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IMPACT OF CHANGES TO WELFARE SUPPORT

Impact of changes to Welfare Support

- Background
 - Changes to welfare support since April 2013
 - Introduction of Benefit cap
 - Introduction of Social Sector Room restrictions
 - Removal of Council Tax Benefits and introduction of Local Council Tax Support Schemes
 - Ongoing Migration from the 6 Legacy Benefits Job Seekers Allowance (JB), Employment Support Allowance (IR), Income Support, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credits and Child Tax Credits to Universal Credit
 - Disability Living Allowance replacement by Personal Independence Payment
 - Abolishment of Social Fund (and responsibility for emergency welfare support to LA with only 2 years funding)
 - Housing Benefit back date changed from 6 months to 1 month
 - Family Premium removal for new cases
 - Child Tax Credit restrictions for more than 2 children-includes restriction to HB/UC/IS/JSA
 - Working Age benefits frozen since 2016

Benefit Cap

- The cap applies to the total amount that the people in a household get from the following benefits: Bereavement Allowance, Carer's Allowance, Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Employment and Support Allowance, Guardian's Allowance, Housing Benefit, Incapacity Benefit, Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Maternity Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance, Universal Credit, Widowed Parent's Allowance (or Widowed Mother's Allowance or Widows Pension if received before 9 April 2001)
- The current level of the cap is:
 - £384.62 a week for couples (with or without children living with them)
 - £384/62 a week for single parents whose children live with them
 - £257.69 a week for single adults who don't have children, or whose children don't live with them
 - The cap is applied via Housing Benefits or Universal Credit

Benefit Cap

- Current live cases 49
- Impact relatively low
 - Most families have stayed in their homes and found ways of meeting the financial gap

Spare Room Subsidy

- From April 2013 Housing Benefit is based on the number of people in the household and the size of the accommodation.
- This applies to all working-age tenants renting from a local authority, housing association or other registered social landlord (RSLs).
- Brings the Housing Benefits payable to tenants of social housing in line with private tenants.

Spare Room Subsidy

- This means those tenants whose accommodation is larger than they need may lose part of their Housing Benefit. Those with one spare bedroom lose 14% of their eligible rent and those with 2 or more spare bedrooms lose 25%.
- BDC Room Restriction current live cases
 - 14% = 297
 - 25% = 51

Discretionary Housing Payments

- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's)
 - introduced in July 2001
 - used to provide financial assistance to claimants in receipt of Housing Benefit and Universal Credit rent costs where it is considered that additional help with housing costs are required.
- Housing costs are generally defined as
 - a rental liability
 - rent deposits
 - rent in advance
 - other lump sum costs (e.g. removal costs).
- DHP's may be awarded as a one-off payment or periodically for an appropriate period.

Discretionary Housing Payments

- Officers work with applicants to identify other support that may be appropriate.
- DHP awards are not conditional and any decision will be based on a fair assessment of need.
- The wider housing issue will be considered, where appropriate.
- Consideration will be given to:-
 - what an award of DHP will achieve;
 - Would the tenancy be sustainable if DHP was paid
 - the consequences of not making the award; and
 - whether any alternative support can be provided.

Discretionary Housing Payments

- 174 Cases DHP totalling £101,120.91 was used in 2017/2018
- 33 to help with Rent deposits
- 29 to help with returning to employment
- 1 to remain in adapted properties
- Remaining to help with general short term costs
- These reasons are recorded using DWP set outcomes

Council Tax Support

- Council Tax Benefit ended March 2013
- LA required to introduce local Council Tax Support Scheme
- Pensioners protected as scheme provided by government
- 10% cut in the funding as well as reductions in administration grant
- Default scheme in 2013/14 and 2014/15
- 80% support introduced in April 2015
- All working age claimants pay a minimum of 20% towards their Council Tax Liability
- Scheme still mostly mirrors existing HB requirements

Hardship Scheme

- £25k per annum
- Transitional relief for those facing hardship as a result of changes to Council Tax Support
- Applications and officer identified
- Personal assessment
- Full financial review
- Transitional relief and long term solutions

Hardship Scheme

- Support provided in 2016/17
 - 188 customers
 - £25,084.20
- Support provided in 2017/18
 - 166 Customers
 - £27,822.78

Universal Credit

- Introduced in Redditch in February 2015
- Single, job seekers making a new claim.
- Delivery Partnership Agreement in Place with RBC
- Support – online claims, personal budgeting, manual council tax support claims
- District went full service in October 2017

Essential Living Fund

- Previously operated by DWP (Crisis Support)
- Responsibility passed to WCC and funded by government
- RBC lobbied for local delegation to ensure could best meet local needs and WCC passed on funding,
- RBC administered local, flexible discretionary scheme
- All applications must be made in person via face to face interview.
- No cash
- Full assessment of needs carried out.
- Approach has significantly reduced 'frequent flyers'.

Essential Living Fund

- Scheme provides assistance in the form of goods, food parcels referrals and vouchers to help individuals and families facing exceptionally difficult circumstances.
- Work closely with The Trussell Trust Foodbank
- Flexible approach to meeting demand. Tailor support appropriately for each individual, and also to try to help with the root cause of the problem, rather than just the presenting demands.

Essential Living Fund

- £16785.13 spent in 2016/17
- £11416.87 spent in 2017/18
- Now fully funded by RBC - £30k per annum
- £5k per annum used to support high level financial advice (Signs of Hope), in partnership with RBC Housing, and BDHT

Financial Independence Team

- ◉ Team formalised through service review this year and officers appointed to new roles in Oct 17.
- ◉ Officers work across BDC and RBC to provide concentrated financial support to people with complex needs by
 - Meeting individually with customers
 - Hold group sessions in the Job centre in Redditch to raise awareness of our services.
- ◉ Officers work closely with Housing Locality, Housing Options, RSL's, CAB, CCP and any other agency that might be able to help.

Financial Independence Team

- ◉ To help support people to prepare their own budgets, understand their priority debts and develop their skills so that they can become financially independent.
- ◉ Maximisation of Benefits, DHP, Hardship, ELF
- ◉ Discuss debts
- ◉ APA, Advance payments, Emergency Help (ELF)
- ◉ Referrals for other support, Housing Team, CAB, Signs of Hope

Financial Independence Team

Period October 2017 to March 2018

- 103 Customer helped with PBS
- 42 Customers referred direct from UC for PBS
- Customer confidence in how to deal with their finances has shown improvements from the start to the end of their time with the team

