

Plymouth Welfare Rights Forum

Reception Room
Council House

Thursday 20th November 2008
1.30 to 4.00pm

Present:

Christina Elia – Saltash CAB
Juliet Mason – MAP
Sue Archard – MIND
Donna Ryall – MIND
Georgina Hancock – START
Carys Evans – START
Patrick Healy – DIAC
Gary Edwards – PCC HB
Pamela Ross – JCP
Chris Johnson – JCP
Denise Crawford – JCP
Linus McCloskey – Westcountry HA
Mo Rafferty – William Sutton Homes
Mary Partridge – Colebrook Housing Society
Scott Robertson – Alabare Floating Support Service
Jane Robinson – Refugee Action
David Godkin – Refugee Action
Melanie Coyne – Refugee Action

Apologies:

Ann Holdsworth – Shelter
Julia Slade – LARK Children's Centre
Susan Smith – DCS Bristol
Les Cole – JCP FIS
Steve Guy – MAP
David Monk
Bruce Abbott – DAN
Julie Jackson – CAB
Alison Jane – MAP
Stuart Charles – Benefit Angels
Mark Poole – MAP

Department of Work and Pensions

Social Fund/ Crisis loans

The forum requested feedback as to how long these are taking and are they being logged in a queue?

Employment Support Allowance

The initial calls were mostly from existing claimants based on news of change that morning.

Pat from (DIAC) requested claim form reference of the Employment Support Allowance guidance form. Pat mentioned that for Crisis Loan, the claimant may be required to complete the form. This we are informed is not necessary as the details are taken thorough out the phone call.

Housing Benefit Report

The Employment Support Allowance affects a Housing Benefit claim. The process is through the new LAMS system.

Maximum three months backdating if the client is of pensionable age

Six months if the client is of working age.

All other claim will be back dated three months only, in the near future.

On the 3rd December the new claim process will take place for benefits. This will result in one process for the whole of the three benefits, to include housing benefit and council tax benefit. The one process being completed via the Jobcentre Plus. This has previously been piloted and will now come on board nationally. The outcome of which will encourage more temporary work and remove the barriers for the claimant.

The transfer of Plymouth City Council Housing Tenants to Regulated Social Landlords will take place in September 09. Housing Benefit will be paid as it is to private landlords, as at present.

Mark Poole was experiencing problems getting thorough to the Housing Benefit line. Gary Edwards was not aware of any specific problems. There are forms and leaflets available for claimants of whom are vulnerable.

Any Other Business

Patrick (of DIAC) had enquired about the new time limits for Appeal Submissions to be received at the Tribunal Service Office. The submission MUST be returned to the Tribunals Office within ONE MONTH. We thanked Patrick for this information as Patrick discovered that the Clerks to the Tribunal service were NOT aware of this important change. Anyone may ask Patrick for a copy of the content of the email that was sent around the Tribunal service.

A Social Policy form and a British Sign Language email will be forwarded to members of the Forum.

Date of next meeting

Thursday 22nd January 2009 1 pm – 4 pm.

**Warspite Room
Council House**

Additional Information Provided

Housing Benefit and Ctax Performance Indicators

Statistics produced re: October 08

Percentage of claims processed within 14 days for private claims – 65%
(August 08 was 68%: 3% increase)

Percentage of claims processed within 14 days for council tenants – 63%
(August 08 62%: 1% increase)

Percentage of claims processed within 14 days for CTB – 64%
(August 08 was 64%: 0% increase)

Average Processing Times – New Claims

Private	31.48 days (August 08 32.63: 1.15 day reduction)
Council	27.07 days (August 08 27.47: 0.40 day reduction)
CTB	33.15 days (August 08 34.79: 1.64 day reduction)

Average Processing Times – Change of Circs

18.80 days (August 08 18.92- .12 day decrease)

Current work situation –

We are starting to see an increase in claims due to the economic downturn; we are managing to keep pace with the increase and achieved a slight reduction in the average number of days to process a claim.

The pilot for the new way of working has been successful and we are looking to extend the trial to a further two teams in the next couple of weeks to thoroughly test the new processes.

LHA – (Local Housing allowance)

No issues.

ESA (Employment Support Allowance)

Now in place and all staff trained, we have not had any particular issues regarding the new allowance and processing HB claims.

Backdating Rules – new rules are now in force.

The maximum we can backdate claims for pension age is now 3 months and for working age 6 months. Working age customers will still have to show good cause as to why the claim should be backdated. At some point in the future the intention is to reduce the working age backdating period to 3 months in line with pension age claims.

In and Out of Work Processes – new processes are being introduced in Jobcentre Plus for JSA and Income support claims, which will mean that information relating to Tax credit and HB claims will be gathered by JCP at the first point of contact, to enable the tax credit and HB offices to process those claims.

Plymouth will be one of the first of a national rollout of these processes over the next 12 months. Plymouth is due to go live with these processes on 3rd December 2008.

GE/20/11/08

Plymouth BDC – Current Performance – October 2008

New Claims	Target (days)	Current	YTD
JSA	11.5	9.69	10.14
IS	10	9.18	9.80
IB	15	10.54	10.78

Changes	Target (days)	Current	YTD
JSA	4	4.75	3.73
IS	4	2.57	2.31
IB	4	2.22	4.29

Telephony	Target (answer in 30 seconds)	Target met (days)	Target not met (days)	Daily average
JSA	90%	15	8	92%
IS	90%	19	4	93%
IB	90%	5	18	82%

- New claims – all within target parameters even with increase in workload.
- Changes – JSA changes post prioritised on receipt to try and alleviate potential problems for customers with 40% increase in claims over last 3 months. The Year to Date for IB is reducing month on month.
- Telephony – IB still currently covering Maternity Allowance calls on behalf of another office which has virtually doubled call traffic, though now reducing. Maternity Allowance calls return to owning office on 1ST December 2008 which should alleviate the problem. JSA are coping though JSA telephony traffic increased by almost 60% over last 3 months.

Plymouth BDC – Work Received (Monday 10.11.08 To Friday 14.11.08)

JSA

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 = 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 = 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 = 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)