

Recommendation 1

Cabinet endorse the comments and early recommendations of the review group which supported the shaping and development of the draft welfare reform communications strategy and the governance arrangements for delivery of the strategy as follows;

- One dedicated telephone number for welfare reform enquiries:
 - For public
 - For frontline staff, Councillors and partners
- Identifying the resource to deliver the welfare reform telephone support lines
- The need to coordinate welfare reform communications campaign at a strategic level
- The need to produce information which contains links to signpost to the right services and support, that is to say FAQs, leaflets and information pack or card
- A campaign to inform and reassure those not directly impacted by the benefits changes
- To include basic information about managing debt on the corporate website which provides a summary of how to save; how to budget and a guide about loans and APR
- To signpost and provide links on the website to organisations that provide information and advice about debt and budgeting such as CAB, WH Money Smart team, WCCU, MAs and Turn2us
- To signpost and provide links to partners in media releases and information relating to welfare reform

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
<p>Dedicated WR Helplines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint service proposed by Welfare Rights and CAB resourced by Cabinet decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint WRS/CAB Welfare Reform Benefits Helpline & Response Team launched. 1,007 calls taken about 1,987 specific subject matters from 1 January 2013 to 31 July 2013 with 464 of the queries relating to Employment & Support Allowance. Councillors' Referral Form implemented in July but no referrals received. 	<p>Helen Winfield</p>

	<p>Welfare Reform Benefits Bus visited 14 destinations in weeks beginning 19 and 26 August 2013 -187 monitoring forms completed for those people seen with queries. 36 briefing sessions on Welfare Reform changes delivered to 1,019+ people including voluntary, statutory and third sector organisations and local radio broadcasts.</p>	
<p>Online Information Resource</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An online resource of information downloads and expert links is in development and will be co-ordinated by the same CAB/Welfare Rights partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial requirements delivered at www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/welfarereform - website developed and Information Pack plus Advisers Factsheets added. Wider WCC stakeholder group to meet to expand the content and define the role for additional ideas like an app or AV content 	<p>Helen Winfield</p>
<p>Communications Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Service maintaining and managing delivery of a single co-ordinated public and stakeholder communications plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Strategy and Action Plan agreed for implementation by the WR Board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - outdoor advertising campaign promoting the helpline number - information provided to councillors and professionals advising of a “fast track” number to provide urgent support - production of information booklets (printed and online) including Benefits Advice and Free Internet Access - promotion of sensible borrowing and Credit 	<p>The Welfare Reform Board took overall responsibility for the Communications Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>All of the actions allocated to Corporate Communications under Recommendation 1 and noted under ‘Timescale/progress so far’ were completed successfully.</p>

	<p>Unions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - comprehensive web content including leaflets, FAQs, links to other partners and sources of information www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/weflarereform - press releases, social media releases, YouTube video production, radio campaign to raise awareness and signpost to helpline 	
<p>Campaign Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual campaigns for 25 March 2013 launch • Campaign to promote the new helpline to the public using outdoor media • Direct Mail campaign to frontline services (GPs, Head Teachers etc.), Councillors, and LSP partners to promote the fast-track private helpline, LGDS, and provide an updated WR rollout timeline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multi-channel extensive media and promotion campaign has been undertaken with partners throughout the spring and summer 2013 	<p>The campaign was delivered in line with the plan. Here is a summary of the main activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A central point of reference was established by updating the Welfare Reform page on the council’s website. This provided contacts for the Welfare Reform and Benefits Helpline, a list of important dates and downloadable documents for both the general public and professional advisers. • Arrangements were made for a ‘Benefits Bus’ to visit various locations around the city carrying professionals to offer help and advice, plus a ‘pop-up’ advice shop in the city centre. The latter opened on Friday 30 August. • The Benefits Bus and the pop-up shop were promoted by through a leaflet distributed

