



# Summary Minutes

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

**Date:** 17 January 2018

**Location:** Caxton House Room 5.22

**Attendees:** **DWP:** Clare Elliott (Chair), Mont Goldman (Secretariat), Darren Baker, Adrian Shooter, Chris Franks, Annette Madden, Kay Bendell, Sheena Parker, Monya Ladipo, Simon Lunn, Michelle Hougham, Phillipa Fallowfield, Sam Mackley, Liz Crowther, Steve Frakes, Graham Roberts

**Dial in:** Caroline Todd, Natalie Nobrega, Ian Gibbons, Oliver Barrett, Richard Ward

**Welsh Government:** Linda Davis

**Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG):** Junaid Tamimu, Mercy Adebisi (Dial in)

**LAs:** Rose Doran, Lisa Hayward, Sarah Price, Sam Ashton, Tim Savill, Ian Brown, Michael McClements, Adrian Mills, Andy Croucher, Simone Hines, Andrew Stevens

**Dial in:** Pam Richardson, June Deans, Peter Meehan, Jayne Henderson, Linda Davis, Howard Mason

**Apologies:** Susan Donald, Zena Cooke, Lee Hemsworth, Matthew Evans, Karina Stibbards, Frank McGregor

## **Welcome and Introductions:**

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

## **2. Matters Arising**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Action Points

The action points were cleared.

## **3. Universal Credit (UC) Issues Resolution Log**

DWP referred the Steering Group to the Issues Resolution Log. Comments and suggestions from the last meeting had been taken into account.

DWP highlighted:

- the revised roll out schedule for full service for February through to April with 10 Jobcentres per month, to allow time for implementation of the changes announced in the Budget.

DWP confirmed that work on new burdens for the closure of live service is underway. DWP acknowledged that mixed economy LAs, i.e. those dealing with both live and full Service will be taken into account.

Overall, Steering Group members felt that the Issues Resolution Log should be more aligned with the other consultative forums.

#### **4. Funding**

Housing Benefit (HB) Admin Subsidy

DWP set out:

- the methodology option outcome from discussion at the 23 November meeting, and subsequent issue of circular S13/2017, illustrating the indicative 2018/19 HB Administration Subsidy arrangements
- current progress, impacting the changes resulting from the Budget, the changes being:
  - Temporary Accommodation Housing Support
  - UC full service roll out
  - UC live service closure
- analysts are currently finalising the numbers and they should be available in the near future.

next steps including:

- sign off of the level of UC savings
- Steering Group to review the draft circular
- setting up a task and finish group to start consultation on the 2019/20 methodology at a significantly earlier date.

The LAAs asked about the process for 2019/20. DWP explained that the intention is to let LAs know 6 months in advance although there are no guarantees, adding that the intention is to start the conversation as early as possible.

The LAAs asked about the composition of the task and finish group. DWP confirmed that any findings from the task and finish group will be subject to ratification from the LA Welfare Steering Group.

## UC Universal Support

DWP gave the meeting an overview of the current position:

- take up is low but showing improvement for Quarter 3, and work with LAs and Partnership Managers is ongoing
- LA Engagement workshops were held at the end of November/ early December, and feedback has been positive, with some key issues addressed
- more workshops are planned for the end of February/ early March, along with a Deep Dive to look at how to improve the end to end process.

DWP advised the meeting that following the Budget, the funding amount should be known at the end of January/beginning of February, subject to internal governance. The Local Government Association representative suggested that integrating Universal Support with the other areas of support available to LAs could improve take up, as there is a need to look at overall debt in conjunction with anti- poverty strategies.

The LAAs referred to the importance of the quality of referrals.

The meeting discussed the role of LAs and whether funding could be granted for missed appointments. DWP pointed out that UC would be asking LAs to provide Management Information (MI) in respect of missed appointments as part of the MI requirements for 2018/19.

### Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP): Government Contribution

DWP explained that since the special meeting on 06 December, a new Minister had been appointed. DWP added that the intent is to produce a response to the Steering Group as soon as possible.

### New Burdens 2018/19

DWP led the meeting through the new burdens amounts adjusted to take the Budget changes into account, broken down by HB policy area. DWP made specific reference to the following new burdens:

- DHP administration: the amount is indicative and is for England and Wales, as arrangements for Scotland are devolved
- Benefit Cap: the amount has been calculated reflecting the lower than expected number of claimants impacted by the Cap
- Migrant Access to Benefits: the amount is based on working age new claims, and may not be appropriate for 2019/20 as UC rolls out.

DWP confirmed that new new burdens such as the Transition to UC Housing Payment will not be included in the LA Funding Schedule, and will be circulated to LAs as soon as possible.

#### LA Funding Schedule

DWP updated the meeting on the latest position:

- the LA Funding Schedule 2018/19 will include final amounts and it is planned to issue it to all LAs in late January 2018
- Terms of Reference are being drafted for the proposed LA Funding Group, and the inaugural meeting is planned for February 2018

DWP explained that the original intention had been to publish the Funding Schedule in December, and that the Budget announcements had caused the delay. The schedule will include UC Universal Support, new burdens, DHPs and HB Subsidy final numbers.

DWP confirmed that once agreed, the Funding Team will write to LAs.

#### Local Authority Funding Group

DWP referred the Steering Group to the draft Terms of Reference, seeking comments by the end of the following week.

DWP explained that this will be a separate consultation group looking at appropriate levels of detail in respect of LA funding.

### **5. LA Welfare Steering Group: Terms of Reference Review**

DWP highlighted the following from the feedback from the survey issued to LA Welfare Steering Group members:

- the overall view is that meetings are going well, although the size of the meeting rooms can be an issue
- the start and finish times of the meetings was agreed
- paperwork should be issued no later than one week in advance of the meeting where possible.

### **6. Budget Measures**

Temporary Accommodation:

- regulations are with Ministers
- it is planned to lay the regulations within the next few weeks, and they will come into force from 11 April 2018
- DWP is working closely with MHCLG, initial meetings have taken place and the LAAs will be invited to future meetings.

DWP explained how the new regulations will affect claimants in Temporary Accommodation at the point of change, and how they affect UC and HB.

#### Transition to UC Housing Payment

- the introduction of this measure on 11 April 2018 will align with changes to Temporary Accommodation
- the consultation closed on 19 January 2018
- at the close of the consultation, DWP Housing Delivery Division (HDD) will commence working with LAs on how this will work in practice, taking the complexities into account
- it is planned to issue technical guidance as soon as possible
- HDD is working through queries from Software Suppliers

Steering Group members referred to the need for clear and transparent guidance, particularly around claimant notifications.

## **6. MHCLG Prescribed Regulations**

MHCLG updated the meeting:

- the MHCLG Prescribed Regulations came into force on 12 January 2018
- the regulations mirror DWP changes to HB, including the same disregards
- the regulations include updated figures for pensioners
- the regulations reflect the changes made in Scotland
- the regulations have been published with an explanatory memorandum.

The meeting discussed the introduction of the 2 child limit, and the implications for new burdens in respect of changes to LA software. It was also requested that DWP and MHCLG should work together more closely with regard to impacting changes as they are introduced rather than waiting until the Prescribed Regulations are updated.

MHCLG also updated the meeting on the Government response to the Ollerenshaw Report.

- cross government clearance was required and has been secured,
- the response is now with the Cabinet Office and, subject to clearance from the Prime Minister's Office; MHCLG is hoping to publish the response by the beginning of February.

## **7. AOB**

No further items were brought forward.

**Date of Next Meeting:** The next full meeting of the LA Welfare Steering Group is scheduled to take place on 07 March 2018 in Caxton House room 2.30 starting at 11.00.

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