

Introduction to Barnet Homes

Housing Forum

17th June 2012

Kate Laffan - Head of Housing Options



Barnet Homes – a little history

- Arms Length Management Organisation [ALMO]
- Decent Homes and improved services for customers
- Focus on driving down costs, improving customer satisfaction and delivery without distraction
- 10 year contract



Barnet Homes – a little history

- Established under Company law
- Board of Directors
- Shareholder
- Not for profit
- Delivering the Council agenda in partnership but with some level of independence



Barnet Homes – what does it do?

- We provide a comprehensive landlord service to 11,000 council tenants and 4,000 leaseholders
- We employ around 360 staff in BH alone and we are one of the biggest employers in the Borough
- We spend on average over £1m p/w
- Built up a healthy reserve from nothing



Mission Statement(s)

- Great service, delivered at great value, that make a positive difference to people, homes and communities
- “We combine a public sector ethos with a private sector commercial focus”



Barnet Homes – Key achievements

- Reduced our operating costs by 17% since 2004
[14% or £4m in the last 3 years]
- Tenant satisfaction up 7% since 2008 to 78%
- Delivered £185m decent homes programme on time and on budget
- Strong reputation in the industry nationally



Barnet Homes delivery

Areas of strength:

- Income collection
- Repairs management
- Customer engagement
- Gas servicing
- Major investment work delivery
- Caretaking



Some recent changes



Our ambitions

- Our brand and reputation are opening doors
- New build and development
- More diverse services
- Managing Agent role
- Partnership bidding [big and small]
- Innovation [The Barnet Furniture Store]



Housing Options Service

- 1st April 2012 – LBB Housing Needs and Resources Service transferred to Barnet Homes
- Opportunity to provide a single holistic housing service for Barnet
- Since undergone a significant restructure driven by required GF savings
- New structure has integrated assessment and accommodation functions
- Rebadged as the Housing Options Service
- Service facing significant challenges – increase demand and reduced supply



First Steps

- Greater customer focus – baseline satisfaction survey going out this week to all service users
- Service Users views informing and shaping service
- Service review – to reshape service to mitigate the impact of welfare reform and increased demand
- Greater focus on homelessness prevention



First Steps Continued

- Increase supply of private rental properties
- Launch of a new procurement strategy with incentives to Landlords
- Working with Landlords in the borough to improve the offer and prevent homelessness
- Embed a performance & vfm culture
- Improve joint working with other departments and agencies



Any Questions?



Allocations Scheme & Flexible Tenancies Update

Shaun Flook

Housing Services Manager

17th July 2012

Allocations Scheme

Pre-April 2011

Today

- ❑ Housing Register
- ❑ Application by form only
- ❑ Everyone allowed
- ❑ Complex points system
- ❑ No caseworker
- ❑ "Choice" based lettings
- ❑ Only social housing
- ❑ Unlimited bids / viewings / refusals & no appeals
- ❑ No rewards
- ❑ >17,500 households (for @600 properties)

- ❑ No Register
- ❑ Application in person
- ❑ Limited qualification
- ❑ 4 bands (3 really)
- ❑ Caseworker for those with need
- ❑ Assisted choice
- ❑ Social + PRS homes
- ❑ 2 reasonable offers & appeals
- ❑ Community contribution
- ❑ @1000 households (for @800 properties)

Most recent major changes

- ☐ Local connection reverted to two years residence by choice.
- ☐ Classes of persons that do not qualify (Localism Act 2011).
- ☐ Implementation of “housingmoves” (pan-London mobility scheme, born from London Housing Strategy, run by GLA).
- ☐ Discretionary secondary succession – no longer automatic but based on need.
- ☐ Carers added to community contribution criteria.
- ☐ Differential criteria for young people to achieve community contribution.

Feedback on allocations scheme

✉ chloe.horner@barnet.gov.uk

✉ Formal review due by April 2014.

✉ http://www.barnet.gov.uk/info/10060/applying_for_council_housing/357/applying_for_council_housing

Local Tenancy Strategy Update

Shaun Flook
Housing Services Manager

17th July 2012



Barnet Council Local Tenancy Strategy

- ☐ The Localism Act 2011 allows social housing providers to use fixed term, *flexible*, secure (or assured) tenancies instead of “lifelong”, secure (or assured) tenancies.
- ☐ In Barnet this will mean most new council tenants being given a 1 year “introductory” tenancy followed by a 5 year flexible tenancy or a 2 year flexible tenancy.
- ☐ Barnet Homes will be able to terminate flexible tenancies at the end of the fixed term.
- ☐ Local Tenancy Strategy approved by Cabinet 4th April 2012.

