



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

## Summary Minutes

**Title of meeting:**

**Date:**

**Location:**

**Attendees:**

**POG**

**16/05/2018**

**Caxton House Room 2.30**

**DWP:** Alan Brown (Chair) (HDD), Jonathan Parker (Secretariat) (HDD), Paul Selby (HDD), Jason Perrott (HDD), Jamal Hussain (Strategy Working Age), Monya Ladipo (UC), Sophie Norris (Strategy Working Age),

**Dial-in:** Kay Bendell (HDD), Alan Sullivan (HDD), Adrian Landeg (CFCD), Marie Savage (Strategy Working Age), Karen Maskill (Strategy Working Age)

**Observers:** Tracey Hester (HDD)

**MHCLG:** Alan Millward

**LAAs:** Paul Ellary (RB Kensington & Chelsea), Gwyn Thomas (Westminster), June Deans (Glasgow), David Kinnair (Birmingham), Chris Boylett (LB Newham), Mandy Fathers (West Oxford), Mark Gillmore (EK Services)

**Dial-in:** Pam Richardson (Gateshead), Paula Doherty (Dumfries & Galloway), Adrian Mills (Anglia Revenues)\_

**Apologies:**

Les Robertson (Fife), Colin Wallbank (Welsh LGA), Andrew Hyatt (RB Kensington & Chelsea), Charles Taylor (East Renfrewshire), Iain Marshalsay (Ceredigion), Colin Graham (Dumfries), Matthew Evans (Wrexham), Darren Baker (HDD), Mont Goldman (HDD).

### 1. Welcome and Introductions:

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

### 2. Matters Arising:

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed, and actions were cleared.

### 3. Universal Credit (UC) Issues Log and UC update:

DWP ran through the of the UC issues log, highlighting the following areas:

- final payment for the whole year (2018/19) is to be made in June
- there is to be more guidance for staff
- feedback suggests co-location so far is working well
- on 2018-19 funding 372 Local Authorities (LAs) accepted and 7 declined – in these areas it is expected LAs will make their own arrangements
- the final report is to be shared with POG

POG members expressed concern over MGP1s being received by LAs where there is no longer an interest.

There was a wider conversation about UC data being sent to LAs, and whether it was sufficient for Local Council Tax Reduction (LCTR) administration and wider local welfare provision. DWP explained that whilst there had been many reviews of this before, the outcomes obviously hadn't been clearly communicated to LAs, or convinced them that all that could be done had been done. Consequently an offer was made to conduct a full root and branch review, and to hold a workshop with interested POG members.

POG asked if improvements on Corporate Appointees can be shared with them. They specifically requested clarification on what changes are being proposed and what the progress/improvements are.

#### **4. Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Funding 2019/20:**

DWP introduced this survey on DHP Funding expenditure which it plans to issue to LAs. POG asked for clarification on what the responses for the survey would be used for. DWP explained the survey was a request for some soft data on what sort of changes or patterns may be occurring in relation to DHP.

- POG suggested engagement with the representative for London Councils who attends the LA Welfare Steering Group who would be able to provide detailed information on DHPs
- POG gave information on underspend and how and when this scenario may occur

POG asked DWP to provide the rationale to it and all LAs for the current survey and how the results are to be used.

#### **5. Housing Benefit Assurance Process (HBAP) Module X and new burdens update:**

DWP provided a brief update on the new HBAP

The key points raised were as follows:

- DWP asked POG for comment on Module X and encouraged POG to ask questions as and when they saw fit if the answer was not in the Module
- DWP reminded POG that any challenges made to the Subsidy return for the period 2017/18 would not be managed by the PSAA and LAs would have to make their own arrangements,

## **6. Budget Measures Extended Discussion:**

DWP referred to UC Budget Measure Issues raised at the recent LA Welfare Steering Group meeting.

The meeting raised the following points:

- A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document has been shared with LAs. POG raised concern over the wording on question 6 surrounding UC being a 'pass-ported benefit.'

A POG member had previously raised 5 questions. These had not been captured, and will be forwarded to DWP for response.

DWP agreed to confirm what should happen with cases that are 3-4 months old, in respect of Transition to UC Housing Payment.

- DWP asked POG if they had a preference in regards to IT Change prioritisation and if it could confirm whether the Transition to UC payment process could be 'lived with' or if it required resolution as soon as possible, taking priority over other planned IT changes. POG agreed it was bearable and accepted that automation would not happen quickly due to the requirement for development and testing.

## **7. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) update:**

DWP explained the key point is with the arrival of GDPR there should be minimal data sharing changes and GDPR is, at a high level, simply a strengthening of the existing Data Protection Act.

DWP summarised:

- Any specific changes, impacting on LAs in relation to the data we already share with them, will be included within the next annual Security Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). However, being GDPR compliant is not just about doing the right thing, but also being fully open and transparent publicly too. So this will mean LAs signing off their MOUs within the agreed time limits.
- An FAQ and myth busting document will be issued by DWP to LAs in a few weeks time.
- DWP confirmed there are no changes to be made to its existing privacy statements regarding what can be done with customer data – what is in place is currently deemed sufficient.

## **8. Debt:**

DWP advised POG that a review of the Payment Deduction Project (PDP) process has been confirmed.

DWP explained that a small project group has been put together and highlighted key

messages as following:

- the tracking of a small number of cases through the PDP process through to Debt Management and then on to UC
- the above review is due to start soon. This will be a staged approach with the expectation of reporting initial findings to POG within two months of the start date and continually after that
- 280 LAs have submitted Data for May and the project will support those LAs which are still to go live as required
- DWP reminded POG that support is available to all LAs for Debt Recovery.

## **9. Supported Housing and Escalating Rental Costs:**

Representatives from Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, (MHCLG) and DWP were in attendance to listen to POG views.

POG had noticed costs for this type of accommodation is escalating for core rent (without service charges). POG requested clear DWP guidance on what aspects LAs should and should not be covering.

POG referred to LAs seeing a lot of new charges for enhanced housing and service management. POG agreed this was occurring in the area of long term disabled and care mostly, but some retirement models were also starting to come forward.

MHCLG and POG discussed specialised accommodation being exempt from the rent controls.

POG asked DWP to give further consideration to the following requests:

- improve the guidance on reasonable costs to give LAs uniformity and prevent comparisons between LAs. DWP to work with LAs on taking a number of cases to Tribunal
- Guidance on what constitutes reasonable costs to pay and whether there is a limit and if so what this is.

## **10. AOB:**

DWP updated POG on the following points:

**Single Fraud Investigations New Burdens:** There has been an exercise conducted in 35 LAs to determine if New Burdens funding is sufficient. The analysis of the test does not confirm the shortfall. DWP will continue to work with POG to refine the assumptions before wider publication.

**Activities around Self Employed cases:** DWP are looking to conduct a test with a small number of LAs asking them to review Self Employed cases with the aim of seeing the impact this has for return on investment. This is a forerunner to potential nationwide rollout. POG expressed support for the initiative and asked to be kept informed of developments.

**Data Matching:** A tool is in development and this is to be tested by LAs to determine if it is fit for purpose.

POG Members AOB:

POG asked DWP to provide a HB Caseload after UC rollout diagram which t had been included in a recent presentation.

POG members requested this information to be issued either to POG/Steering Group or to all LAs via a HB Direct article.

**Date of Next Meeting:** The next meeting will take place on 11 July ,Caxton House room 2.30

**Contact:** Mont Goldman

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