

WELFARE AWARE

UNDERSTANDING AND PREPARING FOR CHANGE

HEALTH CHECK FOR HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

GENERAL / CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

From a Client/Service User Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|--|-----|--------|-------|
| There is a record of which benefits each client receives. It is reviewed and updated regularly. | | | |
| Personalised financial inclusion support and signposting is available to each client. | | | |
| Information about welfare changes is available to clients in different formats e.g. verbally in keywork, through leaflets and posters, in translation etc. | | | |
| Clients are sufficiently prepared to manage changes to benefits after resettlement. | | | |
| There are service user champions trained in welfare benefits. | | | |
| There is access to support (in-house or through another provider) with functional skills (maths and English) and ESOL. | | | |
| Clients understand the need for particular financial products and are supported to open a bank or credit union account that fully meets their needs. | | | |

From a Frontline Staff Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|---|-----|--------|-------|
| Staff have skills, information and resources to support service users with benefit changes. | | | |
| Staff have skills, information and resources to support service users with financial inclusion. | | | |
| Staff are aware of how welfare changes will impact on clients' move on, including housing benefit, local housing allowance, | | | |

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| council tax benefit and local welfare assistance. | | | |
| Staff know when a discretionary housing payment might be appropriate and how to support the client to apply. | | | |

From a Strategic Management Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|--|-----|--------|-------|
| The risk of each change and cumulative impacts on the organisation and service users has been assessed. | | | |
| The organisation has assessed skills/capacity to deliver support to service users around welfare changes, identified where there are deficits and where partnerships/multi-agency working is needed. | | | |
| The organisation has explored opportunities for joint working and pooled resources with other organisations e.g. shared training or activities. | | | |
| Required data collection for each service user includes information on clients' support needs across budgeting, debt, rent arrears, literacy, numeracy. | | | |
| Adequate resources have been assessed and allocated to ensure staff have skills and knowledge across the current welfare system and Universal Credit. | | | |
| Resettlement policies and procedures, including information for clients, have been reviewed in light of welfare changes. | | | |
| The support planning framework has been reviewed, and needs relevant to benefits changes and financial inclusion have been prioritised. | | | |
| Policies and procedures on staff supervision and case management have been reviewed so that financial inclusion and benefits support is included. | | | |
| There is a plan (covering short, medium and long term) to keep clients and staff informed about welfare changes. | | | |
| Management has a named contact at the Local Authority who is involved in the design and implementation of local implementation of welfare changes (e.g. commissioner, councillor, revenues and benefit officer/manager). | | | |
| Housing management – planning and resource allocation for changes to revenue collection with regard to personal service charges and rents has been done. | | | |
| Contingency planning for debt management has been undertaken. | | | |

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| Resettlement policies and procedures, including information for clients, have been reviewed in light of welfare reforms e.g. move from Social Fund to local welfare schemes, impact of council tax benefit changes, reduction in properties eligible for LHA, properties excluded due to bedroom tax. | | | |
| The organisation has spoken to the local council about the potential need for discretionary housing payments for residents affected by the benefit changes (e.g. benefit cap and potential rent shortfalls). | | | |
| The organisation has a welfare reform lead or working group including all grades, management to frontline, to coordinate the organisation's response and ensure it is maintained across the changes to 2017. | | | |
| The organisation has a named contact at JobCentre Plus offices in every area they operate. | | | |

DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE AND PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENTS

From a Client/Service User Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|--|-----|--------|-------|
| Clients are aware of the end of DLA and the implementation of PIP. | | | |
| Clients who receive DLA now are aware that they will have to make a new application for PIP. | | | |
| Clients understand the PIP application and assessment process. | | | |

From a Frontline Staff Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|---|-----|--------|-------|
| Staff understand the change to DLA and the implementation of PIP. | | | |
| Staff are confident in supporting clients to understand notifications about the end of their DLA claim and the need to apply for PIP. | | | |
| Staff are confident in supporting clients through the PIP application and assessment processes. | | | |

LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE SHARED ACCOMMODATION RATE

From a Client/Service User Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|--|-----|--------|-------|
| Clients understand the SAR and if it applies to them. | | | |
| Clients know about the exemptions to SAR for those aged 25-34 years, whether they are eligible for an exemption and how to apply if they are. | | | |
| Clients eligible for the hostels exemption can prove that they have been living in homelessness hostels for 3 months or more, or know how to obtain proof. | | | |
| Clients who are eligible for the MAPPA exemption know to work with their lead professional to access an exemption. | | | |

From a Frontline Staff Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|---|-----|--------|-------|
| Staff are aware of and understand the age extension to SAR and exemptions for 25-34 year olds | | | |
| Staff are aware of processes for providing proof of hostel exemption. | | | |
| Staff are aware of local process for applying for an exemption from the age extension of the shared accommodation rate. | | | |

From a Strategic Management Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|--|-----|--------|-------|
| There is a system in place to access older records in order to provide previous service users with proof to support an application for a SAR exemption based on hostel stay. | | | |
| The organisation has set up a system for providing proof of hostel residency to current/future clients. | | | |

LOCAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE (PREVIOUSLY SOCIAL FUND)

From a Client/Service User Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|---|-----|--------|-------|
| Clients are aware that crisis loans and CCGs are unavailable, and how to access the local welfare scheme in their area. | | | |
| Clients are aware of other options to help with crisis and move on needs. | | | |

