



Title of meeting:	Joint DWP/LA Welfare Steering Group/Practitioners Operational Group
Date/timings:	25 March 2020 - 11:00 – 14:00
Location:	Telekit only – 0330 336 6013, participant code – 750359#
Attendees:	<p>DWP: Clare Elliott (chair), Carolyn Pollard (Secretariat), Darren Baker, Kay Bendell, Sheena Parker, Amanda Sowerby, Graham Roberts, Joanne Hawkins, Susan Johnson, Sarah Turner, Judith Hartshorne, Tracy Williams, Martin Lacy,</p> <p>LAs: Sam Ashton (LC), June Deans (Glasgow), Lisa Hayward (WLGA), Anil Gupta (COSLA), Ian Brown (Wiltshire), Rose Doran (LGA), Matthew Evans (Wrexham), Adrian Mills (Ang Revs), Asha Vyas (), Ian Adams (Islington), Pam Richardson (Gateshead), Jayne Henderson (Newcastle), Linda Davies (WG), Moira Smith (SG), Helen Paine (Gateshead), Simone Hines (IN&B), Paul Knevett (LGA Districts), Gwyn Thomas (Westminster), Paula Doherty (Dumfries&Galloway), Mandy Fathers (West Oxford), David Kinnair (Bham), Lisa Fuller (Renfrewshire), David Jackman (Leeds), Chris Boylett (Newham), Mark Gillmore (EK services), Leigh Wood (Brent) , Callum Smith (SG)</p>
Apologies	Howard Mason (Manchester), Tim Savill (Bham), Paul Ellary (RB K&C), Julia Pitt, Susan Donald (Aberdeenshire), Andrew Cameron (Leeds), Sarah Price (MT)
1. Welcome and Introductions:	Clare Elliott opened the meeting.
2. COVID-19 Communications and Issues Management Process	Amanda Sowerby outlined the proposed COVID-19 communications and issues Management process.
3. Housing Benefit Award Accuracy Initiative	Darren Baker confirmed the Housing Benefit (HB) Award Accuracy Initiative has been suspended indefinitely.
4. Verify Earnings and Pensions	There is consideration being given to switch off the alerts during the COVID-19 crisis.
5. Increased Local Housing Allowance rates	An update was provided.

6. Amendment to the Additional Earnings disregard

An update was provided; guidance was ready to issue once the regulations have been laid.

7. Subsidy claims

Update and confirmation measures have been put in place to ensure HB subsidy payments will be made on time. The payment of HB Subsidy to LAs will continue to be prioritised throughout this period of uncertainty.

8. Access to Data for LA staff using personal kit and working remotely

Housing Delivery Division are urgently consulting with the appropriate DWP Security and Risk teams regarding the current Data Sharing Memorandum of Understanding.

9. Administration of Hardship Fund

A meeting has now been arranged for Thursday 2 April 2020 to discuss further.

10. Local Welfare Provision

The impact of the crisis and Universal Credit claim delays are being felt right across LAs, Citizens Advice Bureau have reported a huge influx of enquiries and claimants asking for the help to claim service.

11. Impacts of COVID-19 on Third Party Deductions

Update provided - due to the exceptional circumstances the Department for Work and Pensions has to re-focus its efforts on key areas of our business, which means certain services are being put on hold.

Meeting closed

Date, time and location of next LAWSG	The date of the next LA Welfare Steering Group is to be confirmed
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