

## Scrutiny Panel A, Welfare Reforms Inquiry: Key Findings and Emerging Recommendations

Meeting Overview	Key Evidence	Emerging Recommendations
<p><b>Meeting 1</b> 25<sup>th</sup> October 2012</p> <p><b>Theme:</b> Key National and Local Changes</p> <p><b>Topics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timetable of Changes</li> <li>• Local Council Tax Changes</li> <li>• Social Fund Transition</li> </ul> <p><b>Speakers</b> Councillor Letts</p> <p>Bernadette Hagan: Head of Operations, Jobcentre Plus - Solent Hampshire and Isle of Wight</p> <p>Paul Medland: Council Tax Benefit Project Manager, SCC</p> <p>Denise Edghill: Senior Manager, Skills and Economy, SCC</p>	<p>Many issues in Welfare Reforms not in our control but need to tackle the response.</p> <p><b>Cumulative impact</b> unprecedented to hit nearly 20,000 residents (see Appendix 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council Tax Benefit</li> <li>• Housing Benefit Cap</li> <li>• Under-occupancy</li> <li>• Universal cCredit, monthly payments and digital by default – target 80%</li> <li>• Under 35s to HMOs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impacts on SCC</b> Local Welfare Provision following abolition of Social Fund Loss of direct payments – leading to rent arrears Demand on crisis services e.g. homelessness, health – capacity to respond.</p> <p><b>Lack of awareness</b> and response from those impacted. Coordinated support essential Communication and advice crucial to deliver a balanced message</p> <p>Key principle is to <b>get people out of benefits and into work.</b> Get Southampton Working programme is going well - Southampton has more jobs and fills more posts than national average. Approx 6000 people looking for work at any time.</p> <p><b>NEETS</b> lower than Core Cities – Good practice examples of getting young people into work through Wheatsheaf Trust and Barnardos.</p> <p><b>Council Tax</b> – 15,000 claimants hit; 9,000 paying for the first time. Av loss £191 Need to make 10% savings whilst protecting pensioners, and War Widows. Considered options but protecting one group hits others harder – 25% cut for all. Opportunity to apply for transition grant and set up a discretionary benefit allowance.</p> <p><b>Social Fund</b> – previous scheme administered by JCP offering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Care Grants – supporting to return or remain in the community</li> <li>• Crisis Loans – support someone in a crisis or disaster</li> </ul> <p>Do not want to replicate the old system – need to be innovative, sustainable, preventative and encourage self reliance. Needs to be both effective and responsive to demand. Without a balanced scheme there will be knock on effects and hidden costs</p>	<p>Develop local financial support mechanisms such as Credit Unions. Raise awareness of credit unions and affordable credit.</p> <p>Consistent and timely financial information, signposting, advice and support should be available and promoted to the most vulnerable.</p> <p>Ensure coordinated response across the city to build capacity and deliver a consistent and balanced message to those affected.</p> <p>Increase HMOs in the short term to cover increasing demand.</p> <p>Review debt policy to ensure the most vulnerable people are not put at greater risk.</p> <p>Support needed for digital by default agenda.</p> <p>See Appendix 1 Agreed recommendations 1 &amp; 2</p> <p>See Appendix 1 Agreed recommendations 3 &amp; 4</p>
<p><b>Meeting 2</b> 22nd November 2012</p>	<p>Current benefits system not working – forms are confusing and time consuming. Criteria complex and does not encourage people to come off benefits.</p>	<p>Taking transitional grant for council tax will give people extra resources</p>

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<p><b>Theme:</b> Setting the Scene</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Policy Drivers</li> <li>Setting the Scene: Local Statistics</li> </ul> <p><b>Speakers:</b> Deven Ghelani: Director, Policy in Practice and Lead on Welfare, Employment and Public Spending for the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ).</p> <p>Denis Gamblin: Directorate Business Manager, Environment and Economy, SCC</p>	<p>Panel recognised flaws – original plan envisaged during a time of economic growth This is the worst time for people to be trapped in poverty and out of work.</p> <p>Change will be challenging but basic principles are relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current system needs a major overhaul</li> <li>Single payment method essential</li> <li>People must be better off in work.</li> </ul> <p>Recognised that there could be greater reward through the taper of benefits in work. Free school meals could be embedded in the system – but may create greater stigma and lack of independence/stigma. BUT doing this could make it difficult to identify those who need support in school Children at risk of not being fed where household struggling.</p> <p>Safeguarding children impact: An impact reforms will have on children: lose of childcare because of the mover; increase in late school admissions; tracking and safeguarding children at risk of abuse will be increasingly difficult as families move properties</p> <p>Crucial that the system does not disadvantage people who are in work. Difficulty is that the jobs are not there for people when they are ready. For many the reforms will be about adapting to a new system and behavioural change – we can't help everyone.