Objectives of the strategy

- ☐ To ensure that the Council's housing stock is used as effectively as possible to provide homes for Barnet residents in housing need who are unable to secure a home for themselves in the private sector.
- ☐ Help people move on into the PRS / home ownership.
- ☐ Address under-occupancy more effectively.
- ☐ Increase turnover of stock.

Will anyone still be offered a “lifelong”, secure tenancy?

- Existing secure/assured tenants being transferred or otherwise moving to another Barnet Council tenancy inc. via housingmoves.
- People in receipt of state pension.
- People going into sheltered housing.
- Applicant or a household member has a terminal illness.
- Some disabled people.
- Former members of the armed forces who have seen active service.

Who will be offered a 5 year flexible tenancy?

- ☐ (those that are not entitled to a lifelong tenancy)
- ☐ All couples (regardless of whether they have children).
- ☐ All households with one or more children.
- ☐ Care leavers aged under 25 (those owed leaving care act duties).
- ☐ All new tenants that are single and aged 25 & over, although some single people aged 25 & over will get a 2 year fixed term.

Remember this is after the one year introductory tenancy!

Who will be offered a 2 year flexible tenancy?

- ☐ All new single, childless tenants aged 24 and under (except care leavers).
- ☐ Some new single tenants or childless couples aged from 25 and over depending on their vulnerability and the outcome of the housing assessment.
- ☐ **Remember this is after the one year introductory tenancy!**
- ☐ Lots of support will be offered to 2 year tenants.

Key Dates

- ☐ All council tenancies viewed in the week commencing 9th July were eligible to be flexible.
- ☐ First sign-up for a flexible tenancy was on Friday 13th July.
- ☐ First flexible tenant moved in on Monday 16th July.
- ☐ First flexible tenancy reviews due November 2014 for 2 year fixed terms starting in July 2012 (reviews will happen 8 months before fixed term ends).

Flexible Tenancy Reviews – Criteria in brief

- ☐ Earnings / assets (same as allocations scheme).
- ☐ Conviction for criminal behaviour or civil disturbance.
- ☐ Breach of tenancy eg. arrears and no agreement or failure to achieve agreement.
- ☐ Under-occupancy.
- ☐ Home was adapted for household member who has left.
- ☐ 2 year tenant who has not worked or undertaken education or training.

Reviews – mitigating factors to be taken into account

- ☐ Terminal illness.
- ☐ Disability.
- ☐ Children attending local school.
- ☐ Foster carer who needs that home to provide care.
- ☐ Care leaver being supported by Social Services.
- ☐ Intensive Family Focus programme.
- ☐ Children subject to protection plan or undergoing care proceedings.

Reviews – possible outcomes

- ☐ 2 year extension for a 2 year flexible tenant (until attains age 25 when extensions become 5 years).
- ☐ 5 year extension for a 5 year flexible tenant.
- ☐ Conversion to lifelong, secure tenancy where someone has become terminally ill or disabled under the definition in the tenancy strategy.
- ☐ Notice served 6 months prior to end of fixed term, advice & assistance to move and eviction if no move.
- ☐ Appeal rights exist (see Tenancy Strategy).

Registered Providers Position (April 12)

Origin	To be clarified
Home Group	All lifetime tenancies
Notting Hill	1 year starter tenancy then fixed term 5 year tenancy. Lifetime tenancies still available in certain circumstances
L & Q	1 year starter, 5 year fixed
One	1 year starter, fixed tenancies for 2 to 5 years.
Christian Action	Do not wish to do time limited tenancies but do use 1 year starter tenancies
Viridian	Starter tenancy initially and then five year fixed tenancy
Catalyst	18 month probation period then a five year fixed tenancy
MHT	1 year introductory tenancy followed by no less than a 5 year fixed term tenancy
Network	5 year fixed term assured shorthold
Dominion A2	Starter tenancy for 18 months, 5 year tenancy review

Registered Providers (cont)

Family Mosaic Starter tenancy for 1 year. Piloting a small selection for 5 year tenancies.

Genesis Lifetime tenancies for over 60s and life threatening illness. For general needs 12 months starter followed by 5 year fixed. Internal tenants moving will retain security. Can be flexible and have different policies in different boroughs.

Sanctuary Fixed term of 10 years probably but not less than 5 years.

