



# Summary Minutes

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

**Date:** 09 September 2015

**Location:** Caxton House Room 6.03

**Attendees:** **DWP:** Neil Johnson (Chair), Mont Goldman (Secretariat), Chris Franks, Shirley Cook, Clare Elliott, Darren Baker, Manny Ibiayo, Chris Wood, Caroline Todd  
Dial in: Kay Bendall, Karen Buckley, Peter Dennis,

**DCLG:** Alan Millward

**LAAs:** David Lock, Pat Durkin, Daniel Drillsma-Millgrom, Paul Ellary, Howard Mason  
Dial in: Matthew Evans, Colin Wallbank, Peter Meehan, Chris Gibbs, John Rosenbloom

**Apologies:** Rose Doran, Lesley Pigott, David Graaff, Steve Carey, Andrew Stevens, Les Robertson

## 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 July and August meetings were agreed, and the action points were cleared.

## 2. Updates:

Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS)

The LAAs asked for more detail to be included in the written updates, and in particular to reflect the issues arising in live service. The LAAs reiterated their request for SFIS performance data.

With regard to publishing SFIS performance data, DWP explained that SFIS is looking into what can be published for 2016/17.

The LAAs asked how the Service Level Agreement (SLA) is being received in local authorities, (LAs), following their input to the consultation and review. DWP explained that the SLA is proving more successful than its predecessor.

Further discussion followed, around the time taken for LAs to receive feedback on their referrals, and the escalation routes set out in the SLA. DWP asked whether the LAAs can provide some examples.

#### DCLG

DCLG updated the meeting on the Council Tax Support Schemes Review. A secretariat is now in place and the process for selecting a chair is underway. The Review must conclude by April 2016.

With regard to a query raised around attachment to benefits for recovery of Council Tax, DWP confirmed that the question has been passed to the Review Secretariat and will be given due consideration by the Review once the full team is in place.

DCLG also updated the meeting on the progress through Parliament of Lord Marlesford's Private Members Bill and the Tenure Bill.

The LAAs asked whether there any plans to amend the Prescribed Regulations for Council Tax.

#### Universal Credit (UC)

DWP explained that the UC Steering Group had met on 07 September. This meeting included a demonstration of the digital service.

The LAAs asked whether the percentage of the UC caseload which contains the housing cost element was known and could be shared. DWP explained that this point had been taken as an action point at the UC Steering Group.

### **3. Abolition of Assessed Income Periods**

DWP explained that research indicated that the impact on LAs should be minimal due to automation through ATLAS.

The LAAs challenged this view pointing out some of the key areas which will potentially impact on LAs.

It was suggested that the LAAs should submit evidence to the project to substantiate their concerns around the potential impacts on LAs.

#### **4. Subsidy Update**

DWP updated the meeting.

Response to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

DWP explained that at the PAC hearing in 2014, six recommendations were given to DWP, with responses due by the end of September. In respect of the third recommendation, to review the subsidy regime, DWP explained that a survey was commissioned with Ipsos Mori. The response rate is approximately 46.5%.

The response to PAC is due at the end of September and the subsidy team is currently working with Cabinet Office to formalise the position. Once this has been agreed and signed off by the Permanent Secretary, it will be shared with the Steering Group.

HB Administration Subsidy 2016/17

DWP updated the current position and timetable, and sought LAA views on netting and capping in the allocation methodology.

DWP referred to the truncated timetable due to the Spending Review announcement in November. The LAAs pointed out that LA budgets are subject to consultation.

The LAAs asked whether they could see any analysis on the impacts to individual LAs of removing netting and capping, referring to the impact of the rollout of the UC digital service.

With regard to SFIS, the LAAs asked whether DWP could consider the possibility of reducing the amount to be recycled from HB administration subsidy in light of potential efficiency cuts for LAs.

#### **5. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) for 2016/17**

DWP outlined the current position.

DWP is looking at the possibility of workshops with the LAAs as part of the full consultation taking in views on the widest possible parameters.

The LAAs pointed out that the impact of the reductions to the benefit cap will need to be clarified.

The LAAs asked whether DWP can further advise the Steering Group on the DHP allocation for 2016/17.

## **7. Housing Benefit (HB): Budget Regulations**

DWP explained that the Social Security Advisory Committee (SAAC) will consult for one month, and that the regulations for Backdating, along with the removal of the Family Premium will be published in December.

The LAAs referred to the primary legislation required for the freezing of benefit rates and how this will affect the announcement on uprating.

## **8. AOB**

No items of AOB were brought forward.

**Date of Next Meeting:** The next full meeting of the LAA Steering Group will take place on 11 November

**Contact:** Mont Goldman

**Email:** [Mont.goldman@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Mont.goldman@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

**Direct line:** 020 7449 5327