

## Scotland's Housing Network (SHN): Welfare Reform Forum Report – June 2018

This report outlines the main points from the recent round of SHN welfare reform events held in June. Over 100 people attended across the three events in June. The events are chaired and facilitated by Tony Donohoe, SHN Associate and can be contacted at <mailto:info@tonyconsulting.co.uk>. All available presentations from the forum can be found at: <http://www.scotlandshousingnetwork.org/welfare-reform/>.

Event Dates	Speakers	Agenda Topic	Presentation Available
East Forum (Edinburgh) – 19/06/18	Tony Donohoe - SHN	Welcome & programme	Y
	Bill Higgins – DWP	UC Implementation Update	Y
	Pauline Torley – Scottish Gov	Social Security Act & Welfare Reform	Y
	Jeremy Hewer – SFHA	SFHA Welfare Reform Updates	Y
	Tony Donohoe - SHN	Welfare Reform Indicators Project	Y
West Forum (Glasgow) – 14/06/18	Tony Donohoe - SHN	Welcome & programme	Y
	Bill Higgins – DWP	UC Implementation Update	Y
	Pauline Torley – Scottish Gov	Social Security Act & Welfare Reform	Y
	Jeremy Hewer – SFHA	SFHA Welfare Reform Updates	Y
	Claire Sharp - SCVO	Digital Participation	N
	Tony Donohoe - SHN	Welfare Reform Indicators Project	Y
North Forum (Inverness) – 21/06/18	Tony Donohoe - SHN	Welcome & programme	Y
	Bill Higgins – DWP	UC Implementation Update	Y
	Owen Griffiths & Laura Carmichael – Scottish Gov	Social Security Act & Welfare Reform	Y
	Jeremy Hewer - SFHA	SFHA Welfare Reform Updates	Y
	Tony Donohoe - SHN	Welfare Reform Indicators Project	Y

Resources	Contact	Further Information/Website Links
Scotland's Housing Network	<a href="mailto:info@tonyconsulting.co.uk">info@tonyconsulting.co.uk</a> (Tony Donohoe) <a href="mailto:Fiona.Jackson@scotlandshousingnetwork.org">Fiona.Jackson@scotlandshousingnetwork.org</a> (Fiona Jackson)	<a href="http://www.scotlandshousingnetwork.org/welfare-reform/">http://www.scotlandshousingnetwork.org/welfare-reform/</a> <a href="http://www.welfarereformscotland.co.uk/">http://www.welfarereformscotland.co.uk/</a>
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations	<a href="mailto:jhewer@sfha.co.uk">jhewer@sfha.co.uk</a> (Jeremy Hewer)	<a href="https://www.sfha.co.uk/sub-category/welfare-reform">https://www.sfha.co.uk/sub-category/welfare-reform</a>
Social Housing & Welfare (SHAW) Bulletin	<a href="mailto:Catherine.Louch@prospectch.org.uk">Catherine.Louch@prospectch.org.uk</a> (Catherine Louch)	Email Catherine Louch at Prospect Housing to be added to Bulletin circulation list.
Department of Work & Pensions	Universal Credit Landlord Guidance Page	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-and-rented-housing--2">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-and-rented-housing--2</a>
SCVO Digital	Claire Sharp SCVO - <a href="mailto:claire.sharp@scvo.org.uk">claire.sharp@scvo.org.uk</a>	<a href="https://digitalparticipation.scot/">https://digitalparticipation.scot/</a>  <a href="https://scvo.org/digital/">https://scvo.org/digital/</a>

## Key Presentation Topics & Points Discussed

Topic	Presentation/Discussion Points
<p><b>SHN Updates</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tony advised that Moira Fraser has left the SHN and her position has been filled by Fiona Jackson</li> <li>• Tony also advised that he had contacted Scottish Government re. a speaker on Pre-Action Requirements for Rent Recovery – no-one available for this round of forums but commitment to attend next round in late October/early November</li> </ul>
<p><b>Universal Credit Roll-Out</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DWP has published the Business Case for Universal credit projecting 200k more people in employment once full roll-out completed and £8bn in economic benefits!</li> <li>• The ‘managed migration’ timetable for existing benefit claimants is currently timetabled from July 2019 – March 2023</li> <li>• From 11<sup>th</sup> April 2018 claimants moving into temporary accommodation eligible for Housing Benefit not UC Housing Costs</li> <li>• DWP confirmed landlord identification verification process when contacting Service Centre – landlord should be asked for information relating to address of property, monthly rent &amp; claimants full name</li> <li>• DWP provided examples of impact of fluctuating earnings on MPTLs and amount of benefit a landlord would receive in these circumstances – highlights that the MPTL value can change and money received by landlord change from one period to next</li> <li>• DWP introducing integrated telephony services giving direct link to case managers &amp; relevant teams for UC queries (Dundee Service Centre)</li> <li>• There was a question over the point in the process when a UC claim has full legal claim status and rights to withdraw a claim. Bill Higgins to check with DWP Legal reps to establish correct position</li> <li>• Some landlords emphasising continued issues with tenants not understanding their on-line journal and needing to be supported/educated in this by landlord staff</li> <li>• At the North Forum reported delays reported by one landlord in decision-making over UC cases with 4-5 months for decisions and payment delays</li> <li>• Also, suggestion that DWP could advise landlords when a change to MPTL or Third-Party Deduction is made which will alert landlord to possible rent payment changes from tenant – for example through the Landlord Portal?</li> </ul>