Peabody 12 month starter tenancy followed by a 5 year fixed term assured shorthold tenancy

Which disabled people get lifetime secure at commencement/after review?

See Local Tenancy Strategy Page 13.

Further consultation being planned by LBB.

housingmoves

a. Eligibility for Housing Moves

Ineligible tenancy types = Introductory, starter, demoted, flexible, assured shorthold, regulated.

Intention is to allow social tenants with flexible tenancies to apply for Housing Moves following their six month review of the scheme.

b. Tenancies that we give / our tenants get via Housing Moves

“Lifetime” assured or secure tenants moving should be given lifetime assured or secure.

If flexible tenants become eligible after 6 month review it appears they “will have their current tenancy terms and conditions honoured by the receiving borough.”

What is being done to make it happen? (1)

- ☐ Mailshot to all under investigation and Band 1, 2 and 3 applicants sent Monday 25th June.
- ☐ Training and tools for staff.
- ☐ Banding decision letters updated.
- ☐ New council tenancy agreements.
- ☐ Sign-up/welcome pack updated.

Making it happen (2)

☰ LBB and Barnet Homes websites updated:
www.barnethomes.org/tenants/tenancy/Pages/Flexibletenancies.aspx
www.barnet.gov.uk/flexible-tenancies

- ☰ FAQs for customers & advocates on websites.
- ☰ Life skills workshops for 25 and unders.
- ☰ Tenancy review process to be finalised over next year.
- ☰ Re-assessing banded cases & informing customers.

To Do

- ☐ Work with RPs to agree new processes.
- ☐ Finalise and deliver support package to 2 year flexible tenants.
- ☐ Review.

