

Report of Chief Officer, Welfare and Benefits
Report to Outer North West Area Committee
Date: 23rd September 2013
Subject: Update on Welfare Benefit changes

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1. The report provides an update on the citywide and local aspects of the significant welfare changes which were introduced in April 2013. These changes have seen more tenants falling into arrears with their rent and their Council Tax. Steps have been taken to mitigate the impact of the changes, including changes to recovery processes, and support is being provided to those tenants who engage with the council about their arrears.
2. The Discretionary Housing Payments scheme, which provides support to tenants affected by the welfare changes, is on track to spend the full £1.9m budget with the bulk of this spend going on those deemed to be priority cases within the Council's policy. Further funding may be available this year from DWP but this is subject to a bidding process and details of the process have yet to be announced.
3. The Local Welfare Support scheme, which has replaced the Social Fund scheme in Leeds, provides goods and services rather than cash to those in need. The spend in the 1st quarter clearly shows that there will be an underspend against this fund and, as a consequence, proposals will be developed and taken to Executive Board for alternative uses of this funding. Proposals will also be developed on potential Local Welfare Support schemes for 2014/15. It is intended to discuss these proposals for the 14/15 scheme with Area Committees ahead of an Executive Board recommendation.
4. The roll out of Universal Credit has started with a further 6 small areas announced as Universal Credit sites. The main roll out of Universal Credit is now not expected until late 2014 or even later. Nevertheless, preparations continue and one of the key aspects of the preparations relates to tackling high cost lenders in the city. A plan of

action has been developed that includes city-wide and locality-based events and the report seeks input from Area Committees for the programme.

Recommendations

5. The Committee is asked to:

5.1. Note the information about the impact of the welfare reforms;

5.2. Note the information about the campaign against high cost lenders and contribute to options for locality-based events and initiatives to support the campaign.

5.3. Champion the following priorities:

- High interest money lending and debt
- Better connecting local people to Leeds job opportunities and training through the planning process, sector based work academies and apprenticeships
- Continuing to support local communities through localised employability, learning and advice provision

Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The report provides an update of the impact of the welfare reforms at both a city-wide and ward-level basis and also provides information on arrangements that have been put in place to support tenants.
- 1.2 The report details some of the preparations that are underway for Universal Credit with a focus on locality-based support that can be provided. A key element of the preparations for Universal Credit and a response to the welfare reforms is a programme of work aimed at tackling the issue of payday and high cost lending in the city. The report provides information about this programme and seeks input from Area Committees on how the programme of activity can work at a locality level.

2 Background information

- 2.1 As part of the Government's programme of welfare reforms, changes to Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and the Social Fund came into effect from April 2013. These changes mean that:
 - Working age social sector tenants deemed to have one or more spare bedrooms see their Housing Benefit reduced;
 - The majority of working age households see their Council Tax Support reduced by 19%; and
 - Funding allocated to the Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants elements of the Social Fund is devolved to local councils.
- 2.2 In recognition of the difficulties these changes may cause for some families, the Government increased funding to local Councils for Discretionary Housing Payments schemes. Funding for Leeds increased from £800k in 12/13 to £1.9m in 13/14.
- 2.3 The policy for the allocation of DHPs was agreed at Executive Board and prioritises spend on the following groups:
 - Disabled tenants in significantly adapted properties
 - Tenants with child access arrangements
 - Tenants approaching Pension Credit age
 - Foster carers and kinship care
 - Pregnant women allocated an additional room for the baby.
- 2.4 Further welfare changes came into effect later in the year.
 - Personal Independence Payments (PIP), which replaces Disability Living Allowance, came into effect from June 2013 for new claims only. The main programme of reviewing DLA cases to see whether they will transfer to PIP, starts in October 2015 although DLA claims that are due to be reviewed before then will be considered for PIP earlier;

- The Benefit Cap comes into effect in Leeds from 12th August 2013 and will see around 424 families lose some or all of their Housing Benefit.

- 2.5 A number of analyses have been carried out on the total impact in Leeds of the programme of welfare changes. Sheffield Hallam University estimates that the changes see a loss of benefit of £232m a year in Leeds, while the LGA's analyses estimates the loss in Leeds at £171m a year.
- 2.6 The welfare changes come at a time when there is significant concern about the growing use of payday and high interest rate lending which is a growing sector of the unsecured lending market.

High Cost Lenders (HCL)

- 2.7 Within the context of these reforms, coupled with the fall in general earnings over the last two years, the council has seen the rise in the use of high cost lenders as a major cause for concern.
- 2.8 It is estimated that 5 million people in the UK access high cost credit of which 2 million use payday lenders. If this national picture is equated to the Leeds population it means that up to 60,000 people in Leeds may use high interest lenders including approximately 22,500 people who may take out Payday loans. Whilst the traditional high cost lenders, eg. doorstep lenders, pawn brokers and cash shops, tend to target more deprived communities, Payday lenders also target more affluent communities.
- 2.9 There is also evidence that financial exclusion is a growing problem in more affluent communities. In 2010, the council undertook research to evaluate the extent of the problem for communities who may not have access to the more affordable forms of banking services. In addition to surveying Leeds deprived communities, a number of more affluent areas were surveyed. One such area was in Yeadon, where households in an area regarded as economically average were surveyed.
- 2.10 This study showed that the problem of financial exclusion had grown worse over a period of 6 years but also that its impact was being felt in parts of the city where it was not previously thought to be a problem. A lot of data was collected as part of this study but just two examples illustrate the problem. In the economically average communities almost 40% of households had no savings at all and 16% were behind with one or more bills, primarily utility bills, council tax and credit cards.
- 2.11 In response to these concerns the council is launching a campaign to tackle high cost lenders and information about this campaign is contained in the main issues part of this report. The Council also agreed a white paper motion at its meeting on Wednesday 11 September which called on a number of initiatives including a request to Government to:

- § Look again at introducing a cap on interest rates charged by high cost, short-term lenders.

