

Plymouth Welfare Rights Forum
Thursday 22nd January 2009

Attendance List:

Terry Sparks – Midland House – Westcountry HA - WHA
Jackie Millard Midland House – Westcountry HA - WHA
Chris Johnson – JCP
Denise Crawford – JCP
Lynn Herbert – Pluss
Donna Ryall – Mind
Mo Rafferty – William Sutton Homes - WSH
Garry Edwards – PCC HB
Austen Mintern – The Zone
Russell King – Broadreach Ocean Quay - BOQ
Carol Griffin – Broadreach Ocean Quay - BOQ
Laura Rossiter – DLA Bristol
Scott Robertson – Alabare Floating Support Service- AFSS
Stuart Toll – Devon Law Centre - DLC
Pat Newton – PCC

Apologies:

Steve Guy - MAP
Dave Hay -
Sue Archard - Mind

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Chaired by Gloria PCAB

Housing Benefit

Terry (WHA) enquired about vulnerable clients having difficulties paying rent themselves. Gary (PCC) mentioned the Vulnerable Policy who will review this for clients. Ross (BOQ) also mentioned sending a pro forma letter to accompany clients situation.

Laura Rossiter

Any claims that are 3months old now come under Blackpool. Any problems with Blackpool processings of DLA or carers then contact Customer Services team on 0117 971 8345 (Laura's direct number). Text number 0117 971 8345.
New claims:

| | | | |
|-----|------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| DLA | Target 38 working days | - | Year to date 28.48 working days |
| AA | Target 16 working days | - | Year to date 12.73 working days |

Re cons:

| | | | |
|-----|------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| DLA | Target 35 working days | - | Year to date 29.56 working days |
| AA | Target 35 working days | - | Year to date 26.11 working days |

Appeals:

| | | | |
|-----|------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| DLA | Target 37 working days | - | Year to date 32.49 working days |
| AA | Target 35 working days | - | Year to date 29.76 working days |

New unit manager Angela Stadden

Any questions?

Jackie (WHA) - asked how long is the wait for DLA Tribunals. Laura will find this information and send email to Jackie and PCAB to circulate.

Claims have increased, DLA 25000 and AA 30000. With 50% DLA being awarded and 86% AA awarded.

Gloria (Chair and PCAB) – asked about older people and has there been an increase with this age group. Laura would find out.

Laura (DLA) – Christmas Bonus will be paid the 2nd March

Jackie (WHA) – believes pressure attached to get clients renewals, is this a legal requirement? Laura - It use to be 6 months in advanced and has now been decreased to 3 months in advanced. Will send this information to Jackie direct.

HMRC no one attended

JCP Report

See additional information at end of document.

Crisis Loan/Community Care Grants

The Forum requested time limits for reviews.

Pat (PCC) – enquiry regarding time limits for reviews of Crisis Loans and community Care Grants (CCG). Chris – (JCP) Will find this out.

Pat (PCC) – Why does the review take 10 – 12 weeks when a clients is homeless, has nothing. How long should this take? How long are they taking? Chris (JCP) - There are no targets but would find out what service they should provide.

Gloria (Chair and PCAB) – Can you give a yearly breakdown of budget? What is the budget? Chris (JCP) - There is no budget and will bring someone next time (March 09) who can answer these questions on Community Care Grants and Budgeting loans.

Terry (WHA) – regarding CCG, clients amount awarded was drastically reduced. Chris (JCP) – I team member makes decisions

Someone from Social Fund department to give question and answers (March 09).

Client turned down for CCG, appealed but it was dealt with at St Austell. Chris (JCP) – claims can go anywhere for Social Fund but the decision should be the same regardless where it is sent.

Can you clarify the criteria for support workers because of the confidentiality policy. Chris (JCP) – Claimant must send letter of authority regarding the agency and the representative who is helping them. Step are being taken to stop this and put something in place for vulnerable individuals.

Russell (BOQ) – Client refused Crisis Loan, where to go now? Chris (JCP) – Contact Miriam Dunn – Bristol.

Austen (The Zone) – Client refused Crisis Loan, has lost faith in system which should be helping them. Support worker was not allowed to attend

appointment with client although the appointment was previously arranged. Chris and Denise will take this back to DWP.

Austen (The Zone) – Crisis Loans phonenumber constantly cut off. Can take a while for form to be sent. Get application from the internet before 3pm and should receive a decision by end of day.

Donna (Mind) – Have to wait 4 weeks for CCG's. Chris – 9 working days normally but running 9½ days. Will find out.

