

Housing Benefit Direct issue 141 October 2013



ISSN 2045-6131 (Online)

Editorial

Welcome to my first Editorial update. In the first few weeks I've been learning as much as I can about my new role and meeting as many people as possible. I'm under no illusion that I still have quite a bit of the learning curve to scale in this complex and important area of government business. My thanks to Bill Hern for holding the fort so ably, to Jonathan Bottomer for his editorial role last month and to Julia Sweeney who has made such an important contribution to this area over the last two years.

While this newsletter presents us with an opportunity to keep you informed, I am also keen to find out what day-to-day issues you face in delivering housing costs and in responding to Welfare Reform. We have excellent engagement with local authority (LA) representatives on a range of consultative forums but it isn't possible to hear from everyone. Our Performance Development Team stand ready to engage with and support you so please share your experiences with them. I'm keen to get as much real-time intelligence as possible. HB speed of processing statistics are due for publication this month, I'll be interested to see how performance held up over a period of significant change at the start of the year.

I attended and presented at the IRRV conference in Scotland in September. It was good to hear from partners at the conference. I was really impressed hearing about the creative approaches you were taking to bring together DHPs, Local Welfare Provision and other local services to provide a bespoke and effective service for vulnerable people. Unfortunately, I will be on leave during the Telford conference but do look out for the Housing Delivery Team who are attending and presenting and will be supporting the DWP stand.

My top priority is supporting the migration of LAs onto the Public Services Network (PSN). You'll all be aware of the need to meet the standards in the new Code of Connection in order to maintain connectivity. This month the newsletter includes more information and contact details for the team in DWP supporting the migration. Also, this month: the additional £20m DHP funding and how to apply.

And finally, we are really proud of the team members who have worked to develop and support Huddle and who received an award in September (picture included).

I look forward to working with you.

Clare Elliott

clare.elliott@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

[Distribution enquiries](#)

Public Services Network – planning for Migration

Your Public Services Network (PSN) Migration leads should be working closely with the Cabinet Office to achieve compliance to the new PSN security standards and preparing for migrating your site to the new network.

As you know the Cabinet Office has raised the bar on compliance standards. Failure to achieve compliance means that a local authority (LA) could be placed into an escalation process leading potentially to removal of connectivity.

The Cabinet Office continues to maintain pressure to ensure compliance but LAs should be reminded that preparation to migrate to the new network shouldn't take a "back seat".

Three LAs were successfully migrated to PSN in July, but the majority of migration activity will take place from now until the end of March 2014. Recently issued communications from the Cabinet Office are urging LAs to select a migration slot as there are daily limits on the number of migrations.

You will be aware of the serious implications of losing access to DWP data so it's worth checking that your PSN Migration lead is fully engaged with the Cabinet Office and that your site confirms their migration slot soon.

View the communication on the [PSN website](#).

Cabinet Office can be contacted at: psn@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) LA Migration Project can be contacted at:

hdd-psn.businessimpactingteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.

Additional Discretionary Housing Payment funding

On 30 July 2013, DWP Ministers announced additional 2013/14 reserve funding of £20 million for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) to support LAs who have experienced a significant increase in the number of legitimate DHP applications. This is one-off funding designed to assist LAs in coping with the increased volume of DHP applications from claimants affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy (RSRS) and to support claimants as they make the transition to welfare reform.

On Monday 23 September we issued a circular HB A18/2013, which contains information about how LAs can bid for additional DHP funding. It contains full details of how the bidding scheme will work and includes an application form on which bids should be made. You should note that each bid must be signed off by the Finance Director in your LA.

This circular has been issued to all authorities but is also available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/244593/a18-2013.pdf

Any enquiries about the bidding scheme should be sent to anne.p.brown@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Award winning collaboration between LAs and DWP

In the September issue of the General Information Bulletin G9/2013 we mentioned that we had been nominated for the London and Home Counties One Service Network Innovation Award for the implementation of Huddle. We have been successful and the team recently received a Bronze award. They were interested to read about the work to successfully utilise secure cloud based collaboration with external users.

We could not have achieved this without the continued support from all the LAs who have used Huddle, and we would like to encourage any users yet to register to join in.

If you have any suggestions on how we can further improve the experience of using Huddle please let us know.

If you would like to gain access to Huddle as an LA user please contact la-sst.hdd@dwp.gsi.gov.uk with confirmation of your LA IT supplier.