- § Introduce restrictions around the practice of 'rolling over' loans given the OFT's recent findings regarding the proportion of revenue generated through charges associated with this practice.
- § Re-designate such lenders within the Town and Country Planning Act so as to require planning permission to be granted before certain establishments can be converted into pay day or high interest loan shops.

3 Main issues

3.1 Appendix 1 provides data on the city-wide impact of the welfare changes as at the end of July 2013. The table below shows the extent of the impact of the welfare changes in the Outer North West area

Ward	No of cases	Wkly HB Loss	No of cases	Wkly HB Loss	No of case
	Under-occupancy		Benefit Cap		Council Tax Support
Adel and Wharfedale	48	£602	2	£169	348
Otley and Yeadon	103	£1,216	4	£138	493
Guiseley and Rawdon	55	£666	1	£59	309
Horsforth	112	£1,397	4	£99	331
Totals	318	£3,881	11	£465	1,481

3.2 Across Leeds the number of tenancies affected has reduced since the start of April but continues to remain high at 7,834. In the Outer North West area there has been a reduction from 344 to 318 in the number of tenancies affected by the under-occupancy changes.

3.3 There is a mixed picture in the Outer North West area in relation to changes in rent arrears for Local Authority tenants. Across the 4 wards, rent arrears have increased from £18,232 to £23,145 for tenants affected by the under-occupancy changes – this is a 26.9% increase. However, in Guiseley and Rawdon rent arrears for those affected by under-occupancy reduced 16%.

3.4 In April 2013, Executive Board agreed a revised rent arrears recovery approach that recognises those who can't pay. The approach focuses on maximising income and signposting to support for issues around debt and budgeting for those tenants who engage with ALMOs about their rent arrears.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

3.5 At the end of July 2013, £864k of the £1.9m spend has been committed and, with Benefit Cap coming into effect from 19th August 2013, it is estimated that the full £1.9m allocation will be spent.

Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme

3.6 The Outer North West area has 1,481 of the 32,000 cases affected by the changes in the local Council Tax Support. It is not possible to break down

collection rates by ward at this stage but overall Council Tax collection is down at the end of June 2013 compared to the same point last year by 0.46% which equates to £1.3m less cash collected.

- 3.7 A report is to be presented to the Executive Board setting out options for the Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15

Local Welfare Support Scheme

- 3.8 Leeds received £2.8m scheme funding for a Local Welfare Support scheme. A Local Welfare Support Scheme, approved by Executive Board, was put in place with effect from April 2013. The scheme is designed to provide emergency support and to provide help to people and families who need support to remain in the community. Unlike the Social Fund scheme delivered by Jobcentre Plus, the Council's scheme is largely non-cash based. Residents who need help are provided with the goods and services they require. This is in line with most other councils. The approved scheme also agreed to set aside up to £500k to support initiatives which promoted Leeds City Credit Union and increased provision of debt and benefit advice.

- 3.9 As at the end of July 2013, £361k had been spent on providing support to residents and a further £375k allocated to support Leeds City Credit Union and a range of debt and benefit advice initiatives. The scheme has also been adjusted to provide help during the summer to families who would be entitled to Free School Meals during school terms but who are struggling to feed their children during the school holidays. More detailed analysis, including spend by area, will be undertaken later in the year.

- 3.10 Work has now started on developing a scheme for 2014/15 and it is intended to bring a consultation paper to the next round of Area Committees in order to inform proposals to Executive Board later in the year.

Benefit Cap

- 3.11 The Benefit Cap, which limits to £500 a week the amount of benefit a non-working family can receive, was launched nationally from 15th July 2013 with cases in Leeds starting to be capped from 19th August 2013. DWP data suggest around 424 families affected by the Cap and work has been ongoing to ensure that families are prepared for the Cap. 11 families in the Outer North West area are expected to be affected by the Benefit Cap and visits have been undertaken to all families where the cap results in a reduction of more than £50 a week.

Preparations for Universal Credit

- 3.12 Following the Pathfinder phase of Universal Credit in Tameside, the DWP has rolled out Universal Credit to 6 more areas from October 2013. The areas are: Hammersmith, Rugby, Inverness, Harrogate, Bath and Shotton and this constitutes the start of the national roll out. A further announcement is expected in the autumn on future roll outs but it is unlikely that we will see any significant roll out of Universal Credit in Leeds until nearer the end of 2014 or even later.

- 3.13 Preparations are continuing for Universal Credit with the main focus being on preparing tenants for a digital claims process, developing a Local Support

Services Framework, tackling high cost lenders and putting in place arrangements for dealing with direct payments of the housing element of Universal Credit to tenants.

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- 3.15 Information about the WNWhL response to the welfare changes is attached at appendix 2

Debt Prevention and High Interest Lenders

- 3.16 In June 2013, Executive Board approved a campaign to tackle high cost lenders in the city. The key elements of the campaign are:
- Coordinate activity across public, private and the third Sector to deal with high cost lending
 - City Wide High Profile campaign
 - Local Neighbourhood promotion and education Campaign
 - Build Capacity for alternative affordable credit
 - Reduce dependency on and use of HCLs
 - Provide direct support for those caught up in HCL
- 3.17 Appendix 3 provides an update on the campaign and welcomes contributions from the Area Committee on locality-based events that would support the campaign.

