



# Kensington & Chelsea Advice Forum

**Tuesday 19 February 2019, 10.00am – 12.30pm**  
**Committee Room 1, Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, W8 7NX**

**Chair:** Angela Spence (AS), KCSC  
**Minutes taken by:** Alice Lowry (AL), KCSC

Item	Notes	Action
1	<b>Forum meeting commences – minutes of the last meeting &amp; matters arising</b>	
	<p>Angela (AS) welcomed everybody to the meeting. Minutes from the last meeting were reviewed – outstanding actions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Andrew Wilson (AW) to contact Mark Stewart to give an update on ethical debt collection at the next meeting.</li> <li>AW to send online benefit housing form to Alice Lowry (AL).</li> </ul>	
2	<b>Universal Credit Assisted Digital Assistance – Lorna Reid, Citizens Advice Kensington &amp; Chelsea</b>	
	<p>Lorna introduced herself to the group. Citizens Advice secured a contract with the Department for Work and Pensions to deliver Universal Credit support for all claims. The contract runs from April '10 – March '20. The support can be either face to face, over the telephone or via web support. This service is provided from the beginning of a Universal Credit claim – from giving a full benefits check to see if UC is suitable, ensuring that the client has everything needed to make the claim (eg. Email account, bank account).</p> <p>The key discussion points which arose within the group included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulties when transitioning from one benefit to another (e.g. DLA to PIP) and the waiting times for UC.</li> <li>Concerns were voiced about the amount of job centres in Kensington &amp; Chelsea and the number of Citizens Advice offices. LR explained that Citizens Advice has offices in North Kensington and in the south of the borough.</li> <li>One group member raised concerns over unsuccessful cases of UC applications not being looked at properly.</li> <li>A discussion was had over whether policies could be changed. LR said that CAB collect information for social policy influencing.</li> </ul>	<p>LR to send details of K&amp;C Citizens Advice offices</p> <p>AW to send postcode guide to accessing job centres</p> <p>DS to look into cases</p>
3	<b>Update on Universal Credit roll out – Dee Solanki from Department for Work (DWP) and Pensions and Andrew Wilson, RBKC</b>	

	<p>Dee (DS) introduced himself to the group and told the group that the DWP felt that the UC rollout had gone well. The DWP are currently looking at creating a hub with partners at the Curve Centre to look at soft skills for work. The Local Authority still have some Housing Benefit officers on site and are working closely with Citizens Advice and work coaches who are working specifically with individual cases who have been affected by Grenfell. DS said he would share escalation route ways for Hammersmith &amp; Fulham and the contact details for work leads. DS also suggested getting in touch with Kam Babrah at the DWP responsible for K&amp;C and inviting him to the next Advice Forum.</p> <p>The key discussion points which arose within the group included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The issues with UC – e.g. waiting times of 6 weeks and other benefits being stopped during an application. DS said it was useful to get feedback.</li> <li>• One group member brought up case of people she knew who couldn't be considered a couple due to one of them living in a care home.</li> </ul> <p>Andrew (AW) went over the impact of UC on housing benefit (HB) claims with the group. He explained that all claims for housing benefit put through before 12 December '18 would be treated as a new claim. The number of new HB claims are dropping but there are still groups of people who are able to claim HB. AW said it was important to ensure people were claiming the correct benefit. For further information, please see presentation.</p> <p>The key discussion points which arose within the group included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues with the impact of UC on council tax support. This has been noticed since mid-January. AW said Mark Stewart was aware of this.</li> <li>• Benefits of claiming UC and working full time.</li> <li>• Hammersmith &amp; Fulham and how they managed with the rollout of UC.</li> </ul>	<p>DS to share contact details for H&amp;F work leads and share Kam Babrah contact details with AL</p> <p>Dahabo to email DS separately</p> <p>AL to find out from Westminster CAB about CT reduction issues</p> <p>DS to share Joseph Pascal (from Hammersmith &amp; Fulham council) details</p>
4	<p><b>Responding to homelessness (St Mungo's)</b> – Amy Withey, RBKC lead on rough sleeping and Peter Sheerin (St Mungo's Recovery Colleges Volunteer Advisor)</p>	
	<p>PS gave an overview of the volunteering positions available at St Mungos. For further information, please click here.</p> <p>AW then introduced herself as the Street Population Manager in K&amp;C – overseeing all responses to rough sleeping in K&amp;C. She explained that when the weather drops to 0oC or below they will respond to all Streetlink referrals within 48 hours (same day in a lot of cases). If a person is found and agrees to it an assessment is carried out. If this was their first night recorded sleeping rough, they would go to a London assessment hub.</p>	

	<p>The key discussion points which arose within the group included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of people successfully housed? This is difficult to answer as some rough sleepers are only seen once. A lot of tricky cases lie in older males in 40s/50s with undiagnosed mental health services.</li> <li>• One group member thought Councils may be bribing rough sleepers to move out of the borough. AW said there were no financial incentives being offered for people to move out of the borough.</li> <li>• For a referral to be made the person needs to be seen sleeping.</li> <li>• One group member told the group about a housing charity run by Westway Trust.</li> </ul>	<p>RBKC to seek update on the Homeless Reduction Act</p> <p>AW to send out all Streetlink details and her contact details for team members.</p> <p>Joanna to give details for housing charity</p>
5	<b>Attendance and feedback from other forums</b>	
	<p><b>Borough Voluntary Organisations Forum</b> AS explained that this meeting was for the voluntary sector to meet with local cabinet members from RBKC 3 or 4 times a year. Any topic suggestions for meetings can be sent to AS or to Baljit Badesha from Nucleus the current BVOAG rep for the advice sector,.</p> <p><b>Co-Production</b> AS updated the group on the plan that WLCCG have been preparing a Grenfell Recoery plan. She said that the Main VOF in June would usually be a good opportunity to discuss any big policy issues.</p>	<p>AS to send out details for Baljit(Advice Sector representative)</p>
6	<b>Any other business</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns over the public health changes and health trainers no longer being used.</li> </ul>	<p>AS to follow up public health concerns</p>

## ATTENDANCE LIST

	Organisation
1	Carers Network
2	Citizens Advice
3	Crosslight Advice
4	Dadihiye

5	Department for Work and Pensions
6	Edith Durham Community
7	KCSC
8	Mad Alliance/NSUN
9	MIND
10	RBKC
11	RBKC Benefits
12	The Clement James Centre
13	Westway Trust