

## Cabinet's Response to Scrutiny Review: Sanctions and conditionality regime

| <b>Recommendation</b>   | <b>Cabinet Decision</b><br>(Accepted/<br>Rejected/<br>Deferred) | <b>Cabinet Response</b><br>(detailing proposed action if accepted,<br>rationale for rejection,<br>and why and when issue will be reconsidered<br>if deferred)   | <b>Officer Responsible</b> | <b>Action by (Date)</b> |
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| <p>Single overarching recommendation: that the partners within the welfare reform steering group, via Rotherham Partnership, aim to establish a local working protocol. Within this framework, partners are specifically asked to consider the following</p>  | Accept  | Detailed responses are set out to specific recommendations that sit under the overarching recommendation.   | Carole Haywood             | July 2014               |
| <p><b>Recommendation 1:</b><br/>How advice agencies can be included in this protocol and the potential role they could play – some suggestions from the review group include a potential presence for them in the job centre itself to pick up instant referrals; cross referrals through the IT systems of the AiR (Advice in Rotherham) partnership; and advocacy and one to one support for more vulnerable clients. They should also consider the potential to carry out awareness raising for claimants on the</p> | Accept  | <p>The idea of a local protocol could help deal with people affected but Jobcentre Plus would have to be an active part of it to have greatest effect. There may be limits to their discretion around some issues and processes but this should not be seen as reason to not proceed. It should be noted that nationally figures show that half of sanctions are applied via Work Programme providers and not the local JCP.</p> <p>Data shared between DWP and the Council will include people sanctioned who are in</p> | Carole Haywood             | July 2014               |

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| <p>expectations and responsibilities they have within the system.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 2:</b><br/>The importance of including all partners - therefore it is essential for Work Programme providers to be included in this protocol. The review group stresses its extreme disappointment with the providers for their lack of engagement in the review and hopes that they will take the opportunity to rectify the situation by taking part in the protocol.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3:</b><br/>How clear and consistent communication mechanisms can be implemented and/or improved across all of the partners, with the aim of making the process as simple and easy to understand as possible for claimants. Some quality standards around this should be considered.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 4:</b><br/>In line with 3 above, again some clear and consistent standards around referral to other support such as the hardship fund, food banks, credit unions and other sources of assistance.</p> | <p>Accept</p> <p>Accept</p> <p>Accept</p> | <p>receipt of Housing Benefit. This will not include everyone sanctioned, but it is reasonable to assume that most will be in receipt of HB.</p> <p>It is clear that the Work Programme providers are not going to participate in this and that DWP supported this. The Council and partners could raise concerns around this with members of parliament and the Local Government Association.</p> <p>This provides an opportunity to explore better communication across agencies for all advice and benefits, not just sanctions.</p> <p>The Hardship Fund is the first line of support for those who have been sanctioned. This is applied for at JCP. The key question in relation to Hardship Fund is how quickly applications are being processed. Whilst application for families with children applications may be processed quite quickly, for single people it</p> | <p>Carole Haywood</p> <p>Carole Haywood</p> <p>Carole Haywood</p> | <p>July 2014</p> <p>July 2014</p> <p>July 2014</p> |
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| <p><b>Recommendation 5:</b><br/>Rotherham MBC should review its eligibility criteria for the “Fund for Change”, as sanctioned claimants are currently not eligible to apply on the basis that they are not in receipt of benefits. The review group notes that since the review concluded, the government have announced their decision to remove the funding for this scheme, which will remove another source of assistance for the most destitute people in the borough. Methods of lobbying the government on this should also be considered.</p> | <p>Accept</p> | <p>may take up to two weeks where people are without money. This could be raised with JCP. Clearly the quicker Hardship payments are awarded, so the less the need for other support.</p> <p>The current eligibility criteria restricts support through “Fund for Change” to those in receipt of prescribed benefits, except support paid by the fund to food banks. The criteria could be changed but careful consideration would be need to be given to what levels of support could be provided as it would not be possible to “fill the gap” left by sanctions within the resources available.</p> <p>The end of the funding for “Fund for change” has to be a consideration. As things stand the funding will cease at the end of March 2015. Members will need to consider what they wish to do in the future, including the use of loans money repaid.</p> | <p>Carole Haywood</p> | <p>July 2014</p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 6:</b><br/>Finally, DWP partners should consider whether it is possible to have the mandatory reconsideration process carried out locally instead of via the decision-making centre in Hanley. The review group request that this be referred</p>  | <p>Accept</p> | <p>Realistically, it is unlikely that DWP will change the national approach to dealing with sanctions including the processes carried out at Hanley irrespective of what benefits would be realised from a local solution.</p>  | <p>Carole Haywood</p> | <p>July 2014</p> |

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| as high within the DWP as it needs to go to be given due consideration. |  |  |  |  |
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