Leeds City Credit Union

- 3.18 A key partner in the battle to tackle high cost lenders is Leeds City Credit Union (LCCU). LCCU is working closely with the Council and other partners to develop support for residents who do not have access to affordable banking services. As part of the Local Welfare Support Scheme adopted by the Council, the Executive Board approved a recommendation that an element of the scheme funding should be used to support, among other things, promotion and development of Leeds City Credit Union services and increased provision of advice and support. Work is taking place to ensure Bramley Credit Union is well placed in these discussions.

Headrow Money Line

- 3.19 The Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI) operating as Headrow Money Line, is a sister organisation to LCCU and started lending in November 2012. In the initial months of trading, Headrow Money Line (HML) is taking a deliberately cautious approach to lending in order to embed systems and to protect against risk. HML is providing affordable credit to many of the residents who have been turned down currently for credit union loans. In so doing it will enable these residents to have access to the broader network of support either provided directly through HML or through partner agencies.

3.20 HML offers a source of credit which is significantly lower in cost and therefore much more affordable than payday loan companies, doorstep and similar lenders. CDFI's operating around the country charge interest in the region of 40% to 70%. HML is currently operating at the higher end of this range in order to ensure security of the business and give time to assess the impact of bad debt provision. Although this seems high, it is significantly lower than the typical rate charged by doorstep lenders (300% and above) or of some "payday" lenders (up to 4000% plus).

Leeds Advice Partners

3.21 A partnership of advice agencies provide debt and welfare rights advice, along with the Council's own Welfare Rights Unit. This service is becoming increasingly important given the many changes to the benefits system highlighted in this report. The City Council is currently undertaking a review of advice provision with the intention of ensuring a more comprehensive coverage of support in all the areas of the city where there is a need and delivering advice in a more integrated way. The new service is planned to be introduced during 2014.

The Local Perspective : Welfare Benefit Changes

3.22 The Area Support Team has led the development of an Employability and Welfare Reform working group was established in July 2012. Partners include WNWHL, JobCentre Plus (JCP), Work Programme providers Interserve and Ingeus, Employment and Skills, Libraries, Children's Service, Clusters, Children Centres, Public Health, IGEN, Leeds City College and Third sector partners. The working group focuses on the impact of the welfare benefit changes and employability within our localities.

3.23 Early programmes of work included frontline worker workshops, which both raised awareness around the welfare benefit changes and engaged frontline workers to identify early challenges and concerns. Over 60 people attended the event, and feedback was very positive. This network is now being used to disseminate new information quickly to local leaders and practitioners from across a range of sectors.

3.24 The Clusters have been organising a series of OBA events to look at the impact of the Welfare Reform, an Outer North West OBA event was held in February and partners are working to deliver the actions identified through this session. These include;

- Increasing the dissemination of information about changes to parents and partner organisations.
- Increasing access and availability to low-cost and ethical lending schemes and to raise awareness to supports such as local food banks and housing support agencies.
- To increase opportunities for volunteers.
- To promote the availability of internet access through libraries and possibly schools out of school time for the purpose of job hunting and application.

Debt Prevention and High Interest Lenders

- 3.25 Public Health are developing a money management/ budgeting course toolkit to enable practitioners to deliver sessions in community centres across the WNW.
- 3.26 Frontline worker training sessions are being organised by Public Health and Trading Standards to raise awareness around illegal money lending, high interest loans and debt prevention.
- 3.27 PC's, PCSO'S and NPT's are also to be trained in dealing with loan sharks by Trading Standards; this will include what is defined as harassment.
- 3.28 WNWhL is continuing work through the Illegal Money Lending Team to look at tackle loan sharks and scams. Staff briefings have been undertaken on loan sharks and scams, particularly focusing on the elderly and vulnerable. Further campaigns are planned, including a week of action in October. The last campaign led to the arrest of two people from west Leeds in connection with illegal money lending.
- 3.29 The WNWhL Financial Inclusion officer has been promoting free school meals, budgeting skills and reducing utility bills to all customers, targeted towards those on a low income. In addition to facilitating a free financial advice surgery trialled in Ralph Thoresby School, Holt Park, LS16 7RX. The team also supported the provision of free employment advice offered in Otley Core Resource Centre by initially sending posters to the local Neighbourhood Housing Offices and posting information in the e-bulletin. WNWhL's officers promoted the service to residents / customers. 277 text messages were sent to residents in Otley to inform them of the free service and 110 letters, with posters, were also sent.
- 3.30 WNW Works staff consulted with customers who had indicated they wanted to either increase their working hours or find work to help address under-occupancy issues. The consultation was based on direct calls to customers to complete a questionnaire about how WNW Works could best support them back into work or increase their skills by providing training, volunteering or work experience opportunities in addition to Sector based Work Academy information.
- 3.31 The Employability and Welfare Reform Working Group has been delivering a range of initiatives to better co-ordinate local activity, identify gaps in provision and use the local community facilities to deliver learning opportunities and employment.
- 3.32 In response to local need partners, including Job Centre Plus, Connexions, WNWhL and the Libraries Services have been involved in establishing an advice session in Otley on a Wednesday. Those people targeted primarily have been those affected by the welfare benefit changes who have stated they are looking for work or wish to increase their working hours. Residents are being informed of this provision through a series of promotional activities, including posters, direct mail and texting. Officers from the Guiseley Job Centre who cover the sessions report that they have been fully booked with 100% attendance and really appreciated by local residents.