</p> <p><b>Southampton demographics</b>- ranked 81<sup>st</sup> in IMD2010 – most deprived quarter 23% of city's population live in most deprived 10% in England Most deprived areas are in most deprived 10% for Employment, Income and Education and Skills.</p> <p><b>Mosaic groups</b> most likely to be affected by Welfare Reforms: Segment 3: Low Income older couples approaching retirement, living in low rise council housing Segment 4: Childless or young people in high rise council tenants with issues of social isolation Segment 5: Vulnerable young families or lone parents living on council housing estates Segment 12: Transient young singles with weak support networks, living in a mixture of housing Appendix 4- Maps of areas where these groups are located Most likely to respond to local newspapers, face to face, and mobile/text</p>	<p>and time to adjust to changes.</p> <p>Ensure council tax works with Universal Credit system.</p> <p>Work with landlords to support tenants who need help to manage their money better.</p> <p>Focus resources on the most vulnerable.</p> <p>Greater awareness needed of changes and potential impacts.</p> <p>Target limited resources to the most vulnerable people and those at risk.</p> <p>Need to design a system with partners that maximises awareness and support in the most deprived locations to lead to better opportunities for the people living there.</p>
<p><b>Meeting 3</b> 6<sup>th</sup> December 2012</p>	<p><b>Key concerns of voluntary sector providers:</b> People are already feeling the changes – things are going to get worse</p>	<p>Promoting and providing good debt and money advice and promoting</p>

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<p><b>Theme</b> Assessing the Impacts of Welfare Reforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Services Perspectives</li> <li>Call to Evidence</li> </ul> <p><b>Speakers</b> Trixie Neilson: Community Voices Dominic Williams: Adviser, Just Money Alison Ward and Clair Johns: No Limits Mike Allot: Community Co-ordinator, Plus You Limited Kylie Marjason: Financial Inclusion Officer, Radian Gary Edwards: Manager, SARC Annette Davis: Admin Manager, SCRATCH Chris Davis: Southampton City Mission Michelle White: Service Leader, Two Saints</p>	<p>Many struggle to pay small amount towards basic needs / support packages Economic climate is exacerbating the situation and not likely to get better in near future.</p> <p>All voluntary organisations are seeing increasing demand for services – current economic climate is causing people to prioritise what they pay for and buy. Fewer benefits will mean people struggle even more.</p> <p>Pride is a big issue – causing a hidden level of poverty.</p> <p>Choices could lead to use of loan sharks, increased debt, losing home or eviction.</p> <p>Knock on impact on people’s health and other public services including mental health, stress, suicide, homelessness, heat vs. eat. Services reducing while demand increasing.</p> <p>Many people struggling to feed their families don’t fit referral agencies – working people or not on public sector radar. Teachers reporting children hungry at school.</p> <p>There is strong voluntary sector support for vulnerable people – but they do not have the capacity or finances to expand to support the change in demand. Voluntary organisations can add value to the money they are given.</p> <p><b>Key concerns of voluntary sector about welfare reforms:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits paid in arrears, loss of direct payments, digital by default, need for bank accounts</li> </ul> <p>It is the cumulative impact of all the changes that will cause the greatest problem. Many people working have access or knowledge of where they can get access to computers – but not all. People on benefits are less likely to have access/knowledge.</p> <p>People in debt have no money to save – need to turn this curve to lead to better money management. Need simple bank accounts and financial management advice – credit unions can help but there are small costs associated with set up and transactions.</p> <p><b>Registered social landlords</b> are offering money advice to their tenants.</p>	<p>credit unions essential.</p> <p>Need to increased signposting to information about Welfare Reform changes and a wide range of support services for people is essential.</p> <p>Any system of crisis support needs to include a way for self-referral.</p> <p>Need more face to face / road shows raising awareness and telling people about the changes in plain English.</p> <p>Start a Fuel Poverty Fund – where businesses and people who do not want their winter fuel allowance - fund can be used to put money on gas/electric keys or make minimum payment to a bill.</p> <p>Work in partnership with RSLs to help cover costs of setting up bank accounts.</p> <p>Increased access to computers and training /support needed and promote where computers/wifi available.</p> <p>Appendix 1 See agreed recommendations 5</p>
<p><b>Meeting 4</b> 10<sup>th</sup> January 2013</p>	<p><b>Supporting People</b> Over 65s and adults will be affected if there is no local welfare provision.</p>	

