



Summary Minutes

Title of meeting: DWP Local Authority Associations (LAA) Steering Group

Date: 05 November 2014

Location: Caxton House Room 6.03

Attendees: DWP: Andrew Parfitt (Chair), Mont Goldman (Secretariat), Clare Elliott, Bill Hern, Huw Meredith, Manny Ibiayo, Jenita Chelva, Mel Frankham, Mabel Wanhogo, Idaros Yusuf

Dial-in: Caroline Anderson, Natalie Russell

Observers: Jon Walton, Simon McCullough

DCLG: Leona Patterson, Margaret Uhure,

LAAs: Dan McCartney, Pat Durkin, Daniel Drillsma-Millgrom, Lesley Pigott, Colin Wallbank, Valerie Pearce, Howard Mason, Andrew Stevens

Dial-in: Peter Meehan, Colin Wallbank

Apologies: Chris Gibbs, Rose Doran, Steve Carey, Paul Ellary

1. Welcome and Introductions:

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

Matters Arising

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

2. Updates

Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS)

DWP updated the meeting.

- The November tranche of the implementation rollout commenced on 01 November with 23 LAs.
- 65 LA staff have transferred to DWP for November.
- The December tranche is on track for delivery and engagement has begun with LAs for the February tranche onwards.
- Planning is underway for the transfer of HMRC staff in February.

- Work is ongoing around arrangements for pension provision.

The Steering Group referred to lessons learned from the rollout of Universal Credit (UC), in respect of partnership working. DWP pointed out that SFIS is sharing its plans for rollout at a strategic level with the appropriate UC teams.

The Steering Group asked about legal rights to investigate Council Tax Reduction fraud.

DCLG

Figures for Administration Grant had been passed to DWP and work with senior officials on New Burdens is ongoing.

DCLG went on to say that discussions are proceeding with legal teams around any changes to the prescribed requirements.

The Steering Group formally expressed concern with the three options contained in the consultation on Local Welfare Allowance. Their chief concern is around the lack of ongoing funding and the lack of an option to continue the current arrangement.

Universal Credit (UC) / LA Transition Working Group (LATWG)

- UC has expanded to 68 Jobcentres across England and Wales, covering 30 LAs.
- Claims are currently being taken for singles and couples and it is planned to take claims from families later in the autumn.
- Following the Ministerial statement regarding expansion, the early schedule for rollout is currently being finalised, with the first tranche planned for February 2015.
- Engagement has commenced with the LAs in the first tranche and a formal note will be issued to all LAs shortly.
- Discussions with the LAAs continue, and their recommendations are being taken into account.

DWP outlined the criteria for selection of LAs for rollout:

- Deliverability by the Jobcentres and Service Centres, with particular reference to capacity and training.
- Whether the LAs are adjacent to existing live sites.
- Whether co-location is in practice.

District Managers are consulting with their counterpart LAs to identify any issues about going live in tranche 1. This is not a case of the LA opting in or out, this is to ensure that the LAs can identify any red flagged issues.

LATWG

LATWG met on 22 October. DWP highlighted some of the items discussed:

- More information regarding expansion planning and additional issues around clarifying the gateway.
- LATWG was updated on data sharing, including fast track work to consider secondary legislation to facilitate data sharing.
- LATWG received a presentation on the Housing Costs alignment process in the North West.
- LATWG discussed the delivery partnership agreement
- There was an update on in-work support and the conditionality regime for former Tax Credit claimants, including the Claimant Commitment and work-search.

A discussion followed focusing on the types and number of forums which the LAAs and their advisors are committed to attend.

3. Fraud & Error Reduction Incentive Scheme (FERIS)

DWP provided an update on the current position for FERIS, following the overview given to the October meeting. The aim of the scheme is to reduce the amount of fraud and error in the HB caseload. The scheme has been fully developed and the intention is to launch it on 24 November. The scheme will consist of three key elements:

- Incentive schemes.
- Start up fund.
- Bid fund.

The Steering Group asked whether any activity will be discounted towards LA baselines. DWP explained that no activity will be precluded and that all information will be gathered through SHBE.

The LGA referred to the high level of sensitivity for both DWP and councils, coupled with financial and resource pressures. The LGA suggested that any release of information is first shared and agreed with the LAA Steering Group. In addition, the scheme should include a review after a given period to evaluate its success and uptake in order to consider any necessary changes.

4. Administration Subsidy 2015/16

DWP updated the meeting on:

- The proposed HB administration subsidy allocations for individual LAs.
- An explanation of the netting and capping methodology.
- The range of options for England, Scotland and Wales.

The Steering Group, (representatives for England, Scotland and Wales) was asked to confirm their preferred options.

For Scotland, Council of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA confirmed its preference.

For Wales, Welsh Local Government Association (LGA) confirmed its preference.

For England, LGA pointed out that it should seek to minimize the impact of the reductions.

5. National Audit Office Report (NAO)/Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

DWP updated the meeting on the NAO report and PAC hearing

DWP explained that the NAO report followed the Value for Money review into fraud and error.

PAC Hearing

Issues raised included:

- SFIS.
- Real Time Information (RTI).
- FERIS.
- The subsidy and certification regime.

DWP will issue a formal response to the NAO report and workshops with LAs are planned to look at the certification regime.

6. AOB

Engagement with LA IT Software Suppliers

DWP advised the Steering Group that the arrangement through which the LA Data Sharing programme engages with the LA IT software suppliers has been challenged by the UC programme. The Steering Group pointed out that that the informal arrangement which is currently in place has been working well.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)

The Steering Group requested an update on the figures for 2015/16 for the next meeting.

Date of Next Meeting: The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 10 December, Room 6.03 Caxton House.

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