3.33 The Outreach Workers are proactively seeking out tenants who are in need of employment support and also responding to referrals from other WNWHL staff who are conducting Welfare Reform and general tenancy visits. In addition there is an on-going campaign to contact customers affected by the welfare reforms who responded to last year's survey saying that they wished to secure employment.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.34 Consultation and Engagement

4.34.1 The report provides information on progress in implementing the welfare changes and the impacts of the changes and is not a report which requires public consultation.

4.35 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.35.1 The Government's welfare changes have implications for equality and diversity and have been subject to equality impact assessments. Similarly, the development of Discretionary Housing Payments and Local Welfare Support schemes have also been subject to equality impact assessments.

4.36 Council policies and City Priorities

4.36.1 The on-going development of responses to the welfare changes and preparations for changes still to come is aimed at supporting City Priorities around health and wellbeing and poverty. Cross-sector working, particularly with the advice sector and 3rd sector organisations such as the Credit Union, is aimed at ensuring tenants and residents receive support to manage the changes.

4.37 Resources and value for money

4.37.1 The report is for information only and does not have any resource implications directly. The on-going development of initiatives to tackle high cost lenders and put in place support for vulnerable tenants has resource implications. These are expected to be met from funding streams for local welfare scheme and local support services framework, once announced.

4.38 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.38.1 There are no legal implications relating to this report.

4.39 Risk Management

4.39.1 The programme of welfare changes increases the risk of rent arrears and Council Tax arrears. Changes to the recovery process along with the application of the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme are aimed at mitigating the risks.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Many tenants are struggling to cope with the welfare changes that came into effect from April 2013; there have been increases in rent arrears and Council Tax

arrears which it can only be assumed are as a result of the changes. On-going preparations for Universal Credit recognise the impact of the changes to date and focus on tackling high cost lending, increasing financial inclusion and supporting tenants to get online to manage benefit claims.

- 5.2 Potential reductions to Discretionary Housing Payments funding in FY14/15 mean that further work is required to move tenants away from dependency on DHPs and into more sustainable and affordable renting solutions.
- 5.3 Partners are coming together in localities to better use the community infrastructure to support people affected by the welfare changes. This provides a good platform for further collaboration with a range of city-wide partners.

6 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- 6.1 Note the information about the impact of the welfare reforms;
- 6.2 Note the information about the campaign against high cost lenders and contribute to options for locality-based events and initiatives to support the campaign;
- 6.3 Champion the following priorities:
- High interest money lending and debt
 - Better connecting local people to Leeds job opportunities and training through the planning process, sector based work academies and apprenticeships
 - Continuing to support local communities through localised employability, learning and advice provision

7 Background documents¹

Appendix 1 Monthly update

Appendix 2 WNWhL response to welfare reforms

Appendix 3 High cost lending update

Appendix 4 Social Sector Size Criteria – Update on contacts / visits to date

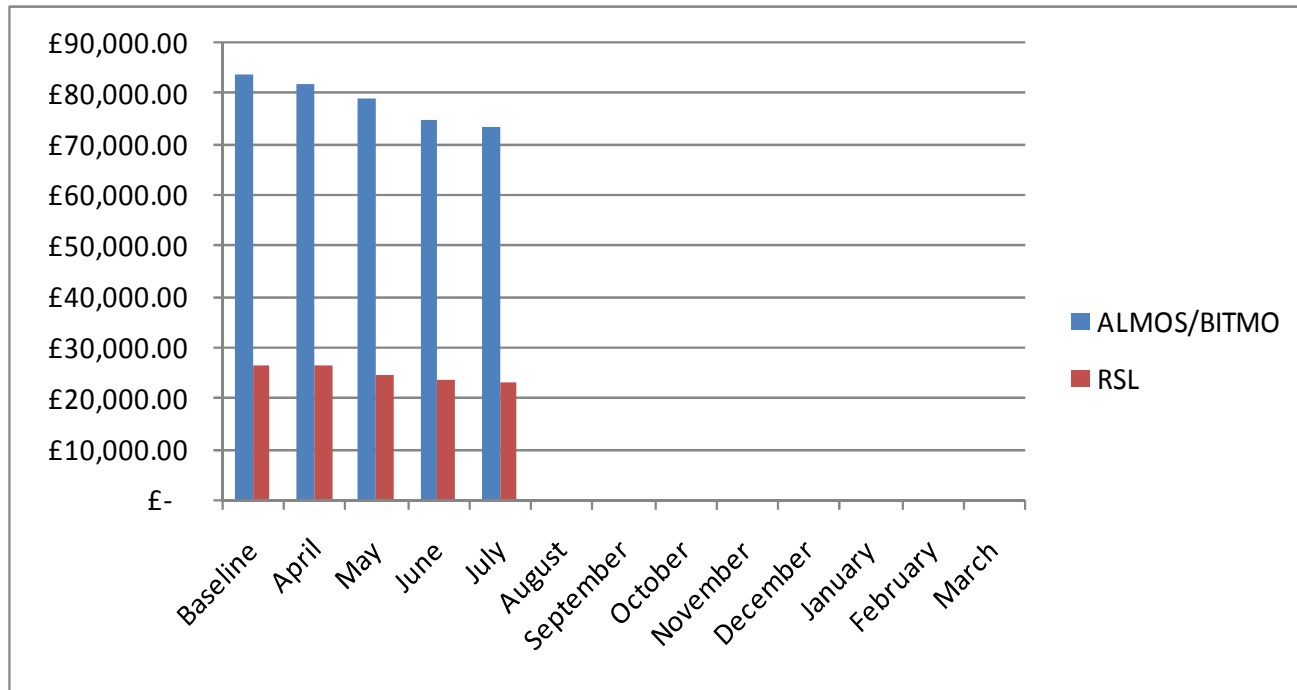
Appendix 5: Arrear of all under occupiers - All arrears cases