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<p><b>Theme:</b> Local and National Good Practice Examples of Supporting Vulnerable People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Fund – Preventative Costs</li> <li>• Supporting Vulnerable People</li> <li>• Making work pay</li> </ul> <p><b>Speakers</b> Matthew Waters: Supporting People, SCC Liz Slater: Housing Needs Manager, SCC Julian Walker: Project Leader 60+ Linda Haitana: Families Matter and Domestic Violence Manager, SCC Mike Carey and David Little: Housing Income Team, SCC Andy Tickner, Skills Manager, SCC Nigel Hughes, Executive Director SAFE Jonathon Cheshire, Chief Executive Wheatshaf Trust Ian Woodland: Unite Union Representative</p>	<p>Especially those in supported housing, and receiving support for mental health and disabilities, fleeing domestic violence and those hoping to stay at home after hospital.</p> <p>The Social Fund has been a life line for many people who need a little extra help to remain or become independent.</p> <p>220 people relied on community care grants to move on from supported housing Not having this funding will silt up units/accommodation. Mainly impacts on single homeless people and women fleeing domestic violence. These people often have limited support network and more likely to be men with learning difficulties, and young or older females. Although approx. 10% are couples.</p> <p>Would potentially lead to increased cost/intervention in the future. Key impacts of no social fund will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced access for prevention</li> <li>• Increased costs on other services</li> <li>• Limited solutions for individuals needing support</li> <li>• High resources spent on wasted support</li> </ul> <p>Loss of CCG could lead to significant event such as break up, separation, job loss, house loss/repossession.</p> <p><b>SOCIAL FUND</b> – we only know how the current system works There will be continued demand for crisis support Changing needs of Welfare Reforms and whilst current economic climate continues we do not know how people will respond and what the greatest needs will be.</p> <p><b>Making work pay</b> is the critical part of the welfare reforms <b>Southampton Action for Employment (SAFE)</b> supports people in priority neighbourhoods / estates to access a 5 week Choices course towards being job ready. Involved in research with Southampton University – have seen a clear change in confidence leading to training and work. All people are on benefits, 70% on employment support, 50% on incapacity benefit for over 5 years with complex / multiple barriers 50% have mental health barriers – life is tough and they often don't believe it can change Provides the intervention people need to get people on the journey to work.</p> <p>Majority of funding for employment support organisations comes from Government Often linked to payment by results</p> <p>Moving people into work after being on long term benefits is a massive change</p>	<p>Ensure support and training is made available to wider voluntary sector agencies.</p> <p>See agreed recommendations 3 &amp; 4</p>

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	<p>Requires huge support e.g. setting up accounts, managing monthly money</p> <p><b>Wheatsheaf Trust</b> have had great success getting people into work – but jobs not there Concentrating on creating jobs with Groundwork Solent – encouraging self-employment.</p> <p><b>SCC skills team</b> are supporting programmes to move residents into work Using S106 agreements to negotiate local work targets through Employer and Skills Plans. Egs include IKEA, Sainsbury's and CostCo Supported by pre-employment training programmes - develop motivation/confidence</p> <p>Important that people are not put into the market if they are not job ready as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knocks people confidence</li> <li>• Risks the integrity of the employment support programmes.</li> </ul> <p>Community Learning develops skills and confidence through social/recreational activities. This encourages engagement and gives people early steps into work- Targeted programme for unemployed (40%) /low paid and 50% priority areas.</p> <p>Projects to support people in sheltered accommodation to be active. Also encourages volunteering opportunities – building confidence and skills.</p> <p>Clear gender issues around employment for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single mothers with school age children</li> <li>• Traditionally hard to engage males in community learning.</li> </ul> <p>Significant support needed for digital by default JCP target is for 80% online –2012 17% Best practice Young people volunteering to teach older people IT skills</p> <p><b>Unions</b> are seeing increasing low paid, casual and 0 hours contracts. Increased needs for jobs, CV writing, debt advice and benefit appeals support Smaller employers can only provide limited support and benefits.</p> <p>Additional burden on self-employed people –have to report earnings monthly</p> <p>Biggest concern – people not getting enough information on the reforms.</p> <p><b>Housing / Homelessness</b> Excellent private sector provision – rely heavily on this Working with private landlords to help people under 35 find suitable accommodation Benefit cap is a big concern – visiting people affected &amp; delivering key message</p>	<p>Need smaller/simpler procurement options eg local maintenance work to enable social benefit for people looking to be self employed.</p> <p>Develop local jobs through energy conservation projects.</p> <p>Need to recognise and support contribution of organisations supporting people out of benefits and into work.</p> <p>Need holistic approach to avoid people having to look for jobs before they are ready.</p> <p>Provide localised advice / skills centres to give access to IT – can libraries support be stepped up for transition period.</p> <p>How can SCC support small employers to provide general information and debt advice.</p> <p>How can this be supported/changed?</p> <p>Need to give a consistent message</p>

