

Welfare Reforms: Action Plan and Activities

Outcomes:

1. Increased self help and independence
2. Easy, efficient, effective support to those with short term / high priority needs
3. Help for people and their communities and build resilience within those communities

Timescales:

- Short term – 1 to 3 months
- Medium term – 3 to 6 months
- Longer term – 6 months +

The actions highlighted below are high level actions and it is suggested that the Strategic Welfare Group identify leads for these actions who can co-ordinate these projects/ Task Groups and feedback to the Strategic Welfare Group.

This action plan is linked to the longer term aims and objectives of the Economic Regeneration Strategy and the Child Poverty Strategy

LO = Linda Owen, CB=Claire Barrow, AW=Alison Whittaker, BC=Bob Clarke, ND=Nigel Denning, HV=Heather Vallance, LF=Lisa Finn, BP=Bernard Page, JW=Jayne Wills, CU=Charles Uzzell, JB=Joanne Beer

Communication / information / advice				
1	Co-ordinated approach to raise awareness with the public and our partners.	FIS LO	Short term	<p>Leaflet outlining some changes produced by Family Information Services (FIS) and published online</p> <p>Council Tax new scheme published at http://www.torbay.gov.uk/cts</p> <p>Action: update leaflet</p>

2	Co-ordinated approach to raise awareness among staff and bringing together departments to work together on understanding the impacts on families/ individuals and the knock on impacts on services, as well as how the local authority can work strategically across departments to minimise the impact on families/individuals	CB LO AW	Short term	Working with DWP on joint awareness sessions covering Welfare Reforms. Working with assistance of TAN for both internal and external staff Action: regular updates on customer contact, mirror public info to staff, website pages/links
3	Digital inclusion – report for Torbay to understand digital inclusion	JB	Short term	Action: report on position in Torbay
4	Digital inclusion – establish a method to improve digital inclusion	LO AW	Medium term	Action: Establish/publicise current resources where is internet access free/ cheap. Alternative routes via telephone, face to face.
5	Strategic and co-ordinated approach to the provision of and access to information and advice services. Consider the one stop shop approach and create single face to face gateway for most vulnerable - Linked to 5 below	BC	Longer term	LGA Pilots for the delivery of Universal credit, bringing together, JCP careers advice, CAB, money advice, free school meals to existing Connections services. Co location improves data sharing, opps to charge partners for a hot desking facility. Is one stop shop right for Torbay?
Targeted Support				
1	To identify and understand the potential increase in signposting activity from April 2013. Linked to 2 above	BC AW	Short term	
2	Identify options to ensure that those who need help receive it at the time they need it	ND	Short term / Medium term	

	Consider Investing in case workers for intensive work with families, working across housing, employment and social services to help families understand their options and, where possible, move into employment.			
3	Appropriate levels of contact for those clients who will be affected by reforms. Offering additional and specific support. Proactively contacting claimants affected by the changes. Consider investing in either telephoning or visiting claimants, as letters are likely to be ignored.	LO	Short term / Medium term	Working with JCP, identification of clients who will be affected by benefit cap already taking place and contact being made to advise of changes. Clients of Council Tax Benefit contacted to advise them of the changes.
4	Ensure that existing funding is targeted for those clients most in need. Agree criteria and definition of most in need. Ensuring that the <i>cumulative</i> impact on families of all changes to benefits is understood to avoid multiple and confusing communications with claimants. Ensuring that decisions about allocating discretionary and other funding are in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, which requires them to advance equality of opportunity.	LO HV LF	Short term / Medium term	
5	Work with partners to identify and bid for external funding. Identify funding streams for local advice services to ensure sustainability and resilience in helping local residents affected more broadly (particularly for those for whom employment is not an option).	BP Devon WAG JS/FM	On-going	Link to SLA development with CDT Community Development Trust

6	Establish a policy on debts owed to the Council and the support which is available for our residents.	JW	Short term	Action: ensure Corporate Debt Policy includes action as a result of welfare reforms
7	Encourage work placements and apprenticeships across public sector organisations.	CU	Short term / Medium term	
Monitoring				
1	Ensuring that Impact Assessments inform decision making.	JB	On-going	
2	Work with the Devon Strategic Partnership Welfare Advisory Group (WAG) to monitor trend and develop an impact register.	JB	Short term / Medium term	
3	Re-establish the partnership forum to assist in the compiling of the impact register and Partnership to support Online Access, Financial Capability, Employment, Vulnerability	JB LO	Short term / Medium term	Action: Establish contact with Welfare Benefits Forum, consider template for impacts