



Telford & Wrekin

C O U N C I L

**SCRUTINY REPORT
HELPING RESIDENTS ACCESS
BENEFITS**

MAY 2010

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1. INTRODUCTION

We decided to carry out a review of Helping Residents Access Benefits because Members were concerned that residents, especially those affected by loss of income or redundancy resulting from the recession, may not be aware of, or claiming, benefits that they are entitled to.

The review had two main objectives:

1. To identify ways in which awareness of benefits available can be raised generally and through a more targeted way for particular groups of people;
2. To identify how current Council and partner agency processes for administration of benefits could be more co-ordinated and delivered in a more customer friendly way.

We have gathered information for this review from a number of sources, including:

- Meetings with officers in Revenues and Benefits and Customer Services, including a review of the First Point Advice Centre;
- A survey of the Council's Business Unit Managers to ascertain what benefits, including in-kind benefits, are available;
- Meetings with Managers from the Pensions Service, Jobcentre Plus and the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB).

In this report we will discuss 2 types of benefits:

- Statutory benefits administered as part of the national welfare benefit scheme
- Non-statutory benefits which may be any service, support or aid, either monetary or in-kind, that help to meet the specific needs or improve the quality of life for target groups.

Section 2 of this report summarises the information that we have gathered as part of our review. We would like to thank all those people who have taken the time to meet with us. We have made a number of recommendations in the report which we believe will help improve the way the Council and its partners increase the uptake of benefits by local people. These recommendations will be presented to the Council's Cabinet, and for those recommendations that are accepted by the Council, we will monitor the progress to implement them.

Scrutiny Lead Member

Councillor Adrian Meredith

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Councillor Keith Austin

Councillor Clive Mason

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2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Every year there are millions of pounds worth of benefit provision that goes unclaimed: nationally the figure is estimated to be around £16 billion. The reasons why people fail to claim what they are entitled to and what works in helping people to claim are well researched, but it remains impossible to provide precise figures on the number of people missing out on benefits, and impossible to pinpoint who and where they are.

Why don't people claim what they are entitled to?

There is no one single reason why people do not claim the benefits that they are entitled to, but a series of inter-related factors that prevent people from claiming. Potential claimants fall into three categories:

- Older people
- Unemployed working age people, including with families, many of whom are first time claimants due to the recession
- Vulnerable adults

Research has shown that there are a number of psychological thresholds that people must go through before claiming, such as acknowledging they are having difficulty making ends meet, an awareness of what benefits exist, a perception that they will be eligible for the benefit and positive feelings about the benefits system.

Other research has highlighted key reasons why older people fail to claim, although the same reasons can apply to people of all ages:

- The complexity of the benefits system
- Difficulty completing official forms
- Misconceptions about entitlement (e.g. that owner occupiers are not eligible for means tested benefits or that only those with extreme levels of disability qualify)
- Frequent changes to benefit rules or titles
- Fear of losing independence
- Reluctance to disclose personal information
- Fear that a claim may adversely affect another benefit
- Unresponsive or inaccessible channels of communication
- Fear of making a fraudulent application.

People living in rural and more affluent areas tend to have a worse take-up rate as do older people and people from ethnic minorities (particularly women).

Much emphasis has been placed on the issue of benefits take-up in recent years following the Government's 1997 manifesto commitment to improve levels of benefits take-up by older people and to tackle pensioner poverty alongside the extension of means tested benefit entitlement. It is means tested benefits which have consistently shown the worst take-up levels, possibly due to some of the reasons outlined above.

The recession has obviously increased the number of working age people with an entitlement as the level of redundancies and reduced income has increased. These may be people new to the benefit system and are resistant to claiming for cultural reasons, or assume that if they have savings they will not be entitled to benefits. There could also be people returning to work after a period of unemployment who may not be aware of their full in-work benefit entitlements.

The impact of increased benefit up-take

An increase in benefit take-up can have a positive impact in several ways. Neil Bateman in his report "*An evaluation of benefit take-up work for older people*" for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough council in 2007 describes three areas of significant impact.

i) On individuals

Improved benefit income has been shown to have a significant impact on the health and well being of individual benefit claimants. National Audit Office research in 2002 showed that older people who had been helped to claim additional benefits spend the extra money on essentials which improve their overall health and well being such as food, clothing and utilities, being able to afford a wider range of goods and services such as decorators and handymen or lump sum expenditure on items like carpets, fridges and mobility scooters.

A study in Wales in 2004 reported that 62% of GPs found patients who had received additional income from welfare advice showed an overall improvement in their health, a reduction of physical pain and decrease in mental health issues. A study about spending of Disability Living Allowance by families with disabled children showed that the extra resources were usually spent on home based resources for the child as well as clothing, children's social activities, basic care and educational services. And among pregnant women, improved benefit income produces babies with better birth weights (a key indicator of future health, disability and child development).

Not to be overlooked are the less tangible gains such as a greater sense of independence and dignity.

ii) On communities

The 2002 National Audit Office report also showed that people receiving additional income from benefits are likely to spend the extra money on local goods and services. One study by the Fraser of Allender Institute ("*The impact of welfare spending on the Glasgow economy*": University of Strathclyde) stated that the provision of welfare rights advice was a cost-effective form of job creation and estimated that for every £10 million of additional benefits generated, an additional 258 jobs were created. Another study concluded that for each pound of extra benefits, there is a multiplier effect on the local economy with spending being multiplied by 1.7 before the money leaves the local economy.

iii) On Local Authorities

The positive impact of benefit take-up has the effect of dampening demand for some local authority services. There are also direct gains such as improved Council Tax collection rates and lower rent arrears.

What are the statutory benefits and who administers them?

