

Kensington and Chelsea Advice Forum (KCAF)

Thursday 19 September 2017
Small Hall, Kensington Town Hall
Hornton Street, London, W8 7NX
10am – 12.30pm

Minutes

Chair/Minutes: Angela Spence, Gulden Fedayi, KCSC
Attendance list attached.

	Item	Actions
1	Introductions No apologies received	
2	Minutes of the last meeting & matters arising <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved• No matters arising	
3	Universal Credit (UC), DWP <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Currently not yet engaged with people on the Working Tax Credit• Initial Interaction mainly by telephone and then through digital platform [has been in place for 4 years but will take time to embed].• Currently claims to existing benefits – ESA, JSA and IS• These are based as individual claims unless circumstances has changed, and if no change then claimants will remain on legacy benefits.• Roll out for new claimants only from March 2018 in this order = Enfield, Barnet, Islington, Haringey, Camden then Kensington and Chelsea.• Migration of systems expected around spring 2019 to end of 2022.• 80% of UC claims are being 67% paid following first assessment Landlord Cohort <p>At evaluation stage, was hoping for a full roll out in October 2017, but there has been slight delay.</p> <p>Design timeline for digital processing of claims is now September 2018 [i.e. entire Job Centre network</p> <p>- 700 at moment across Wales, England and Scotland</p>	

Questions/comments from members

JR asked if there were systems in place to support people with disabilities and people for whom English is not their first language?

- DWP provides funds to support access to digital services. Helping people get online with guided support available.
- DWP cannot complete the forms for the claimants because of Data Protection regulations.
- Individuals who have difficulty with the online process is offered guidance as the system is able to pick this up through the number of failed attempts or 'being stuck' on form filling.

BB stated that people who are isolated, have no support is an area that is being looked at. Stats show that some people make claims but then disappear/ waiting on processing of payment but in fact that the claim is lost in system as it has not been followed up by the claimant. Advice agencies felt that this system is flawed as people may not know that they have to follow up on claims if it has been flagged up with them directly.

The timeframes that claimants are used to waiting with benefit process is not untypical if these go over months, so they therefore will not chase on claims and/or not aware that they have to.

- DWP explained that information on the process is widely cascaded with an emphasis for claimants to check their claims so that these do not become dormant.

DWP to bring back to next meeting the stats on number of claims made and have fallen as 'dormant', including status of these i.e. ESA/ Appeals etc.

- UC is now in full service. It operates on an agile system; a test and lean system and has been evolving since 2013.

Suggestion made that DWP could send emails /confirmations to help people become adjusted with new system processes.

- Appeals process changed for DLA but there are delays being experienced by the system. The assessment period is 28 days followed by another process that asks claimants to confirm 'I am not a robot' to avoid abuse /scams/ fraud.

The Advice Network members were encouraged to feed back their findings as there is a real commitment by DWP to make the process easier not more difficult. Feedback can be sent via the universal credit site on the gov.uk website.

ESA – engagement is geared towards initial conversations about health and work at the outset of the claims process [approx. 4 weeks after work assessment completed]. Intended to be light-touch and not interrogative. It has no bearing on the outcome of a work capability assessment. Work

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	related activity for new claimants came in to force in April 2017.	
4	<p>Turn 2 Us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn to Us was set up in 1897 • It is a national programme and aimed at individuals in financial hardship. • Applications are via an online facility/ digital platform. It can also be accessed via telephone and face to face. • Works with a wide range of partners and delivered via a team of volunteers who help individuals with form filling and grant searches. • £16.6bn of welfare benefits and tax credits are going unpaid • 5m visitors to Turn to Us website which provides a wide range of information and access to resources. • Benefits calculations and Universal Credit calculations offered, free and easy to use • Allows intermediary agencies to set up accounts. • Grant search option provides access to 3,000+ grant giving organisations. Simple to use, know the criteria for clients, which has filters by age/geography/ religion/ background and work. Many grants can be applied for online. • £8m grants awarded in 2016. • <u>Turn to Us Grants</u>: Elizabeth Finn Fund aimed at supporting people with costs for studies, NVQs and degrees • <u>Turn to Us Response Fund</u>. This is a new fund which is reviewed every 2 years and aims to provide a financial response to something significant that has happened over the past 12 months. Offers £1k for individuals, £1,500 for individual plus scheme and an additional £4k for adaptations. Help with rent arrears where there is not a rent deposit scheme in place. Not for private care. <p>Link to website</p>	
5	<p>Hate Crime, RBKC</p> <p>Definition of hate crime shared and discussed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low levels of reporting e.g. 4 per month in K&C yet there is anecdotal evidence that suggests that it is much higher. Hate crime covers racial, religion and disability is less reported. Can include verbal abuse. • The Hate Crime Service aims to support victims. Victim Support operates across England and Wales, and not just London. • Self-referrals accepted or via other service providers. • The service is not counselling but does provide emotional support 	

	<p>through advocacy and advice / information and interventions around promoting personal safety. Victims are offered 6 sessions but this can be extended to more if needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement includes drop-in sessions around different sites. • Hate Crime Partnership – RBKC, Fire Service and other statutory agencies. • VCS Working Group – meets every 6 weeks and the priority for next 12 months is community engagement. • National Hate Crime Week – 14th-21st October 2017. Posters will be distributed around the borough, aiming to raise awareness. • Online Hate Crime – the Met. Police have recently deployed an initiative to address this. <p>Would like to see more VCS participation in hate Crime working group and hate crime reporting scheme if interested contact Lorna Platt at RBKC – Lorna.platt@rbkc.gov.uk</p>	
6	<p>Updates from strategic meetings</p> <p><u>BVOAG</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RBKC’s main priority has been in relation to Grenfell response. VCS Representatives put questions to Cabinet about the council’s response to the tragedy and current response. <p><u>Main VOF</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 people attended last meeting which was the day after the Grenfell Tower fire. The majority of the meeting focussed on what had happened, <p><u>KCSC Poverty and Inequality Network</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is no longer running, likely to now be replaced by a VCS Grenfell Network run by KCSC <p><u>VCS Grenfell Network – 26th September 2017</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now established • KCSC new post for Grenfell will be key in delivering a VCS voice on Grenfell 	
	<p>Member updates</p> <p><i>CAB K&C:</i> Reported that as the agency is becoming more and more involved, they are picking up trends which the CAB is willing to share the</p>	

	<p>learning e.g. clients in temporary housing, not sure if they can access benefits, some clients declining temporary housing because they are worried that it may slow down the process for them to be housed in permanent accommodation. RBKC has assured them that this is not the case – and that the aim is to house all families in permanent accommodation within the year.</p> <p><i>Vanessa Robinson – Community Living Well: An internal launch of service took place in June 2017 and are working towards a public launch of the navigators service. Website will be up and running in October 2017 to enable people to be able to self-refer. The aim is to have a phased launch.</i></p>	
<p>AOB</p>	<p>Homeless Reduction Plan – what is RBKC doing about this and when will it come into force? It is expected that this will be around April 2018. New duties will look at everyone who presents as homeless. RBKC should have a plan by now and consultation should be happening but this has yet to be announced. KCSC to follow up and bring back to next meeting.</p>	<p>KCSC</p>