Welfare Reform and Housing

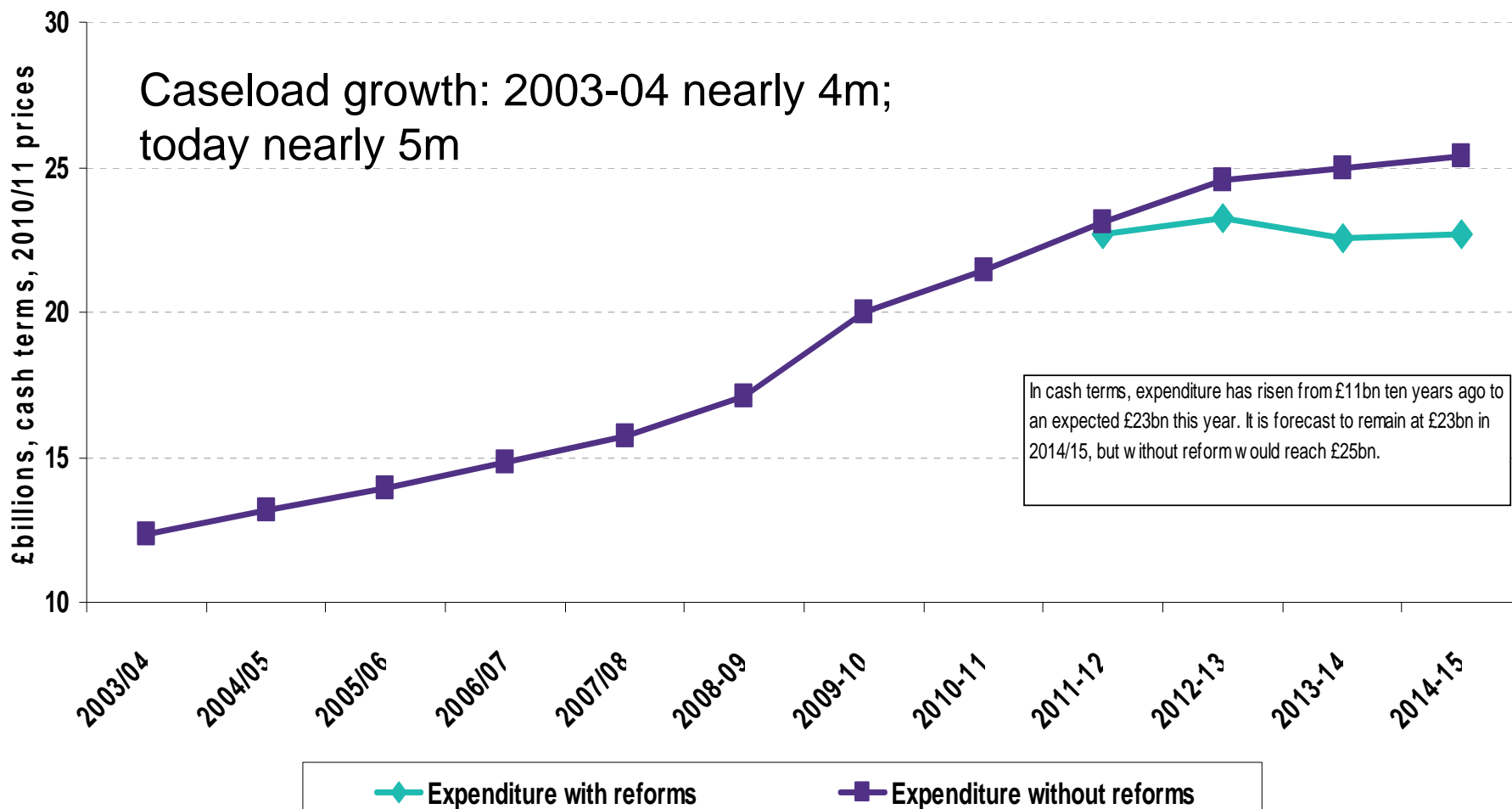
Barnet Housing Forum

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Eugene Nixon, Relationship Manager, Universal Credit

Why change (2)

Growth of spending over a decade



Housing Benefit has already changed

From April 2011:

- Local Housing Allowance (LHA) reform (removal of 5 bed rate and £15 excess, caps to weekly rates)
- size-criteria: additional room for a non-resident carer where a disabled person has need for overnight care
- staged increase in non-dependant deductions
- LHA set at the 30th percentile of rents in each Broad Rental Market Area, rather than the median

From January 2012:

- LHA – extend Shared Accommodation Rate to those under 35

From April 2012:

- LHA rates frozen

Summary of reforms impacting on local authorities from 2013 (1)

- LHA rates to be uprated annually by reference to the Consumer Price Index from April 2013 – this will end the monthly uprating of LHA rates and bring the system in line with other pensions and benefits
- Housing Benefit for working age Social Rented Sector customers will be restricted for those who are occupying a larger property than their household size and structure would warrant from April 2013:
 - 22% of working age Social Rented Sector Housing Benefit claimants in London, with an average loss of £21 compared to 31% and £14 in Great Britain

Summary of reforms impacting on local authorities from 2013 (2)

- introduction of localised support for Council Tax to replace Council tax benefit:
 - DCLG has consulted on plans to localise support from April 2013 and introduced a Local Government Finance Bill in December 2011
 - (Remember to tailor if delivering to Wales or Scotland)
- The Benefit Cap will be introduced from April 2013
- April 2013 - abolishing the discretionary elements of the Social Fund. New locally-based provision to replace Community Care Grants and general living expenses Crisis Loans will be designed and administered by local authorities in England and devolved to Scotland and Wales

Summary of reforms impacting on local authorities from 2013 (3)

- Disability Living Allowance to be replaced with a new benefit to be introduced for eligible working age people (16-64) in 2013/14 called the Personal Independence Payment
- a new Fraud and Error Change Programme is a key enabler of the Government's welfare reform agenda. We have developed a joint DWP and HMRC strategy for reducing fraud and error in the Tax Credit and Benefit systems
- ...and of course introducing Universal Credit

Social Rented Sector

- June 2010 Budget announced size criteria rules to be introduced into social rented sector
- Housing Benefit entitlement for working-age tenants in the social rented sector will be restricted to reflect the needs of their household
- this will take effect from April 2013 for all current and new claimants
- claimants will see a reduction in Housing Benefit of 14% for under occupation by one bedroom and 25% for under occupation by two or more bedrooms
- the number of bedrooms Housing Benefit will cover will be based on the LHA size criteria rules (but with no Shared Accommodation Rate):
- **one bedroom for each of the following:**
 - a couple
 - a person who is not a child (age 16 and over)
 - two children of the same sex
 - two children who are under 10
 - any other child

Preparing for Social Rented Sector Size Criteria

- we have been working closely with local authorities and Housing Associations in developing implementation plans and writing guidance
- the Chartered Institute of Housing is producing a toolkit designed to aid landlords in the implementation of this measure
- we have engaged with welfare rights organisations while developing this policy to ensure the needs of different customers are taken into account
- we are producing products to aid with implementation that will include letters, leaflets and posters designed to draw customer attention to the changes