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Under-occupancy statistics

The weekly loss of Housing Benefit is:

- £ ALMOs £72,922.01
- £ HAs £ 22,841.63



NUMBER OF UNDER OCCUPIED CLAIMS WITH RENT ARREARS BY ALMO

2013/14	Baseline	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
AVH	450	1067	998	954	882								
BITMO	60	144	149	146	139								
ENE	663	1801	1668	1565	1406								
WNW	746	1600	1555	1484	1394								
Not Known	15	40	0	0	0								
TOTAL	1934	4652	4370	4149	3821								

Under-occupancy statistics

Ward breakdown

	ALMO NUMBER	ALMO £	RSL NUMBER	RSL £		ALMO NUMBER	ALMO £	RSL NUMBER	RSL £
Adel and Wharfedale	33	£ 432.15	15	£ 169.95	Horsforth	105	£ 1,227.11	7	£ 170.60
Alwoodley	125	£ 1,387.52	35	£ 592.83	Hyde Park and Woodhouse	287	£ 3,148.81	133	£ 2,109.14
Ardley and Robin Hood	61	£ 741.17	34	£ 452.59	Killingbeck and Seacroft	590	£ 7,102.39	67	£ 886.27
Armley	403	£ 4,306.47	99	£ 1,501.42	Kippax and Methley	84	£ 1,179.38	16	£ 242.46
Beeston and Holbeck	304	£ 3,297.04	37	£ 497.42	Kirkstall	337	£ 4,071.92	24	£ 333.74
Bramley and Stanningley	309	£ 3,732.27	30	£ 421.91	Middleton Park	483	£ 5,671.49	91	£ 1,269.29
Burmantofts and Richmond Hill	614	£ 6,420.96	115	£ 1,692.63	Moortown	43	£ 489.73	82	£ 1,317.19
Calverley and Farsley	59	£ 744.92	7	£ 132.97	Morley North	75	£ 842.70	18	£ 262.12
Chapel Allerton	277	£ 3,265.02	153	£ 2,448.51	Morley South	134	£ 1,471.47	19	£ 296.48
City and Hunslet	187	£ 2,170.55	120	£ 1,863.72	Otley and Yeadon	84	£ 937.13	19	£ 279.50
Cross Gates and Whinmoor	135	£ 1,626.24	30	£ 432.70	Pudsey	127	£ 1,551.41	25	£ 389.51
Farnley and Wortley	281	£ 3,188.82	16	£ 143.63	Rothwell	141	£ 1,810.84	46	£ 639.69
Garforth and Swillington	62	£ 754.88	3	£ 46.98	Roundhay	66	£ 712.51	42	£ 693.42
Gipton and Harehills	357	£ 4,081.02	149	£ 1,968.40	Temple Newsam	259	£ 3,262.03	46	£ 706.34
Guiselley and Rawdon	47	£ 558.56	8	£ 108.85	Weetwood	138	£ 1,569.59	16	£ 245.39
Harewood	25	£ 350.16	0	£ -	Wetherby	50	£ 623.43	9	£ 132.49
Headingley	14	£ 192.32	27	£ 393.49					

Discretionary Housing Payments as at 31.07.13

Priority Group	Total requests	Awards	% of awards	No award	% where no award	Ave Weekly award	Total cost of awards made
Sig adapted	498	309	62%	189	38%	£ 13.64	£ 195,538.24
Child access	322	246	76%	76	24%	£ 11.80	£ 137,773.77
Approach PC age	60	54	90%	6	10%	£ 15.77	£ 26,353.42
Housing & birth	21	19	90%	2	10%	£ 11.02	£ 2,121.07
Exceptional circs	547	341	62%	206	38%	£ 13.78	£ 188,305.04
Foster Carers	23	23	100%	0	0%	£ 15.48	£ 17,011.53
Not in priority group	550	10	2%	540	98%	£ 19.68	£ 5,077.27
Number of UO cases	2021	1002		1019		£ 15.45	£ 572,180.34
LHA cases affected by welfare changes	338	240		98		£ 30.61	£ 164,021.71
Benefit cap cases	None	None		None		None	None
Cases not in above categories	590	235		355		£ 26.41	£ 128,222.47
Total of DHP claims	2949	1477		1472			£ 864,424.52
Total spend to date	£ 402,912.94						
DHP Budget	£ 1,924,162.00						

Local Welfare Scheme statistics as at 31.07.13

Calls offered

Date	Offered	Abandoned	To CSO's	Eligible Applications	Awards
Apr-13	1896	768	1128	366	283
May-13	1866	711	1155	454	395
Jun-13	1737	600	1137	428	377
Jul-13	2151	803	1348	526	462
Total	7650	2882	4768	1774	1517