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	<p>Need to increase income            Universal Credit change from weekly to monthly payments will have a big impact            Private sector rented holds the social housing solution. Key concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcrowding, demand and homelessness</li> </ul> <p>Potential impact of housing displacements from London boroughs looking for cheaper accommodation. Do not know the impact of this yet.</p> <p><b>Housing rent collection</b> – ethos is to keep people in their homes            Evictions 20% of other local authorities – Universal Credit could undermine this</p> <p>Due to welfare reforms – will have £1m additional rent to collect.            Likely to see increasing arrears. Pilots have seen 88-97% collection rates.</p> <p>Actions underway – training, developing experts, roadshows, visiting, signposting, joint publicity with credit unions.</p> <p><b>Families Matters</b> programme looking at families as a whole            key strands include worklessness, school attendance and reducing offending.            To be working with 615 families with complex needs by 2015.</p> <p>Internally, the coordination and joint working is strong.</p>	<p>and coordinate advice.</p> <p>Essential to promote and link experts for employment.</p> <p>Ensure innovative use of discretionary housing payments to support people staying in their homes.</p>
<p><b>Meeting 5</b>            7<sup>th</sup> February 2013</p>	<p><b>Communication Plan</b> –developed cross agency through Gateway to a Better Future            Steady use of different channels of communication through coordinated campaign using</p>	<p>Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the right channels being used?</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Theme</b> Resourcing the Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications</li> <li>• Partnership Resources</li> <li>• Voluntary Sector Capacity</li> </ul> <p><b>Speakers</b> Wilson Massie: Marketing Officer, SCC Sara Crawford: Improvement Manager, SCC Bernadette Hagan: Head of Operations, Jobcentre Plus - Solent Hampshire and Isle of Wight Denise Edghill: Senior Manager, Skills and Economy, SCC David Wrighton: Building Bridges Forum Jo Ash: CEO Southampton Voluntary Services.</p>	<p>existing channels and some additional support e.g. Money Tree and posters Tailored to reach people hardest hit, via coordinated layers of communication. Messages being given are, timely and easy to understand. Appendix 5 Map of locations for Money Tree posters</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>West (sent to Shirley LHO)</td> <td>420</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Central (sent to Central LHO)</td> <td>180</td> </tr> <tr> <td>East (sent to Peartree LHO)</td> <td>220</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North and South (sent to Townhill Park LHO)</td> <td>250</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Maybush LHO window</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sure Starts (two each)</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gateway</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Homelessness Reception and temporary units</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>1114</td> </tr> </table> <p>Key message: changes are coming - the only way out is to get work or increase hours. Job growth rate does not match the number of people coming through job ready Even if people get advice – any other response is limited.</p> <p>There is no corporate budget / resource. Plan being delivered through good will and joint working. Training to organisations supporting people has been ad hoc eg Schools Forum, GP Forum, Benefits Awareness events – not anyone’s overall responsibility.</p> <p>Money Tree has been collaborative approach – funded through HRA budget Cited as excellent practice – but very limited numbers available to general public, receptions and organisations supporting others - Need significantly wider distribution.</p> <p>Funding bid to build capacity for advice services. Solent University has offered students to monitor impacts of Welfare Reforms.</p> <p>There are still some core groups not responding – Gateway found only 4% customers aware of the changes and the impacts to come.</p> <p>Older people may struggle with online services. Not everything can be done online – as this is not the preferred communication channel for those who are most at risk. Face to face support needed for the core groups not engaging – in the localities where they are based.</p> <p><b>Partnership working to help people into work</b> – SCC renowned for its work Providers finding is much easier to access funding.</p>	West (sent to Shirley LHO)	420	Central (sent to Central LHO)	180	East (sent to Peartree LHO)	220	North and South (sent to Townhill Park LHO)	250	Maybush LHO window	2	Sure Starts (two each)	20	Gateway	2	Homelessness Reception and temporary units	20		1114	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the focus on the right groups, localities and places?</li> </ul> <p>Ensure support is there for people who can’t work or who want to get work.</p> <p>Need o develop a programme of training sessions to ensure that organisations/people in positions of support are fully aware of the impacts.</p> <p>Coordinated approach to funding.</p> <p>Need funding to ensure wider distribution of Money Tree.</p> <p>Information packs needed for Councillors and organisations supporting people.</p> <p>Money Tree could be broken down into a pick list of support documents.</p> <p>Promote libraries for use of internet – get young unemployed volunteers to support training for older people.</p>
