

Appendix 1 - Impact of Welfare Reform on West Devon

Impact	What we have seen	The Council's response
Localisation of Council Tax Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax Benefit abolished from 1 April 2013 • New scheme implemented for 2013/14 protecting claimants from change • Large increase in customer contact due to confusion over change even though no financial impact • Claimant numbers down by 4.5% to 4036 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected vulnerable claimants for 1st year of scheme by meeting costs from elsewhere. • Scheme for 2014/15 will be out for consultation in August & September • Council decision required by December 2013
Housing Benefit Claims Increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Claims have increased by 2.5% to 3,185 in the last year • Telephone contacts have remained high, with a spike in April/May during the introduction of the bedroom subsidy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of Money Advice Service from 1 day a week to 3, funded by Local Discretionary Welfare Support • Increased promotion of the Discretionary Housing Payment
Increased requests for Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) (Available to top up Housing Benefit at the discretion of West Devon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in applications (see table below) • 43.9% of claims are from tenants affected by the bedroom subsidy (47 of 107) • Larger award and a rural pressures additional award, (total of £149,748) to recognise the lack of suitable, affordable housing and the extended work/travel area residents face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signposting towards money advice, alternative accommodation and Devon Home Choice • Creative use of the fund to its full capacity

<p>Removal of Bedroom Subsidy (Bedroom Tax)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased demand on Discretionary Housing Payment fund. • Increase in people registering to downsize on Devon Home Choice • Lack of clarity around exempted persons (military personnel, carers children with special needs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlords & Council wrote to affected tenants. • Additional piece of work has begun in August to renew contact with affected tenants offering support and advice • Encourage people to downsize through mutual exchange or transfer • Additional module on Devon Home Choice system for mutual exchanges • Increased provision for money advice • Working with Strategic housing to identify people needing to downsize to involve them in design of new homes
<p>Increase of the single Room Rate paid by housing benefits historically to under 25's and now to under 35's</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased difficulty in getting younger rough sleepers into accommodation • Difficulty in sourcing suitable accommodation for singles with visiting children to ensure children are not put at risk in shared accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging Landlords to let to groups of individuals rather than families for larger accommodation • Working to increase numbers of houses with multiple occupants • Advising Younger people to remain at home.
<p>Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Rate in general</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific problem in Tavistock, which is in the same LHA area as Plymouth, therefore, as rental costs are lower in Plymouth, the amount of LHA awarded is disproportionately lower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging people to seek cheaper more affordable accommodation outside of the more expensive settlements (wider impact with rural communities and people having to leave)
<p>Benefit Cap</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only came into force on 15 July 2013. No impact as of yet. However up to 4 families in the borough have lost more than £100 a week. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The households affected have been contacted to provide help and assistance with the transition.

<p>Registered Providers (RP's) requesting Rent in Advance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RP's are concerned about their rent arrears with introduction of Universal Credit, in some cases requesting 4 weeks rent in advance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piece of work around where tenants are getting this money from (i.e. is it payday loans) • Council asking wider questions as part of Devon Home Choice review around whether requesting rent in advance is in spirit of partnership? Does it help meet housing need? (are the high banded tenants being overlooked because they can't get the rent in advance together and vacancies go to people in low or no housing need)
<p>Local Discretionary Welfare Support Fund (Introduced to limit impact of abolished Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer calls on the fund than expected. • Resettlement & emergency payments being made for a variety of reasons • Applications dealt with on a case by case basis so impact on staff time (no additional staff resources) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing awareness amongst the voluntary sector and our statutory partners • Information on the website & electronic form • Increased provision for money advice
<p>Rough Sleeping & Responding to No Second Night Out</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in rough sleepers with significant health problems • Increased spending on temporary accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern Rough Sleeping Outreach project. • 27 Rough Sleepers (or people at risk of rough sleeping) assisted since March
<p>Homeless Presentations Vs Homeless Preventions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is continuing to offer good early intervention solutions to stave off the use of temporary accommodation and the need to accept the full homeless duty • Although homeless approaches have remained broadly the same. The numbers of approaches due to affordability have increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonds & Rent in Advance • Landlord Negotiation • Arrears Management • Supported accommodation • Mediation

Money Advice Vs Budgeting Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People requesting LDWSF are signposted for advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are budgeting well, but unable to plan for unforeseen emergencies – e.g. a cooker breaking
Increase in Housing register Applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The register has stayed fairly static 	
Sanctions – Jobcentre penalising job seekers for a range of reasons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased requests for Local Discretionary Welfare Support Fund due to sanctions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Devon wide with the job centre+ to understand these and get them resolved as soon as possible

West Devon Discretionary Housing Payment

April to June comparison	2012/13	2013/14	% Increase
No. of Applications	26	51	96%
No. Accepted	18	38	111%
Total Amount Awarded	£4228.52	£12,237.88	189%

April to September comparison	2012/13	2013/14	% Increase
No. of Applications	48	107	123%
No. Accepted	35	78	123%
Total Amount Awarded	£9,438.80	£27,064.44	187%

Annual comparison	2012/13	2013/14 prediction	% Increase
No. of Applications	123	274	123%
No. Accepted	98	218	123%
Total Amount Awarded	£31,997.71	£91,748.96	187%