Decisions	
Outcome	Totals
Awarded	1517
Not awarded	257
Total	1774

Value of awards			Breakdown Of Goods	
Item	Value	Number	Goods	Total
Store Cards	£ 7,010.00	232	Dryer	8
ASDA baskets	£ 38,456.10	659	Cooker	393
Fuel (cash)	£ 10,602.30	527	Fridge	322
White / Brown Goods	£ 234,009.81	608	Bed	235
Flooring	£ 67,183.19	193	Bedding	32
Travel	£ 1,138.00	4	Curtains	11
Removal	£ 2,773.09	10	Washer	91
Total	£ 361,172.49	2233	Sofa	34
			Microwave	14

Breakdown Of Non Awards

Reason	Total
Referred to DWP	34
Single – not met emergency criteria	126
No response to our phone calls	50
Previous Claims	2
Living with family – not met emergency criteria	21
Cancelled / withdrawn by customer	24
Total	257

Local Council Tax Support

NUMBER OF CLAIMS AFFECTED BY 19% LCTS scheme

2013/14	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
ALL CLAIMS	34042	33535	32995	32500								

Weekly Value of Loss of Benefit for claims affected by 19% LCTS Scheme

2013/14	April	May	June	July
All Claims	£ 85,364.44	£83,811.83	£82,003.06	£80649.93

The average weekly reduction in May is equivalent to an additional **£4,193,796** per annum that needs to be paid by customers on Council Tax Support.

Council Tax Group		Comments
Elderly	30186	National prescribed scheme: no change to entitlement
War Pensioners	33	Protected: no change to entitlement
Severe Disability	2371	Protected: no change to entitlement
Enhanced Disability	5004	Protected: no change to entitlement
Carer	1524	Protected: no change to entitlement
Lone Parent Child Under 5	6600	Protected: no change to entitlement
Other	32512	No protection: entitlement reduced by 19%
Total	78230	

Local Council Tax Support: breakdown by ward of numbers with additional 19% to pay

WARD	Number Of Claims	WARD	Number Of Claims
Adel and Wharfedale	348	Horsforth	331
Alwoodley	690	Hyde Park and Woodhouse	1504
Ardsley and Robin Hood	498	Killingbeck and Seacroft	1804
Armley	2003	Kippax and Methley	438
Beeston and Holbeck	1784	Kirkstall	1160
Bramley and Stanningley	1292	Middleton Park	1877
Burmantofts and Richmond Hill	2788	Moortown	543
Calverley and Farsley	440	Morley North	531
Chapel Allerton	1596	Morley South	733
City and Hunslet	1981	Otley and Yeadon	493
Cross Gates and Whinmoor	809	Pudsey	675
Farnley and Wortley	1142	Rothwell	506
Garforth and Swillington	294	Roundhay	593
Gipton and Harehills	2987	Temple Newsam	905
Guiseley and Rawdon	309	Weetwood	664
Harewood	146	Wetherby	219
Headingley	417		

Appendix 2

West North West Homes Leeds Response and Activities

Social sector size criteria (under-occupancy)

1. Between September 2012 and March 2013 WNWhL undertook visits to all 2,828 of their tenants affected by the under occupancy changes. The same exercise was completed by Housing Associations in the area (Unity, Connect and Leeds Federated). The visits highlighted how the changes would affect the customer and the likely shortfall in rent that tenants would face.
2. The following options were discussed in detail with the customer:
 - Ensuring all eligible benefits are being claimed;
 - Ascertaining income details and prioritising expenditure;
 - Identifying eligibility for DHP and supporting referral;
 - Supporting tenants to register a housing application;
 - Promoting mutual exchange;
 - Supporting tenants to set up a bank account or direct debit;
 - Budgeting and debt advice; and
 - Referring vulnerable tenants for specialist support through the Independent Living Teams, Adult Social Care or Children's Services.
3. In addition to the above WNWhL have employed an additional member of staff to assist customers looking to downsize their home. As well as helping individuals to find a move they are promoting mutual exchanges, by helping customers register their properties for exchange, promoting a swap shop event and putting estate agent style Mutual Exchange boards outside of available properties. This has led to an increase in the number of customers seeking to exchange properties.
4. A more detailed review of how tenants are dealing with the under-occupancy changes will be undertaken in the autumn. This will look at tenants who have moved to more affordable accommodation, tenants who are managing to pay the extra rent and tenants who are struggling to cope with the extra costs.

Benefit Cap

5. During July, all customers affected by the Benefit Cap were contacted by Debt and Benefit Advisors to check benefit entitlement and offer advice and assistance in dealing with the effects of the Benefit Cap. Contact has also been made by Jobcentre Plus to advise tenants about the help they can get with moving into work, as families working more than 16hrs (lone parents) or 24hrs (couples) are exempt from the Benefit Cap.

West North West Homes Leeds (WNWHL) Arrears Process

6. The arrears process has been revised to ensure that more support is given to customers who are struggling to pay their rent. This is ensuring that rent collection is being maximised but customers are not facing losing their home if another alternative solution can be agreed. This can be evidenced by looking at the number

of letters sent in April compared to how many Notices of Intent to Seek Possession (NISP) have been served. For example at week 2, 157 automatic stage one letters were issued. This increased to 847 at week 3, when the under occupation arrears cases were introduced.

The number of cases progressing to letter two stage at week 5 reduced significantly to 297. At week 13, week commencing 25th June only 81 of these cases had a NISP served. Appendix 5 shows the arrears rate by ward for WNWhL. As can be seen there was an initial increase in arrears, but the amount owed has not been increasing since April, partly because the number of affected customers has been reducing.