Benefit Cap

- the benefit cap will be introduced from April 2013 and will apply to the combined income from the main out-of-work benefits, plus Housing Benefit, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits
- the working assumption is that the cap will be:
 - £500 per week for couples and lone parents
 - £350 per week for single adults
- 67,000 households will be affected by the cap in 2013/14
- the average benefit reduction is £83 a week per household

Benefit Cap - Exemptions

The following households will be exempt from the cap:

- those entitled to:
 - Working Tax Credit
- those in receipt of:
 - Disability Living Allowance
 - Industrial Injuries Benefits
 - Personal Independence Payment
 - Attendance Allowance
 - Employment and Support Allowance, if paid with the support component
 - War Widow's and Widower's pension
- claimants who have been in employment for 52 weeks or more when they claim benefit (and the loss of employment is not of their own making) will be exempt from the cap for up to 39 weeks

Benefit Cap - Implementation

- **Phase 1** - from April 2012, Jobcentre Plus and local authorities will be providing support to those households claiming out-of-work benefits that will be impacted by the benefit cap in April 2013
- **Phase 2** - implementation of the benefit cap for new and existing claimants from April 2013, via a deduction from Housing Benefit
- **Phase 3** - new claims to Universal Credit will be subject to the cap from October 2013

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is

A policy	that tackles welfare dependency, poverty and worklessness by making work pay
A benefit	that replaces a complex system of working-age benefits and credits with the Universal Credit and a single set of rules
A gateway	that together with employment support programmes, helps people into work
A platform	that will help us deliver an internet-age service whilst continuing face-to-face support for those who need it
An ambition	reforming welfare to transform lives

How is Universal Credit different?

Current System

The welfare system has **more than 30 benefits** each with their own rules and criteria

Work incentives can be very low, benefits are reduced to take account of earnings but different benefits have different rules

Conditionality: some benefit claimants are capable of working but have no obligations to look for work

Payments are paid to different adults in a household and for various periods

Universal Credit

Universal Credit provides a new single system means-tested support for working-age people who are **in or out of work**

Universal Credit **will ensure that work pays**. Financial support will be reduced at a consistent and predictable rate and people will generally keep a higher proportion of their earnings

Universal Credit will **personalise conditions** according to people's capability and circumstances

Universal Credit is a **single monthly payment** to each household (Though we will retain the ability to pay more frequently or to split payment in exceptional circumstances)

Developing the Delivery Model

Since May 2011 we have worked in partnership with HMRC and local authorities to co create the design options for the face-to-face service delivery from 2013

DWP National Service Offering

- Labour market services
- Claimant support
- Complex needs
- Budgeting support
- Visits
- Online access
- Risk identified

Local Flexibility

- Claimant support
- Complex needs
- Budgeting support
- Online access

The joint design team established that a national service offering with targeted local flexibility is the optimum solution from October 2013

Universal Credit – why a digital service?

- the service will be **digital by default** because it is better for claimants, staff and taxpayers. It is:
 - **available**: not limited to office or contact centre hours
 - **flexible**: helping people navigate the system, showing them what they need to see, to do what they need to do
 - **responsive**: can be rapidly improved in light of user feedback
 - **informative**: giving a single, integrated picture based on up-to-date information, including latest earnings
 - **integrated**: developing over time to join up work and benefit services, and forming a core part of government's online offer
 - **accessible**: designed from the outset to meet the needs of a wide range of users
- and it will be digital because **the future is digital**:
 - employers expect digital skills for almost all jobs
 - mobile devices are more prevalent and powerful
 - people can save money by accessing online services
- but we recognise that some claimants will need help to use the online service - other channels will be available for the minority who need them, mainly phone, but also face-to-face or post

Universal Credit – channel objectives

There's a four year transition period from 2013 to 2017
We don't expect everyone to switch channels on day 1

- 50% of contacts that can be digital, should be digital in 2013
- 80% of contacts that can be digital, should be digital by 2018

For our claimants IT skills are increasingly important:

- it's cheaper to buy goods and services online
- it's easier to search for work online and move into work

We want to help people to make the change

What are we doing to prepare for channel shift?