From a Frontline Staff Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|--|-----|--------|-------|
| Staff are aware of the local welfare assistance scheme's referral process, eligibility criteria and type of support offered. | | | |
| Staff are aware of other funding options that could be used for move on costs. | | | |

From a Strategic Management Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|--|-----|--------|-------|
| The organisation is monitoring the impact of the transition to local welfare assistance e.g. on resettlement, and looking for alternative sources of support. | | | |
| The organisation is in contact with the local authority to give feedback on the local scheme, including looking for a role for the voluntary and community sector in delivery. | | | |

COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT

From a Client/Service User Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|---|-----|--------|-------|
| Clients are aware that they may be liable to pay council tax, even while on benefits/low income, and know how to manage their council tax payments. | | | |

From a Frontline Staff Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|---|-----|--------|-------|
| Staff are aware of local changes to Council Tax Benefit and how this will affect clients living independently/moving on to independent accommodation. | | | |
| Staff know the level of contribution required for people in receipt of council tax support. | | | |
| Staff support service users to understand and manage their council tax bill. | | | |

From a Strategic Management Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|--|-----|--------|-------|
| The organisation monitors the impact of changes to council tax support and ensures appropriate support is available, sharing this information with the local authority as needed to mitigate any problems. | | | |

BENEFIT CAP

From a Client/Service User Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|---|-----|--------|-------|
| Clients are aware of the maximum amount of combined benefits they can receive and how the reduction will be applied if they exceed the cap. | | | |
| Clients who may be affected by the cap are aware of the implementation date in their area. | | | |
| Clients are planning how to manage any rent shortfalls and are aware of support options such as DHPs. | | | |

From a Frontline Staff Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|---|-----|--------|-------|
| Staff understand the benefit cap, how it is applied under the current system and Universal Credit, and which types of benefits mean a claimant is not subject to the cap. | | | |

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| Staff can identify which clients will be affected by the benefit cap and when it will be implemented in their area(s). | | | |
| Staff support clients affected by the cap to apply for discretionary housing payments or negotiate with landlords. | | | |

From a Strategic Management Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|---|-----|--------|-------|
| The organisation has assessed the impact of the benefit cap on its rent revenue, has a plan to manage any rent shortfalls and is aware of the implementation date(s). | | | |

SUPPORTED EXEMPT ACCOMMODATION

From a Strategic Management Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|--|-----|--------|-------|
| Organisations understand the definition of supported exempt accommodation and whether this applies to their service – definition also includes organisations that have received resettlement grant (pre-SP). | | | |
| Organisations understand that local authorities will be required to register this status on the Single Housing Benefit Extract which will lead to the housing costs element not rolling into Universal Credit. | | | |
| Organisations have a contingency plan if they are not defined as exempt which addresses accessing exceptions to direct payment of housing costs to claimant. | | | |

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

From a Client/Service User Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|--|-----|--------|-------|
| Clients know how to set up standing orders for rent, personal service charges, utilities etc. | | | |
| Clients are aware of the information/issues they will need to provide/disclose when applying for Universal Credit in order to be considered for a payment exception. | | | |

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| Clients understand conditionality, the Claimant Commitment and sanctions processes. | | | |
| Clients on full work-related requirements understand the Work Programme and related requirements. | | | |
| Clients are equipped with the skills to budget and manage a single monthly payment of benefits. | | | |
| Clients have access to the internet and a computer. | | | |
| Clients are supported with maths, IT and financial capability. | | | |

From a Frontline Staff Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|---|-----|--------|-------|
| Staff can access computers and the internet with clients (e.g. keywork rooms). | | | |
| Staff are computer literate and have the skills necessary to support clients with computer and internet use. | | | |
| Staff understand support and exceptions process in UC, and can support clients with the information/issues they will need to provide/disclose when applying for Universal Credit in order to be considered for a payment exception. | | | |
| Staff know what financial services (banks, credit unions etc) are available in their area and service managers have developed a relationship with their managers to improve access to banking facilities for service users. | | | |

From a Strategic Management Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|---|-----|--------|-------|
| The organisation has assessed risk with regard to Universal Credit, particularly with regard to rent revenue. | | | |
| The organisation has assessed what support and resources will be required to manage transition of revenue processes to UC model (e.g. potential move to monthly service charges). | | | |

HOUSING BENEFIT SIZE CRITERIA ('BEDROOM TAX' / 'SPARE ROOM SUBSIDY')

From a Client/Service User Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|--|-----|--------|-------|
| Clients have received information about Housing Benefit reductions associated with spare rooms in their property | | | |
| Clients have a plan to manage any rent shortfalls e.g. moving home, budgeting, additional working hours, finding employment, discretionary housing payments, taking lodgers. | | | |
| Clients have access to information about taking lodgers, finding new accommodation and housing swap schemes | | | |

From a Frontline Staff Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|--|-----|--------|-------|
| Staff are aware of reductions in Housing Benefit due to size criteria. | | | |
| Staff are able to identify those clients affected by reductions in Housing Benefit due to size criteria. | | | |
| Staff support clients affected by the size criteria to: apply for discretionary housing payments; find work or extend working hours; take a lodger; find a smaller home. | | | |

From a Strategic Management Perspective

| Action | Yes | Partly | No/NA |
|---|-----|--------|-------|
| The organisation knows which clients are affected by Housing Benefit size criteria reductions and ensures appropriate support is available. | | | |
| The organisation has assessed the impact of Housing Benefit reductions on its residents and has a plan to manage arrears. | | | |
| The organisation has approached the local authority and understands the allocation of direct housing payments. | | | |