It can be clearly seen that the number of cases progressing through the arrears process is reducing and the majority of customers are being supported in making payments or pursuing other options such as downsizing, either via CBL or mutual exchange.

Preparations for Universal Credit

7. Work has commenced in relation to the introduction of Universal Credit. Lead Officers are attending seminars and researching best practice and working with other ALMO's and Local Authorities
8. The WNWhl annual tenancy visit is being revised to capture the additional data needed in preparation for Universal Credit.
9. The WNWhL Financial Inclusion Officer is looking at a range of ways to promote digital access to tenants including the use of mobile provision, mentoring and volunteering schemes and on-going involvement with the BT / Citizens Online 'Get IT Together' project that aims to get more people online. They are also planning four digital inclusion events.

Through WNW Works four Estate Caretaker Apprenticeships, a new Work Experience Mentor and two Employment Outreach Workers have been appointed, the latter in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, to work with their unemployed customers and bring them closer to the job market.

Since staff started in their outreach roles, around 300 tenants have been supported through telephone/ written, and face to face contact with regards to job search. A much larger number, of around 2000, have been contacted by text inviting them to attend job focused events.

In August an information session was delivered to support the Childcare Assistant vacancies that have arisen in the Children's Centres around the city.

Appendix 3 – High cost lenders action plan

Priority area	Actions	Involvement/Partners	Action Progress
Develop understanding of the scale of the issue in Leeds	1. Financial profiling at SOA level	FI Team, Regional Policy Team	Discussions with Salford University on feasibility of mapping Leeds research data against nationally available data.
	2. Mapping of provision of HCL through mapping of local financial services	Area Management	Baseline data set out in Executive Board Report, September 2012, to be supplemented by local knowledge.
	3. Utilise data analysed during the Advice Sector Review to map current resources and activity to tackle debt issues across Leeds	FI Team, Environment and Housing Commissioning Team	
Coordinate activity across public, private and 3 rd Sector to deal with HCL	4. Presentation to Financial Inclusion Steering Group on HCL campaign	FI Team	Presented to Steering Group on 3 July 2013
	5. Coordinate activity across ALMO's to ensure that best practice is delivered uniformly across city.	LCC Housing Management Service Area Management	ENE and AV both employ a dedicated CU staff member to work closely with tenants.
	6. Encourage all social housing providers to engage with best practice examples	LCC Housing Management Service Area Management	
	7. Area Management Locality working to coordinate partners at a community level	Area Management	
Develop Communication Plan in two parts. 1. City Wide High Profile campaign	8. Develop an overarching communication plan for producing a comprehensive promotion and marketing plan warning of the problems of HCL's and promoting alternatives ie. LCCU.	FI Team Corp. Comms.	Communications Plan developed and currently seeking marketing agency to deliver the plan via a tender exercise. Interviews to take place on 3 September.
	9. Engage major sports organisations in campaign against HCLs and promoting alternatives particularly LCCU;	FI Team	Met with Leeds Rugby, LUFC and YCCC. Leeds Rugby and YCCC keen to be involved. Further letter sent out to LUFC following their management changes.
	10. Engage with major public and private sector employers and the banking sector to support the campaign	FI Team LCCU Area Management	Discussions held with Chamber of Commerce. LCC Chief Exec article circulated in Chamber of Commerce bulletin.

2. Local Neighbourhood promotion and education Campaign	11. Engage with Leeds's Universities and NUS to support the campaign	FI Team	Met with University of Leeds, Student Advice. Letter to 2 Leeds universities seeking action on payday lending
	12. Engage with local media to seek their involvement in the campaign	FI Team Corp. Comms.	Contact made with YP reporter
	13. High profile public meeting/media event to launch campaign	FI Team	Conference to take place on 25 October
	14. Investigate the use of "void space" on advertising hoardings, both public and private sector	FI Team Corp. Comms.	Meetings have taken place with relevant officers and possibilities being explored
	15. Investigate prominent banner adverts on public buildings	FI Team Corp. Comms. Area Management	See 13
	16. Ban websites carrying adverts for HCLs;	FI Team Corp. Comms.	List of 190 payday lenders compiled and forwarded to LCC IT. Also sent to all other WY authorities and York who have agreed to block websites. Date agreed – 2 September. Internet redirect pages prepared and press release ready for issue.
	17. Discourage contractors promoting HCLs;	Corp. Procurement	
	18. Develop campaign website to support HCL campaign with advice and information about partner services	FI Team Corp. IT Services	Met with IT services and temporary web pages have now been set up until new campaign branding in place.
	19. Develop a social media campaign through Facebook, Twitter etc	FI Team Corp. Comms.	
	20. Develop promotional and educational material to support local campaigning activity against HCL and promoting LCCU	Corp. Comms. Area Management	
	21. Provide comparisons between HCLs and more affordable options;	FI Team LCCU	Case studies prepared with LCCU
	22. Provide guidance on dealing with money issues that avoid using HCLs;	Advice Agencies LCCU Area Management	
	23. Create programme of events to keep issue fresh, raise awareness of issues and to raise awareness of frontline role;	FI Team Area Management	