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	<p>Although nationally Southampton youth unemployment and benefits claimants is low There are pockets of high deprivation – similar to Northern cities.</p> <p><b>Southampton Skills Development Zone</b> – very successful where there is funding To develop single points of contact – colleges leading on specific skills/employment JCP can easily refer people.</p> <p><b>Section 106 agreements</b> have helped 300 people into employment &amp; apprenticeships E.g. Costco target to employ 70 unemployed local people. Engaging SAFE and Wheatsheaf Trust to give extra support.</p> <p><b>Strategic Investment Budgets (SIB)</b> to work and direct resources with specialist intervention. Supporting people with multiple barriers to move into employment SIB is offering unique approach where partners are pooling budgets to develop a streamlined approach eg JCP, Police and probation getting ex-offenders into work.</p> <p><b>City Deal</b> offer future opportunity to boost local economic growth</p> <p><b>Building Bridges Forum</b> is being realigned to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to the priorities of Southampton Connect</li> <li>• Coordinate /galvanise smaller organisations helping people into employment</li> <li>• Providing employers with a fast route into the voluntary sector.</li> </ul> <p>The city has a robust employment voluntary sector but times are changing Need to ensure organisations provide complimentary work and build capacity.</p> <p>Work to develop this Forum is commended by the Panel.</p> <p>Underemployment continues to be a big issues – not likely to change in near future. Efforts to get people job ready will be undermined whiles this continues.</p> <p>Need to match skills with job growth areas e.g. eco-contracts/retrofit. Worklessness is high especially amongst women who have never worked. Empty Nesters programme has helped many women to enter the job market.</p> <p>Role of volunteering is crucial to the success of getting people into employment.</p> <p><b>Overview of Voluntary Sector Impacts</b></p>	<p>Encourage wider use of Strategic Investment Budgets.</p> <p>Maximise opportunities within City Deal to ensure local jobs for local people. Needs to give highest priority to skills and employment.</p> <p>Funding needed to support the development of this forum be best supported.</p> <p>Lack of affordable child care continues to be an issue.</p> <p>Links to Leaders project Getting the Economy Going.</p> <p>Event to raise awareness of vacancies and employment gaps and future jobs eg health &amp; social Care, construction and new developments.</p> <p>Promote opportunities for self-employment.</p> <p>Make better use of voluntary sector to give messages and cascade/signpost changes from Welfare Reforms</p> <p>Is there sufficient support to gender specific groups?</p> <p>NHS involvement?</p>



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	<p>Seeing huge resource reductions – cash, grants and donations - Down £1.7bn In a time of unprecedented increasing demands and need for volunteering opportunities – likely to continue.</p> <p>Strong voluntary sector BUT there is lack of capacity to cope with increasing demand Ideally placed to cascade and support people in need</p> <p>Gender impacts of Welfare Reforms: Impact of nominated individuals Women find it harder to get into employment as they often take care responsibilities.</p> <p>Equalities impact on different communities (black and ethnic minority groups): some families might be disproportionately affected: language issues, greater number of large families</p> <p>Impacts of reforms wider than traditional financial / advice services e.g. relate. Impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships, homelessness, tolerance, mental health, stress, domestic violence, low level crime.</li> <li>• Community tensions: there is a need for an overview of the wider community impact of any developing community tensions</li> </ul> <p>Expect to see voluntary organisations either closing or shrinking as funding reduced Redundancies will happen for many of 500 voluntary organisations in SVS.</p> <p>Extra costs of reduced voluntary sector activities will fall on public sector - Higher level of intervention in future – especially Health, GPs, Police, Housing</p> <p>Potential growth of the grey economy may put people at further risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drug dealing, loan sharks, illegal income, tax avoidance.</li> </ul>	<p>How do we support these specific community groups?</p> <p>Event needed to invite voluntary organisations to identify a way forward in transition period – through Gateway to a Better Future project?</p> <p>How can we encourage business community to engage in supporting volunteering.</p> <p>Redundancy benefit workshop.</p> <p>Greater recognition with employers for volunteering certificate scheme.</p> <p>Establish a role for a city wide Welfare Reforms Officer to coordinate and lead activity during the transition period.</p> <p>Appendix 1 See Agreed Recommendations 5</p>