



# Summary Minutes

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

**Date:** 14 September 2016

**Location:** Caxton House Room 6.03

**Attendees: DWP:** Manny Ibiayo (Chair), Mont Goldman (Secretariat), Caroline Todd, Chris Franks, Craig Smith, Ursula Brennan, George Beresford, Robert Irvine, Steve Kempson, Sian Fonfara, Gethin Hughes, Trevor Pendergast, Paul Robinson, Kay Bendell

**Dial in:** Bev Winnemore

**Observers:** Jason Perrott, Satbinder Man, Gladys Nyakaiski, Greville D'Cunha

**LAAs:** Sonika Sidhu, Andrew Stevens, Alex Sewell, Jennifer Wynter, Matthew Evans

**Dial in:** Howard Mason, Peter Meehan, Colin Wallbank

**Apologies:** Paul Ellary Andrew Barbour, Rose Doran Steve Carey, Lisa Hayward Clare Elliott, Natalie Keogh, Catherine Garman

## 1. Welcome and Introductions:

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

### Matters Arising

Minutes

The minutes of the March meeting were agreed, and the action points were cleared.

## 2. Updates:

Housing Delivery Division (HDD) Overview

DWP advised on the following key areas:

- HDD is working with colleagues on the Autumn Statement, due on 23 November.
- Housing Benefit (HB) Administration subsidy for 2017/18 is on track and options will be presented in November.

- Two Local Authority (LA) secondees have been recruited to help with the development of the new certification arrangements.
- HDD is working with LAs on their concerns in respect of Wider Use of Real Time Information (WURTI); a test and learn process is underway, and findings will be shared with the Steering Group.

The LAAs asked if any further New Burdens were under consideration. HDD is working with colleagues in respect of the changes to policy on Child Tax Credits to limiting support for two children, as well as the changes to Employment Support Allowance (ESA).

#### Housing Policy Division (HPD) Overview

DWP advised on the following key areas:

Supported Accommodation:

- an announcement is expected in early autumn
- it is hoped to publish the Ipsos Mori research findings before the Autumn Recess.

#### Universal Credit (UC)

DWP updated the meeting on the following:

- The UC LA Steering Group met in September, key points discussed were:
  - the roll out schedule
  - the prioritisation of work in respect of work and welfare changes
  - sites for Phases two and three, with publication of sites four to six due in November.

The LAAs asked about migration of cases in Live Service to Full Service, and whether those claimants will need to apply for Full Service or whether they will simply be transferred.

The LAAs raised an issue around additional funding for the automation of Council Tax, and that the funding provided has now run out. DWP noted the points made and will provide an update at the next meeting.

The LAAs also referred to the roll out schedule in respect of the LA IT suppliers, and any potential issues regarding test files. London Councils offered to assist in gathering evidence.

### **3. Limiting Support to Two Children**

DWP advised that this represented the first engagement regarding changes to existing policy in respect of Child Tax Credits, adding that the changes were introduced in the 2015 Budget.

DWP explained the core policy principles behind the changes to Tax Credits (limitation of support to a maximum of 2 children), and that the policy will be introduced in 2017.

DWP explained that as Child Tax Credits are a passport to HB, the policy changes will affect the amount of HB that can be paid.

#### **4. Removal of the Work Related Activity Component in ESA and HB**

DWP explained the policy changes, who will be affected, and why the changes are being made.

DWP went on to explain the Impact on LAs, and that the regulations for the changes are being developed, and that the Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) will be advised.

#### **5. Benefit Cap**

The meeting discussed the possibility of a “firebreak” in the implementation schedule over the Christmas period.

DWP had looked into it in quite some detail but had had to conclude that it would not be possible to offer a “firebreak” since:

- slowing the processing work in DWP down for a period would jeopardise completion by the end of January, and therefore risk running into Council Tax billing in the LAs

The LAAs pointed out that some LAs usually close over the Christmas period.

DWP explained that the implementation schedule will be based on LA caseload volume, low to high, and that the largest LAs will be scheduled towards the end of January.

#### **6. LA Funding Project**

DWP explained the thinking behind the project.

- the aim is to better understand the totality of funding
- a mapping exercise will be undertaken.

DWP referred to the District Partnership Arrangements, which is the current way in which LAs are funded for UC, adding that the aim is change this method and create two streams:

- i) Universal Support Grant.

ii) New Burdens.

DWP went on to say that the aim is to provide an indication for the following year by the end of November, and to provide a breakdown of the amount for each LA. These will be forecast figures subject to the usual caveats. Formulas are under discussion.

The aim is to build a more strategic relationship with LAs, and to notify them of all funding streams.

The project will meet with the UC Director General, and then with Government.

**8. AOB**

The LAAs raised an issue following circular S9/2016 in which some LAs were allocated very small amounts for New Burdens payment 2016/17: Removal of temporary accommodation management fee in Housing Benefit subsidy. The LAAs reiterated their views regarding the provision of a de-minimus, particularly as some amounts awarded cost more to process than the amount awarded.

**Date of Next Meeting:** The next full meeting of the LAA Steering Group will take place on 09 November 2016 in Caxton House

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