		<p>by Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs) and Wolverhampton Homes. A two-week radio advertising campaign promoting the Benefits Bus was also commissioned from Free Radio, beginning on 12 August. In the first week a general promotional message was carried, while the second week featured daily updates on the bus's location.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New promotional literature was also commissioned, including a general information leaflet explaining the benefits changes and a leaflet identifying locations where internet access is provided free-of-charge. The literature was distributed through Third Sector partners, LNPs, GPs' surgeries, libraries, the Benefits Bus and the pop-up shop.• Promotion of the Welfare Reform and Benefits Helpline for 12 months has also been guaranteed through using the Patient Information Screens in local hospitals and health centres.• The Corporate Communications Team has also made extensive use of social media:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ daily promotions were carried on the Wolverhampton Today Facebook page
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Recommendation 2

Cabinet agree to the development of a Digital Inclusion Strategy for the City taking into account the mapping exercise currently underway

- a) Further investigation of developing mobile device usage should be undertaken, including the need to check that the Council has the relevant technology for people to do things mobile i.e. aps
- b) Review computer access in public places across the City to ensure adequate capacity for increase demand:
 - Review computer usage rules in libraries (currently 3 hours) and other public access points and give consideration to dedicated use of one or more computers for form filling and non-leisure uses e.g. job search allowing for the individuals' capabilities on the computer
 - Where gaps in coverage identified, explore other possibilities e.g. use of schools, taking into account barriers to their use, discussing possible solutions with Heads and school governors where required.
- c) Explore the possibility of rolling out volunteer schemes providing support for people to access ICT who lack the confidence or skills taking into account personal privacy.

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital inclusion mapping exercise underway. • Connected City/Digital Inclusion Task & Finish Group established. • Draft Digital Inclusion Strategy for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital inclusion mapping exercise complete. Digital Inclusion Strategy developed, based on number of national and local drivers, by Connected Cities Task & Finish Group. • Final Digital Inclusion to be presented to 	Heather Clark

<p>consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised draft presented to Welfare Reform Board. Seek external funding to address gaps and enhance provision including explore opportunities from local support services framework Monitor demand on introduction of Universal Credit for new claimants between October 2013 and March 2014. 	<p>Cabinet on 11 September 2013 for signoff, following consultation with Welfare Reform Board during August.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital inclusion intervention being designed as part of the social inclusion priority of the Black Country European Investment Strategy 2014-20. Initial meeting held of Local Support Services Framework for Universal Credit claimant. Wolverhampton is not in the latest round of Universal Credit roll out; however, the implementation plan to take forward the actions within Digital Inclusion Strategy will evolve to reflect the demand created through its introduction. 	
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Recommendation 3

Councillors to be provided with a point of contact (to be determined) which will enable them to raise any emerging welfare reform issues.

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
<p>Item covered through the dedicated fast-track helpline being provided from 25 March 2013 for frontline services and professionals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated fast-track line open from 25 March 2013. Stats only available from June onwards (due to CAB data recording system tweaks needed). There were no fast-track callers in June and only 2 in July. No calls have been received from Members. 	<p>Helen Winfield</p>

Recommendation 4

The Council gives further consideration to the causes of underclaiming of benefits and considers options for the promotion

of take up of benefits		
Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A campaign to promote benefit take-up is among the possible additional campaigns above. • Potential to integrate this with a campaign to redress stigmatisation around benefits, repeat promotion of the helpline, progress digital inclusion communications, repeat 'reassurance' and sensible borrowing messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multi-channel extensive media and promotion campaign has been undertaken throughout the spring and summer 2013 to signpost people to sources of professional advice and support relating to the Welfare Reform Act. Key activities are described above in the response to the recommendation. 	<p>A separate campaign to promote benefits take-up was not agreed by the Welfare Reform Board, primarily for budgetary reasons.</p> <p>We recommend that consideration be given to a campaign of this type should the necessary funds be available in the future.</p>

Recommendation 5

Cabinet agree to make a cross party statement on behalf of Wolverhampton City Council to Wolverhampton MPs to welcome the Government proposals for regulation of payday loan and credit card APR rates in light of the impact of welfare reform and debt on the City .

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare Reform Board, through chair (Sarah Norman), to draft a statement to provide to Portfolio Holder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been much local and national publicity/campaigns to highlight the impact and consequences of short term loans 	Anthony Ivko