



# Summary Minutes

**Title of meeting:** DWP Local Authority (LA) Welfare Steering Group

**Date:** 23 November 2017

**Location:** Caxton House Room 6.24

**Attendees:** **DWP:** Annette Madden (Chair), Mont Goldman (Secretariat), Chris Franks, Kay Bendell, Phil Eskdale - Lord, Rhys Cockrell, Edward Green, Graham Roberts, Raj Kang, George Beresford, Darrell Smith, Monya Ladipo, Natalie Nobrega

**Dial in:** Adrian Shooter, Caroline Todd, Simon Lunn, Steve Frakes, Ian Gibbons

**Welsh Government:** Linda Davis

**DCLG:** Kelly Verney

**LAs:** Rose Doran, Lisa Hayward, Sarah Price, Sam Ashton, Matthew Evans, Tim Savill, Ian Brown, Mark Fowler, June Deans, Lee Hemsworth, Michael McClements, Adrian Mills, Andy Croucher, Zena Cooke

**Dial in:** Susan Donald, Simone Hines, Peter Meehan, Helen Paine

**Apologies:** Clare Elliott, Darren Baker, Karina Stibbards, Jayne Henderson, Andrew Stevens, Howard Mason, Jennifer Wynter, Frank McGregor

## 1. Welcome and Introductions:

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

## 2. Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed. Action Points

The action points were cleared.

## 3. Draft Issues Resolution Log

DWP referred the Steering Group to the draft Universal Credit (UC) Issues Resolution Log explaining that that this was a high level overview of the current issues and their status. DWP asked the Steering Group for their views on whether all key issues had been captured.

Steering Group members pointed out that some issues require more detail.

#### 4. Post Budget Update

DWP informed the meeting of the measures introduced in the Chancellor's Budget (22 November) and the Secretary of State's speech to the House of Commons (23 November) including:

- An increase in the maximum amount for Advance Payments from January 2018, and an extension of the repayment period.
- From spring 2018 it will be possible to claim for an Advance Payment online
- Changes to the seven day waiting period; from February 2018 all claimants will be eligible for UC from the first day of their claim (subject to satisfying the conditions of entitlement).
- From April 2018 DWP will pay claimants an additional two weeks Housing Benefit (HB) after the end of their claim to HB to support them transitioning onto Universal Credit.
- New claims for all Temporary Accommodation will be paid through HB from April 2018
- From January 2018 there will be no more new claims to Live Service, new claimants in Live Service areas will be directed to claim legacy benefits, (this will be reflected in HB Subsidy figures)
- Changes to the roll out for UC Full Service to allow the opportunity to implement these changes. This will not impact on the Managed Migration process which will begin in mid-2019.

DWP will write to all LA Chief Executives and the Scottish and Welsh Governments. The letter will give an assurance on funding.

The UC Bulletin has been held back so that it can include as much detail as possible, and that the revised roll out schedule has been published on .gov.uk. here: –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-transition-to-full-service>

DWP informed the meeting that the Budget contained additional funding for Fraud Error and Debt.

Steering Group members asked about the financial impact of the Transition to UC Housing Payment, and in particular on funding sources; what has been costed and what is the additional impact.

Steering Group members urged DWP to provide a timetable and breakdown of funding streams as LAs are currently working on budgets and savings.

## 5. Funding

Universal Support and Management Information (MI)

DWP advised the meeting that:

- 94% of LAs had submitted MI for the first 2 quarters
- Take up for both quarters was at similar levels

DWP stated out that evidence is needed in respect of Jobcentre activity, and that UC is looking at the end to end process.

The Local Government Association (LGA) representative pointed out that take-up has been more successful in areas where co-location is in operation.

DWP explained that these issues will be reviewed and taken up at the next round of LA Engagement events.

The Steering Group discussed:

- Differences between Live and Full Service referrals
- The need to spread Good Practice
- The links between LAs and Jobcentres

DWP went on to explain that for 2018/19, caseloads will need to be reworked in light of the roll out, and the focus will change.

HB Administration Subsidy

DWP explained that the amounts to be allocated are indicative.

DWP set out:

- The current progress
- Methodology options and funding
- Next steps
- Future improvement plans

DWP set out a comparison of the options, giving an overview of the options and outlining the key differences between them, and recommending its preferred option.

DWP explained that the object is to set out the methods how subsidy could be allocated around 3 key principles:

- i) Relative simplicity

- ii) As fairly as possible
- iii) With sustainability

In discussion the Steering Group asked whether the quantum can be revisited in light of the Budget announcements, and queried how LAs can secure business continuity. They also queried definitions around caseload, referring to increased complexities and activity around changes of circumstance.

DWP acknowledged the need for LAs to maintain their business continuity.

In answer to a question from group members, DWP confirmed that if group members could not reach a consensus as to which option they would prefer, then as in previous years the Department would allocate the Admin Subsidy funding using its preferred methodology.

The Steering Group asked when Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) would be producing figures for Local Council Tax Support for 2018/19, and whether the quantum for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) could be revisited.

## **6. HB Policy**

Transition to UC Housing Payment (formerly known as HB Run On)

DWP set out:

- the rationale for proposing the introduction of the measure
- HB run – on for natural migrations to UC
- HB run – on for managed migrations to UC.

In discussion the Steering Group made the following key points:

- They queried why UC could not make the payment through the Advance Payment mechanism
- With regards to boundary changes which LA would be liable.
- Whether the fact that that this payment would be for HB recipients only would affect the Equality Impact Assessment
- The potential for New Burdens and the need for DWP to engage with LA IT suppliers over any changes to LA software

DWP explained that following the announcement in the Budget concerning the changes to the UC roll out, assumed volumes will need to be revisited, as fewer than anticipated naturally migrated cases will be coming through.

The Steering Group expressed the view that the timetable for the introduction in April 2018 was overly challenging.

#### Specified Accommodation

DWP explained that with the scrapping of LHA rates in the Social Sector, a new funding model for Supported Accommodation will be split into 3 categories:

- Short term
- Longer term
- Sheltered

#### Long Term Supported Accommodation

DWP explained that the funding mechanism will stay within the welfare system, and will be part of UC

#### Short Term Supported Accommodation

#### Funding for Supported Housing

On 31 October 2017 DWP alongside DCLG published a policy statement outlining the government's proposals for a flexible funding approach for the supported housing sector, to come in to effect from April 2020. At the same time two consultations on the details of the models were launched. Also some research into the projected future demand in the sector has been commissioned.

As part of the policy statement, two consultations were launched; one on housing costs for sheltered and extra care accommodation, and one on housing costs for short-term supported accommodation.

Both of these consultations seek the views on the design of the government's new supported housing funding models which relate to England only. DWP is seeking views on the funding models from the sector, providers, commissioners and residents alike.

The consultation period for each of the consultations is 12 weeks commencing on 31 October 2017 and closing on 23 January 2018 at 11:45pm.

The policy statement and consultations can be accessed on GOV.UK here -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-for-supported-housing>

Special Practitioners' Operational Group (POG) 16 November

DWP summarised the special POG held on 16 November to discuss options for Managed Migration and the introduction of HB Run On.

In respect of the Managed Migration POG members were of the view that all benefit types should be migrated in one go rather than JSA cases first, with this process being done by postcode geography mirroring the rollout of the full service.

**7. AOB**

No further items were brought forward.

**Date of Next Meeting:** The next full meeting of the LA Welfare Steering Group will take place on 17 January 2017 in Caxton House room 5.22 starting at 11.00.

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