

Charter for the Design and Delivery of a Welsh Benefits System

Introduction

In 2019 the National Assembly's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee (ELGC) conducted an inquiry into *Benefits in Wales: Options for Better Delivery* which called for written evidence between the periods 21 February 2019 to 11 April 2019. Their report published in October 2019 included 17 recommendations for the Welsh Government of which one included;

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Welsh Government establish a coherent and integrated "Welsh benefits system" for all the means-tested benefits for which it is responsible. As part of this, the Welsh Government should develop a set of principles underpinning their design and delivery. These principles should be co-produced with people who claim these benefits and the wider Welsh"

Proposed Charter Commitment

To establish a rational and integrated Welsh benefits system for all means-tested benefits for which the Welsh Government are responsible, we will:

- Develop and deliver communications and processes which are clear and accessible to all.
- Develop an inclusive system demonstrating fairness and equality in the delivery of Welsh benefits.
- Develop and build a system which is flexible and not a one size fits all methodology.
- Raise awareness of people's entitlement to benefits to help maximise household income in Wales.
- Work in partnership with stakeholders in the development and delivery of a system which meets the needs of people in Wales.
- Encourage feedback to enable the delivery of the best service possible.
- Make a positive difference in Wales which is aligned with the Well-being of Future Generation Wales Act.

Who delivers this Charter?

Welsh Government will work in partnership with delivery partners, local authorities, stakeholders and people accessing the benefits system to ensure the informed development and delivery of a system which fully meets the needs of people in Wales.

How will it be delivered?

For individuals and communities, we will take steps to:

- Improve take-up, ensuring as many people as possible receive the financial support they are entitled to.
- Meet the needs of those who are most excluded, including those who are unaware of their entitlements.
- Raise awareness of the advice and support which is available to help with an application / claim, an appeal or independent support available to help those who are most vulnerable.
- Ensure staff are knowledgeable and experienced and receive ongoing training in the delivery of up-to-date advice and appropriate support.
- Meet the needs of groups that are particularly vulnerable to poverty, recognising the diversity of the people of Wales as encompassed by the Equality Act 2010.
- Make sure advice is provided on entitlement to benefits which are not devolved to Welsh Government.
- Refer to other organisations or support services which improve well-being or financial circumstances where appropriate.

Process and Services – we will take steps to:

- Allocate resources fairly and efficiently to deliver a service which puts people first.
- Adapt our process and systems to meet individual needs and preferences.
- Test our systems with the people who will use them before finally putting them into practice.
- Encourage feedback on the process and services provided.
- Promote a more positive view of people's entitlements and why support is there for those who need it.

A prosperous future – we will:

- Take steps to identify problems at an early stage to help break the cycle of poverty.
- Continually develop systems and processes which will bring benefits to all.
- Tackle disadvantage by promoting and encouraging take up of the advice, support and financial assistance that is available.

- Ensure everyone is treated equally, fairly and without discrimination.
- Continue to work with our partners to meet the needs of people in Wales.

Charter Outcomes

- Increased take-up of Welsh benefits, helping to maximise household incomes and contribute to tackling poverty in Wales.
- Informed Welsh policy which has involved partners and individuals and other stakeholders in its development.
- Awareness of benefit entitlement and the support available is improved through clear messaging on Welsh and non-devolved benefits which also challenges myths and stereotypes.
- Ministerial commitments on income maximisation and welfare benefit take-up are delivered.
- Financially resilient communities are developed through our commitment to alleviate and combat poverty.
- Outcomes are improved for children and young people from low income households, supporting them to have a better future.

Putting the Charter into Practice

We know that the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic have impacted on levels of poverty in Wales and we must address these longer term impacts as well as focusing on the immediate crisis to alleviate poverty.

To do this we will continue in dialogue with our stakeholders through the relevant fora to ensure the Charter continues to work for all, and in ensuring we help to maximise incomes and raise awareness of support and services which people in Wales are entitled to.