



Summary Minutes

Title of meeting:	DWP Local Authority Associations (LAA) Steering Group
Date:	11 March 2015
Location:	Caxton House Room 6.03
Attendees:	<p>DWP: Neil Johnson (Chair), Mont Goldman (Secretariat), Clare Elliott, Huw Meredith, Darren Baker, Sue Francis, Mabel Wanogho, Manny Ibiayo</p> <p>Dial-in: Darran Nuttall</p> <p>DCLG: Leona Patterson, Rob Leech</p> <p>LAAs:, Dan McCartney, Pat Durkin, Daniel Drillsma-Millgrom, Lesley Pigott, Paul Ellary, Valerie Pearce, Andrew Stevens, Colin Wallbank</p> <p>Dial-in: Peter Meehan, John Rosenbloom, David Graaff</p>
Apologies:	Rose Doran, Steve Carey, Howard Mason

1. Welcome and Introductions:

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

Matters Arising

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed, and the action points from February's meeting were cleared. DWP agreed to provide an update at the next meeting on Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and whether there was any mechanism for unspent funds to be recycled into next years allocations.

2. Updates:

Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS)

The Steering Group asked about new burdens. DWP explained that work on new burdens for 2015/16 started in January and should be concluded by the end of June. Areas covered include Service Provision, HR impacts, live running and Single Point of Contact (SPOC). It was noted that the Practitioners' Operational Group (POG) has been included in the sign - off process for the Service Level Agreement, and issues around funding had been raised.

The Steering Group has previously requested that 'lessons learned' from the SFIS rollout should be discussed to ensure that learning is in place for the larger scale rollout of Universal Credit (UC). This would be of particular value in respect of the impact on the

wider local authority (LA) services. DWP explained that an initial 'lessons learned' has been published on the website and it is planned to issue a wider 'lessons learned' following the post implementation review.

The Steering Group queried the establishment by Fraud Error and Debt of a new strategic joint working group. DWP explained that the new joint working group had been set up in December to look at touch points between welfare and corporate fraud. The group is time limited and represents a task focused feasibility study. It will report to DWP and DCLG Ministers, and will feed back progress to the Steering Group.

Universal Credit (UC) / Transition Working Group (TWG)

The Steering Group asked for a strategic discussion on how DWP and LAs can join up on helping claimants into employment.

An action point was taken for DWP to take this up as a future agenda item for either TWG or Steering Group.

Transition Working Group (TWG)

The Finance and Commercial Group met in January and reported to TWG. Findings from this group, and in particular those that relate to future implications for Administration Subsidy can be shared with the Steering Group.

3. Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Schemes (FERIS)

DWP explained that the Maintenance Fund represented a continuation of Start – Up funding.

Fraud and Error Indicator

DWP referred to a meeting held at the end of 2014 which looked at what the indicator should cover to drive the right behavior. The meeting had agreed to focus on changes in circumstances. DWP added that analysts have been engaged and the focus now is around allocating the HB caseloads into risk categories. There are plans to publish the indicator in October 2015, and to publish the number of reductions in line with FERIS. A high level note will be issued to LAs.

With regard to categorisation of risk groups, DWP explained that it is planned to set up a working group with LAs. It was suggested that the Steering Group should have input into the categorisation of risk groups.

The Steering Group discussed whether to publish by volume or value.

4. Future Direction for Steering Group

The approach to the future direction of the Steering Group should be one of consensus, maintaining its key strategic remit.

From the discussion that followed, key points to emerge were:

- The LAAs were content with the suggestion of bi-monthly meetings and where

possible to arrange for TWG meetings to follow on from Steering Group meetings;

- There should be an option to call an emergency meeting / telekit in between the formal meetings if required for urgent business;
- That the group expect to be sighted on a forward look from the Department and allowed to comment and provide insight on topics through discussion;
- That Fraud, Error and Debt should be a key item for strategic direction and comment;
- That where appropriate, strategic views may be sought from other LA colleagues with relevant knowledge and operational experience to offer;
- That the statutory requirements of the group remain and the terms of reference amended to reflect these agreements.

5. Fraud and Error Strategy for HB

DWP gave the meeting an overview of the development of the strategic approach to Fraud and Error for Housing Benefit:

- A programme of work will be developed for the next few months which will inform a more detailed action plan for the next few years.
- The vision is to reverse the current trend for fraud and error, utilising the evidence base and working in collaboration with LAs to identify solutions.
- There will be several strands of work including greater use of data and analytics, the role of policy and legislation, LA/HB administration, performance and debt management and recovery.

DWP added that engagement is planned to tackle each of the identified strands.

6. AOB

LAAAs asked whether there was any progress on new burdens for the administration of DHPs. DWP explained that work on this is ongoing and the Steering Group will be notified of progress as soon as possible.

It was agreed that as the Steering Group is moving to bi-monthly meetings, the next meeting will take place in May, with any items in the interim to be cleared by correspondence.

Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be **Wednesday 13 May**, Room 6.03 Caxton House.

*Note: subsequent to the meeting, the meeting scheduled for 13 May did not take place and the next Steering Group meeting is scheduled for **10 June 2015**.*

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