Pat (PCC) – Appeals – Right to reside. Chris – WICK decision takes 50 days with no target on appeals. Will get someone (Chief Executive – Lesley Strathre) to attend WRF.

Gloria (Chair and PCAB) – Future Speakers

Steve Meaking – April
HMRC – May
Lesley Strathre – not confirmed

Any Other Business

DWP – had problems with CAB/ forum website.
Karen hasn't sent Powerpoint.

Next Meeting 26th March 2009

Additional Information

PLYMOUTH BDC – CURRENT PERFORMANCE – as of 9.1.09

| New Claims | Target (days) | Current | YTD |
|------------|---------------|---------|-------|
| JSA | 11.5 | 9.88 | 10.05 |
| IS | 10 | 9.78 | 9.78 |
| IB | 15 | 19.69 | 11.33 |
| ESA | | 15.05 | 9.41 |

| Changes | Target (days) | Current | YTD |
|---------|---------------|---------|------|
| JSA | 4 | 4.70 | 3.84 |
| IS | 4 | 2.15 | 2.27 |
| IB | 4 | 11.01 | 4.62 |
| ESA | | 1.95 | 1.97 |

| Telephony | Target (answer in 30 seconds) | Target met (days) | Target not met (days) | Daily average |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| JSA | 90% | 15 | 8 | 88% |
| IS | 90% | 19 | 4 | 95% |
| IB | 90% | 5 | 18 | 99% |
| ESA | 90% | 15 | 5 | 94% |

| Social Fund | Target (days) | Current | YTD |
|------------------|---------------|---------|------|
| Bud / loans | 6 | 5.71 | 6.67 |
| SS Mat Grants | 5 | 3.26 | 5.70 |
| Comm Care Grants | 9 | 9.56 | 8.79 |

- New claims – all within target parameters even with increase in workload. JSA new claims have improved on Year to Date comparison even with massive rises in workload. Our first contact centres are regularly recording record numbers of new claim applications being made to Jobcentre Plus.

As of the end of November 2008 there were 59,490 JSA customers in the South West compared to 37,600 in November 2007 – an increase of 58.2%. November also saw a 14% rise in JSA customers in the South West compared to the previous month, well above the national average increase of 8.8% for the same period.

In Devon & Cornwall the number of JSA customers was 20,840 compared to 13,629 in 2007 - an increase of 53%.

- Changes – the amount of changes work is slowly building up as the number of claims increase, particularly on JSA. However this work is being managed and clearance times are still within the defined levels.
- Telephony – not unexpectedly the amount of call traffic is also increasing, though not on the same level as claims. This is mainly because we are continuing to prioritise new claim work and the majority of our call traffic relates to new claim applications.
- Social Fund – Crisis Loan applications continue to increase week on week. For week ending Friday 18 January 2009 2,689 applications were received and 2,669 applications were assessed within 24 hours of the application being received.

PLYMOUTH BDC – NEW CLAIMS RECEIVED (Monday 12.1.09 to Friday 16.1.09)

(the smaller figures shown underneath are details I previously gave for week ending 14.11.08 for comparison purposes)

JSA

A - Claims o/s from previous week = 722

B - Claims received in week = 1741

C - Claims to be assessed (A + B) = 2463

Claims o/s at end of week = 968 (of which 178 require further info / evidence)

A - Claims o/s from previous week = 656

B - Claims received in week = 1139

C - Claims to be assessed (A + B) = 1795

Claims o/s at end of week = 902 (of which 137 require further info / evidence)

IS

A - Claims o/s from previous week = 183

B - Claims received in week = 189

C - Claims to be assessed (A + B) = 372

Claims o/s at end of week = 175 (of which 125 require further info / evidence)

IS

A - Claims o/s from previous week = 580

B - Claims received in week = 269

C - Claims to be assessed (A + B) = 849

Claims o/s at end of week = 555 (of which 304 require further info / evidence)

IB

A - Claims o/s from previous week = 119

B - Claims received in week = 30

C - Claims to be assessed = 149

Claims o/s at end of week = 108 (of which 72 require further info / evidence)

IB

A - Claims o/s from previous week = 396

B - Claims received in week = 124

C - Claims to be assessed = 520

Claims o/s at end of week = 381 (of which 218 require further info / evidence)

ESA

A - Claims o/s from previous week = 364

B - Claims received in week = 287

C - Claims to be assessed = 651

Claims o/s at end of week = 407 (of which 237 require further info / evidence)

ESA

A - Claims o/s from previous week = 88

B - Claims received in week = 196

C - Claims to be assessed = 284

Claims o/s at end of week = 162 (of which 117 require further info / evidence)