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<b>Rent Arrears Deductions Requests</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a query over who can request a change in the rent arrears deductions i.e. from 20% to 10%. For example, can a landlord do this? See attached document for DWP response.</li> </ul>  <p>Microsoft Word 97 - 2003 Document</p>
<b>Scotland – Social Security Act &amp; Housing/Welfare Reform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scotland Act gives powers over 11 Benefit areas (new Scottish Social Security Agency main locations in Dundee &amp; Glasgow)</li> <li>• Universal Credit Scotland Act 2016 – priority has been direct payments of housing cost to landlord and twice monthly payments to UC claimants known as “Scottish Choices”</li> <li>• Choices are available to claimants in all UC ‘Full’ Service areas during their 2<sup>nd</sup> assessment period and via their online journal. To date over 2,500 people have taken up one or both choices.</li> <li>• SG to publish initial official statistics on the UC “Scottish Choices” in summer 2018</li> <li>• Scottish Government now also looking to implement split payments for UC between different members of the household. Currently consulting on this but appears complicated and announcement on this will follow at later stage.</li> <li>• 18-21yr olds HB restrictions (only small number in Scotland affected) – Scottish Government will continue to provide support to mitigate this but DWP has now announced that policy is being reversed and eligibility will be restored although timescale for this unclear.</li> <li>• Bedroom Tax – SG abolishing but DWP has delayed ability to do this – now May 2020 at earliest. However, SG will continue to mitigate through DHPs until fully abolished.</li> <li>• Discretionary Housing Payments – now a devolved policy area with bulk of budget £50m in 18/19 for Bedroom Tax. £10.9m for other but SG querying take-up of Benefit Cap related funding as budget under-spent in 17/18. Unclear what reasons for this are but Minister has written to LAs asking for feedback/views.</li> <li>• Scottish Government colleagues keen for landlords to provide case studies/examples of Benefit Cap cases</li> <li>• Some landlords (especially HAs at the forums) highlighting increased demand for advice/support across the range of welfare reform changes and keen for Scottish Government to consider specific funding for services.</li> </ul>

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<b>Scottish Choices – Highland Social Landlords</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attached is leaflet produced by a group of social landlords in the Highland area providing information on “Scottish Choices” for their tenants/customers.</li> </ul>  <p>UCChoicesLLLeaflet V4.docx</p>
<b>SFHA Presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noted that in UC ‘Full Service’ areas increase of approx. 400%-800% in claimants over year long period (i.e. Greenock, Musselburgh &amp; Inverness Jobcentres). Increase in Social Rented Household claimants considerable too – i.e. 1800% in Greenock (Nov 16 – Nov 17)!</li> <li>Still issues over disconnect between UC Housing Cost deductions and payments made to social landlords. Also, errors in payment schedules requiring resources to fix and reconcile.</li> <li>Universal Support Delivered Locally – limited in scope and variations in level and quality of support?</li> <li>SFHA highlighting need for HAs to provide practical digital support for tenants and customers affected by UC</li> </ul>
<b>Welfare Reform Indicators Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tony updated that a paper with revised set of indicators had been drafted and had met with SFHA, ALACHO to discuss potential indicators</li> <li>Feedback form last round of forums had assisted in shaping the new set of indicators</li> <li>The next stage would involve ‘testing’ the indicator collection and collation with a small number of LA and HA landlords – <b>any LA or HA that wants to be involved in this part of the project for this please contact Tony?</b></li> <li>The initial data collection would probably be for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter (Jul-Sept 2018) so likely to collect data in October 2018</li> <li>At the moment circa 21 indicators focused on UC numbers, DHPs, arrears, MPTLs, evictions and support</li> <li>Some discussion over evictions and limitations and noted that Scot Gov was now collecting some data on this from LA landlords</li> </ul>

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<b>Digital Participation (West Forum only)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCVO highlighted Digital Participation Charter for Scotland which organisations can sign- up to</li> <li>• Focus is to encourage digital participation within organisations and for their customers</li> <li>• Digital Champion training is also available (8hrs) for employees and others within organisations</li> <li>• Claire Sharp also highlighted the Digital Charter Funding which is available in the form of small grants to assist organisations in developing digital skills</li> </ul>
<b>Dates of next SHN Welfare Reform Forums</b>	East (Edinburgh) Tuesday 30 <sup>th</sup> October 2018; West (Glasgow) Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2018; North (Inverness) Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> November 2018.

Tony Donohoe, June 2018