	24. Provide briefing and training to frontline staff;	All Directorates Public Health Area Management	
	25. Develop HCL toolkit for frontline staff;	Advice Leeds All Directorates Area Management	
	26. Link with illegal lending team campaigns where appropriate;	Illegal Money Lending Team Area Management	IMLT are members of the FI Steering Group and work regularly with partners across the city
	27. Investigate advertising on side of council vehicles	LCC Transport Corp. Comms. Area Management	
	28. Work with Secondary Schools to develop media for education on HCL's possibly utilising such as "Shontal" theatre group	Children's Services Area Management	
	29. Investigate possibility to produce video production of the "Shontal" play for use by community groups and schools	FI Team Corp. Comms.	
Build Capacity for alternative affordable credit	30. Develop a programme of initiatives to support the delivery of expanded credit facilities through LCCU and Headrow Money Line (CDFI)	FI Team Corp. Comms. Area Management	See 8 above. A package of support initiatives agreed and funding provided to LCCU to implement.
	31. Engage with the banking sector to seek their support for working closely with LCCU to enhance provision	FI Team LCCU	Meeting set up with some banking partners and LCCU preparing for a larger meeting in the Autumn
Reduce dependency on and use of HCLs	32. Set costs reduction targets for ALMO tenants;	ALMO's LCC Housing Services	
	33. Promote alternative options including CDFI, LCCU Payday Loans and LCCU Budgeting Accounts;	Corp. Comms. Area Management	See 8 above
	34. Use control zones in worst affected areas to discourage doorstep lenders visiting homes in the area;	ALMO's Area Management	
	35. Support social enterprise models for furniture re-use;	FI Team Citizens and Communities Directorate	

	36. Investigate possibility of developing a “Brighthouse” social model for white goods and furniture	FI Team Citizens and Communities Directorate	
	37. Link in with fuel poverty activity, including Wrap-up-Leeds, Warm Front and Community Energy Together (switching scheme)	Fuel Poverty Officer Area Management	Regular dialogue takes place with the Fuel Poverty Officer
	38. Work with employers to educate and support staff about Payday Loans and alternative arrangements	FI Team Area Management	
	39. Work with Public health to tackle lifestyle issues	LCC Public Health Area Management	
	40. Discourage HCL as a way of paying council/utility bills	LCC Revenue Division	
	41. Work with Food Banks and other anti-poverty initiatives	FI Team Citizens and Communities Directorate Area Management	
Provide direct support for those caught up in HCL	42. Increase money, debt and benefits advice	FI Team Env. And Housing Commissioning Team	
	43. Include debt review in rent/Ctax arrears cases;	LCC Revenue Division, Corporate Debt Team ALMO's	
	44. Ensure a unified approach to debt collection by utilising the Corporate Debt Team and coordination through the Corporate Debt Liaison Group	FI Team LCC Revenue Division, Corporate Debt Team	Next meeting of the Corporate Debt Liaison Group taking place on 4 October
Measure the impact of the approach	45. Agree indicative KPIs	FI Team	
	46. Review and refresh approach as required	FI Team	

Appendix 4 Social Sector Size Criteria - Update on Contacts/Visits Undertake to Date

	WNWHL	%
Number of Tenants Affected May 2013 List	2277	
Completed Visits / Contacts	2160	95%
No response to contacts and newly affected awaiting contact	117	5%
Family Size Dispute	91	4%
Property Size Dispute	42	1.8%
Transfer Requested * see below	222	10%
Cover Shortfall from Income / Benefits	1238	54%
Seek Employment/Increase hours	317	14%
Plan to move to other tenure	108	5%
Seek Lodger	54	2.4%
Foster Carers	8	0.4%
In adapted Properties	86	4%
Access to Children or Applying	21	0.9%
Tenants considered High Risk	84	4%
* Bedroom Requirements of those requesting a transfer		
1 Bedroom	153	69%
2 Bedrooms	61	27%
3 Bedrooms	8	4%
4 Bedrooms	0	0%
5 Bedrooms	0	0%

Appendix 5 Arrears of All Under Occupiers

All Arrears Cases

Ward	March	April	May	June	Change (£s) red = increase green=decrease
WNWhL Total	£234,722	£280,250	£284,523	£ 281,904	£ 47,182
Adel and Wharfedale	£ 1,862	£2,000	£2,081	£2,289	£ 428
Armley	£33,753	£43,182	£42,727	£ 41,987	£8,234
Bramley and Stanningley	£30,333	£36,892	£35,791	£36,325	£5,992
Calverley and Farsley	£3,891	£5,454	£4,918	£5,297	£1,406
Chapel Allerton	£32	£32	£32	£78	£46
City and Hunslet	£2,542	£1,096	£555	£726	-£1,815
Farnley and Wortley	£34,761	£42,071	£42,058	£ 42,251	£7,489
Guiseley and Rawdon	£ 5,508	£5,301	£5,018	£ 4,602	-£905
Headingley	£927	£1,298	£1,521	£ 1,834	£907
Horsforth	£7,954	£9,493	£9,257	£ 9,475	£1,521
Hyde Park and Woodhouse	£29,461	£35,528	£38,565	£ 36,428	£6,967
Kirkstall	£49,380	£58,628	£59,593	£ 60,023	£10,644
Moortown	£ -	£30	£16	£ 97	£ 97
Otley and Yeadon	£2,908	£5,695	£7,134	£ 6,779	£3,871
Pudsey	£16,531	£16,973	£18,568	£ 17,198	£668
Weetwood	£14,880	£16,577	£16,690	£ 16,514	£1,633

Please note that these are ALL arrears cases and therefore arrears may have been accrued previous to the introduction of the size criteria benefit changes in April 2013. Also any arrears accumulated since April 2013 can only be assumed to be directly related to the decrease in benefit.