We plan to work across government, private sector and voluntary sector boundaries to create, support and encourage opportunities to deliver the digital message

DWP

are increasing activities and support to boost take up of online services, e.g.:

- through Digital Champions,
- Through providing computer access in Job Centres

Public Sector

Digital Deal – getting social housing tenants online
using customer contacts to deliver ‘digital interventions’ (e.g. when tax credits are claimed)
HMRC are introducing iForms this autumn and improving information services on new website

Private Sector

In partnership with other organisations, such as E-Skills Agency, persuading major employers to support and encourage their people to use work facilities to access online services

During migration

delivering targeted & timed advice and guidance to claimants on why and how to get online

Voluntary Sector

collaboration with Go On to extend our reach to a wider range of delivery partners than we can influence on our own

working with voluntary sector who help our claimants

providing advice, support and resources to claimants and potential claimants

Payment of Universal Credit

- Universal Credit will be paid to claimants who are in work and out of work
- as most businesses pay monthly, Universal Credit will also be paid monthly
- claimants will be responsible for managing all household costs, including rent payments
- to help claimants prepare for Universal Credit, we will test key elements of incorporating housing support into Universal Credit whilst protecting the financial position of social landlords
- Housing costs for owner-occupiers in Universal Credit will continue to be paid to qualifying lenders direct under the Mortgage Interest Direct scheme
- Direct Payment Demonstration Projects will run for a year in six local authority areas

Direct Payments Demonstration Projects

Project purpose is to:

- test the impact of various trigger points and safeguards on social landlords
- test safeguards for different groups of people, e.g. trigger points for making payments to landlords, and test budgeting tools for claimants
- evaluate claimant communication strategy and test landlords' strategies for maintaining financial viability

Participating local authority areas:

- City of Edinburgh Council and Dunedin Canmore Housing Association
- Torfaen Borough County Council and Bron Afon Community Housing and Charter Housing.
- Wakefield Metropolitan Borough Council and Wakefield and District Housing
- Shropshire Unitary County Council and Bromford Group, Sanctuary Housing, and Wrekin society.
- Oxford City Council and Oxford Citizens (part of the Greensquare Group)
- Southwark Council and Family Mosaic



Universal Credit – the right support for claimants

- The new service will be straightforward for many – but some claimants will need support to deal with the changes
- **Financial Products** - we are working with the commercial and social banking (e.g. credit unions) to develop bank accounts that have in-built budgeting capability
- **Tailored Support** - we are conducting a detailed segmentation of claimant support needs to understand the demand for such support and to help us either build solutions into mainstream support or develop tailored solutions
- **Exceptions** - for those who will not be able to manage Universal Credit, even with support, we are developing an exceptions framework
- **Engagement** - we have established an external advisory group to help us with this - the Support and Exceptions Working Group, which includes representatives from local authorities, housing and advice organisations

Changes to Pension Credit (1)

- as a result of the introduction of Universal Credit the following changes will be made to Pension Credit:
 - help with eligible rent. Support for eligible rent for customers over Pension Credit qualifying age will be provided through a new component of Pension Credit called Housing Credit
 - help with dependent children. A new additional amount will be included in the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit for dependent children
- the earliest date that these changes will be incorporated into Pension Credit new claims is currently 12 months after the go-live of Universal Credit e.g. October 2014
- conditionality and other Universal Credit working age rules will not apply to Housing Credit, so that pensioners should continue to receive the same support as now

Changes to Pension Credit (2)

- the current planning assumption is that migration of Housing Benefit and tax credit information for pension age customers will be completed by October 2017
- the number of customers over Pension Credit qualifying age in receipt of the above benefits is as follows:
 - Pension Credit only – 1.4m
 - Pension Credit and Housing Benefit – 1.3m
 - Housing Benefit only – 0.3m
 - Child Tax Credit – 0.1m

Changes to Pension Credit (3)

Migration information

- the migration approach for the pension age caseload will be based largely upon the managed movement of cases in accordance with a profile agreed with both the importing and exporting businesses
- the intention is that the migration process for pension age customers will be as intervention free as possible. The underlying principle of the migration approach will be to ensure continuity of financial support for pension age customers and to minimise the potential for avoidable contact, confusion and anxiety. This will be achieved through a comprehensive communications strategy and close collaboration with local authorities and HMRC throughout the planning process and beyond

Conclusion

- radical changes to the benefit system
- move towards Universal Credit over time, with implications for delivery of housing services and costs
- work in progress on delivery model
- we will need to do things differently: on-line claims and real-time processing
- ...and so will our citizens
- Universal Credit in context of broader welfare transformation
- Welfare Reform alongside some major work to configure broader services especially localised Council Tax support and new fraud services
- Remember Pension Credit will be amended to provide help with eligible rent and dependant children for pensioners
- Universal Credit some key decisions are needed to help you plan

Questions

Barnet Housing Forum