-in: Les Roberson Pamela Richardson Matthew Evans, Martin O'Neill

Apologies: Alan Sinclair, Mark Underwood, Colin Wallbank, Alison McGrory, Karl Thomas

Welcome and Introductions:

DWP opened the meeting and introductions were made round the table and for those dialing in. Les Robertson (COSLA) and Chris Boylett were welcomed as new members of POG

Matters Arising

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Action Points

The outstanding action points were cleared.

DWP updated the meeting on an action point from March concerning POG's request for general guidance around First Tier Tribunal responses on issues such as Size Restriction and Benefit Cap in respect of Human Rights legislation.

It was agreed to reinstate the action point pending further developments.

3. RTI Update

DWP RTI project updated the meeting

- Testing is underway in six sites to identify issues around the quality of the data, and feedback has been positive
- Management Information (MI) is being gathered, giving a clear view of any problems
- Work is underway to resolve issues identified, e.g. issues around passported benefits which should not have been referred
- Work is ongoing to resolve an anomaly around case referrals of insufficient monetary value
- Once the interim report from the MI has been collated it will be shared with POG
- Work on the guidance is underway and the Implementation Working Group will be an integral part of the Quality Assurance process with POG receiving the final version
- Go – live will be as scheduled for 06 October.

Within DWP thus far RTI has had a positive impact on the savings achieved

POG also pointed out the positive effect of testing prior to going live.

4. Scottish Rate of Income Tax (SRIT)

DWP SRIT Team updated the meeting.

They summarised:

- The introduction of SRIT through the Scotland Act of 2012.
- Implementation in April 2016
- Discussions already held with the Software Suppliers

- An assessment of the impacts on Housing Benefit (HB)an overview of SRIT
- discussions which are ongoing with COSLA
- SRIT will collected by HMRC on behalf of the Scottish Government.
- SRIT will be based on residency in Scotland
- The main interaction with HB will be around calculation of earnings

Legacy suppliers will be required to make some changes and will need assurances from LAs. LAs currently do not hold and use the tax codes. .

Although POG gave an assurance that there were no IT changes required to LA systems, DWP felt that there were two additional areas they needed to consider:

- i) Any changes to LA forms and leaflets that refer to tax.
- ii) Training and guidance for LA staff.

POG asked about in year changes. DWP explained that there will be no in year changes, and should the Scottish Government announce the rate late, an assumed calculation can be made under Deeming Powers.

In the discussion that followed, key points to emerge were:

- The potential impact on unearned income cases
- Whether notifications will need to be changed and whether the governing DWP regulations will need to be amended
- The impact from changes in income and the fact self employed do not have tax code
- HMRC guidelines will be followed with regard to cross border claimants
- Should a Scottish resident of 6 months or longer move to England they will still be regarded as a Scottish taxpayer and the Scottish rate will apply
- The regulations for the self employed will need to be reviewed to see whether any amendments are required

DWP explained that legislation regarding a Welsh Rate of Income Tax is underway, and additional guidance may be required for English LAs.

It was agreed that POG will continue to be updated on general DWP progress of the SRIT project and POG members will be invited to attend a special meeting to fully agree the impact on the LAs.

POG agreed to canvas their LA colleagues to impact their forms, letters, guidance and training against the SRIT and advise DWP of any impact at the joint DWP/LA meeting.

5. Document Retention

DWP explained the reasons for the proposed changes for LAs in respect of retention of documents

POG was content in principle with the proposals, and Records Management Policy will be updated accordingly.

POG members asked about the length of time data is held on CIS, and queried the shorter retention time for Income Support.

DWP reassured POG that DWP Fraud and Error teams had been included in their discussions.

6. DHP Overpayments

DWP advised POG of the current position regarding overpayments of DHP where decisions in respect of the benefit cap have been overturned.

7. Fraud and Error Performance Measurement (LA engagement with the HB Review Process)

DWP explained that the purpose of the discussion was to seek POG's approval regarding proposals to revise the HB Review process

The discussion which followed focused on:

- Key areas of fraud
- The 10 day consideration policy and the escalation process if there is no contact after the 10 day period
- The pros and cons of using nominated officers
- Visibility at the end of the process
- Subsidy thresholds regarding the amount of official error
- Incentivisation for LAs

POG pointed out that they are committed to drive up engagement with the review process, in particular the challenge function and suggested a different approach to masterclasses and seminars. They felt that webinars and use of HB Direct could be an alternative way forward.

In summary, DWP asked POG to canvass their colleagues regarding the review process, with particular reference to the 10 day period, with a view to further discussions at the next POG.

8. AOB

State Pensions

DWP advised the meeting of the key legislative changes to the new State Pension from 6 April 2016, in particular around:

- Qualifying Years for the new state pension
- The four components for the new state pension
- The impact on LAs around CIS/ATLAS.

Information Sharing with Social Landlords for UC

POG noted the commencement of the consultation.

Date of Next Meeting The next POG will take place on 29 October, Caxton House Room 6.03. 10.30 – 12.30

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