



Summary Minutes

Title of meeting:	Practitioners' Operational Group (POG)
Date:	28 January 2015
Location:	Caxton House Room 6.03
Attendees:	<p>DWP: Geoff Scammell (Chair), Mont Goldman (Secretariat), Barry Dennett, Beverly Winnemore, Sharon Mcgeown, Mabel Wanogho, Tessa Deare, Marco Almeida</p> <p>Dial in: Liz Wright, David Whetton, Richard Griffiths, Jo Wood, Ann Pinchin, Jon Walton</p> <p>Local Authority Associations (LAAs): Paul Ellary, Chris Boylett, Frankie Cartwright, Gwyn Thomas, Martin O'Neill, Mark Gillmore</p> <p>Dial-in: June Deans, Pamela Richardson, Mandy Davies</p>
Apologies:	Karl Thomas, Matthew Evans, Paula Doherty

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.

Action Points

The action points were cleared with the exception of AP Oct 04 2014 which was carried forward.

3. Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) New Burdens

- The New Burdens Assessment discussions are taking place and it is hoped, subject to agreement that payment to LAs can be made by June/July 2015.
- The Practitioner Group, including LAA representation met on 26 January and was due to meet again on 23rd February. Further meetings have been scheduled.

DWP is working towards having access to SHBE data.

4. SFIS: General Update and Service Level Agreement (SLA)

The SLA for Service Provision can only have value if both parties are able to comply.

DWP added that the Service Provision and associated SLA will be subject to ongoing review, particularly around funding and local agreements

5. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

DWP outlined the main changes to the MoU:

- There are some legal changes taking into account data sharing in light of welfare reform.
- The annexes now include more information.
- There is an additional annex containing the types of data shared with LAs for the purpose of the MoU.

The MoU has been re-drafted to ensure that it does not duplicate the Guidance for LAs in the use of Social Security Data. DWP invited further comment from POG prior to sign off, with the intention to issue the final version to LAs by the end of the financial year.

POG were generally content with the amended version, pointing out a potential issue around homeworkers.

6. ATLAS/ETD Merge

DWP updated the meeting:

- Some issues need to be resolved before national rollout can proceed.
- To this end it has been decided to defer the rollout until fit for purpose, which should be by the end of March, this will also avoid the LA end of year processes.
- JSAPs ETD feed into ATLAS has been switched off on a temporary basis due to volumes of notifications that require manual intervention as a result of identified issues.
- Dual running will be possible after national rollout because access to the existing ETD server has been extended until the end of April 2015.
- The project will continue to update POG on a regular basis.

7. Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Schemes (FERIS)

DWP updated the meeting:

- The schemes have been running for 2 months and the key focus has been on getting LAs to either opt in or apply for start-up funding by the deadline of 30 January.
- Additional funding via a maintenance fund will be available for 2105/16.
- 368 out of a total of 379 LAs opted-in, which equates to 99% of the Housing Benefit (HB) caseload.

- 315 start-up fund applications have been received, with 40 approved and paid.
- 42 LAs opted-in only (without applying for any funding).
- Applications for the start-up fund have been mainly for staff for resource intensive activities.
- Performance Development Team consultants are contacting the LAs to encourage opt-in.
- A workshop on SHBE data is planned for early in February.
- An options paper for 2015/16, including timescales for maintenance funding and baselines and thresholds, will be issued to the LAA Steering Group.
- Applications for maintenance funding will be similar to the application for startup funding. The specific details and application process will be communicated during March 2015.
- FERIS is in discussion with RTI to consider how both schemes align with the wider F&E strategy.
- FERIS aims to process applications to payment within 20 working days (if no further information is required).

8. Real Time Information (RTI)

DWP updated the meeting on the proposed wider strategic use of RTI, and outlined the objectives of the project:

- The current RTI solution is not sustainable, so a strategic solution is proposed.
- The focus will be on prevention rather than detection.
- The AGILE process for development will be user-centric.
- A front end user interface is envisioned.
- An Alert service will flag up financial changes.

DWP explained that the project is seeking to work with a LA to view the whole HB process.

POG members asked about the next set of RTI referrals.

An action point was taken for DWP to issue an update to POG about future RTI referrals.

9. Migrant Access to Benefits (MABs)

DWP updated the meeting, highlighting:

- The restrictions already brought into place.
- The changes being introduced from 09 February.

DWP outlined the numbers in receipt of Housing Benefit likely to be affected due to the changes being introduced from 09 February.

POG members asked about consideration for guidance, particularly around entitlement, Permanent Residency and Right to Reside.

An action point was taken for DWP to consider guidance around residency and right to reside, and the evidence requirements.

10. AOB

POG members asked for an update on the HB Review process for the next meeting.

Date of Next Meeting The next POG will take place on 25 February, Caxton House Room 6.03.
10.30 – 12.30

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