There is a wide and complex range of statutory benefits which make up the national welfare benefit scheme, administered by 5 organisations. These are:

- Local Authorities:
 - Housing Benefit
 - Council Tax Benefit
 - Free School Meals
 - Calculation of home care and non-residential social service charges
 - Supporting People (supported housing for vulnerable people)

- Jobcentre Plus (JCP):
 - Employment and Support Allowance
 - Income Support
 - Incapacity Benefit
 - Jobseekers Allowance

- Pension Service (PS):
 - Pension Credit
 - State Retirement Pension

- Disability and Carers Service (D&CS):
 - Disability Living Allowance
 - Attendance Allowance
 - Carers Allowance

- Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC):
 - Working Tax Credit
 - Child Tax Credit
 - Child Trust Fund
 - Child Benefit

What kind of benefit take-up work is most effective?

Local activity and other research shows that the most effective way of reaching people is through face-to-face contact. Marketing campaigns and publicity do not always have a huge impact in getting messages across in a way that encourages them to seek help.

Generally, customers fall into 3 categories:

- i) People who are already in the system or claiming some type of benefit
- ii) Customers who have never made a claim but pro-actively seek help
- iii) Those who have never claimed benefits and who do not proactively seek help.

Once a customer is in the system it is easier to identify and rectify under-claims, but customers who have never claimed and are unknown are very difficult to identify.

The 2007 Sandwell report found that based on research, the most successful take up work (with older people) should not rely on publicity, should include personalised advice and help with claiming such as help with filling in forms, and include liaison with and referrals from other agencies.

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3. BENEFIT TAKE-UP WORK IN TELFORD & WREKIN

By the Council

- Revenues & Benefits

Revenues & Benefits administer Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. The primary role is to administer benefits, rather than to engage in up-take work, although there is a dedicated Welfare Benefit Take-up Officer funded directly from the Revenues & Benefits budget. This post provides assistance to customers referred from any service area, and is responsible for increasing take up not only of Council administered benefits, but also a range of other welfare benefits including Attendance Allowance, Carers Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Pension Credit, Working Tax Credit and Free School Meals.

Since February 2007, Revenues & Benefits have offered in-home assessments so that by March 2009, 55% of customers submitting a Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit application to the Council had their forms completed and claim assessed during a home visit. By March 2009, 3294 home assessments had been booked using this method. During the home visits, officers also provide advice and assistance to customers regarding other benefit entitlements, and where they are confident of an entitlement they will refer the case to the dedicated Welfare Benefit Take-up Officer to progress.

Revenues & Benefits are also responsible for recovering Housing and Council Tax Benefit overpayments and debt recovery for Council Tax, non-domestic rates and sundry debts. A joined up approach is taken to recovery of debts for those that are controlled by Revenues and Benefits in cases where customer is experiencing difficulty paying or financial hardship. However debts managed by other services are not generally included when agreeing repayment plans. Vulnerable customers or those applying for Discretionary Housing Payments receive advice on issues including money advice and budgeting skills and are sign posted to specialist debt advisors. The Revenues Service refers accounts where customers are sent recovery documents directly to the Citizens Advice Bureau to target those most in need with debt advice. This is in addition to the general signposting for debt advice which currently happens.

Overall, during 2006-2009, benefit take up amongst older people was increased by £2.1m, in the 7 months to March 2009, take-up by working age families increased by £109k.

- Social Care Finance

The Social Care Finance team includes 7 staff who provide advice to adults requiring or receiving a social care service. They offer face-to-face advice on DWP benefits during home visits, but as only one of the team is able to provide help with filling in forms, people are mainly sign-posted to the Pension Service, CAB, Age Concern or A4U for this support. The team is not resourced to provide a service to anyone other than those needing or receiving social care services.

The team's target is to achieve benefit maximisation in at least 75% of the cases where potential entitlement to unclaimed benefits is identified. Performance for 2008-09 was 87%. 89% of clients were visited and assessed within the target 10 working days of the case going to funding panel (delays were due to the client wanting a relative or carer to be present).

The team facilitates a number of Welfare Benefit Training Sessions each year, in addition to joint training done with Revenues & Benefits.

- Corporate Contact Centre

The Corporate Contact Centre has delivered a Revenues & Benefits service from July 2008 as phase 1 of the Corporate Contact Centre. Initially the Contact Centre received around £100k telephone calls a year, but there has been a 12% increase in incoming calls to Revenues & Benefits as a result of the economic downturn.

The Corporate Contact Centre is supported by a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which currently covers benefits, council tax, elections and the land & property gazette, but is hoped to extend to bring in other services to inform all back office systems. This system allows information e.g. change of address to be distributed to all subscribing systems.

- First Point

This flagship project was set up in February 2009 to help people during the recession by providing them with a comprehensive, one-stop advice centre for benefit and other services. The centre relocated from Telford Library to Civic Offices on 1st March 2010. In the first month after opening in the new location, around 3,500 customers used First Point advisors, which is an additional 250 visitors to the equivalent services at First Point in the library in March 2009. Revenues & Benefits was the most popular service with 2,355 customers in March 2010.

The range of partners includes Benefits & Council Tax, CAB, A4U (providers of benefit advice to disabled people), Affordable Warmth, Next Steps, Shropshire County Training (partners with JCP to help people into work), the Prince's Trust (to support younger people), Employment Link (back to work support for disabled and people with mental health issues), Family Information Service. New partners have been added recently: Land charges, leisure & theatre bookings, the PCT, registration of births, environmental & highways services and elections.

There is a "Fast Track" service which enables customers to have their benefit claims processed immediately, if they have all of the required information and documentation with them. They are seen by 1 of 2 Benefit Officers who complete the application forms, and process the claims while the customer waits so customers know how much Housing & Council Tax benefit they are entitled to, and give advice about tax and pension credits

etc. and signpost to relevant organisations such as DWP. Customers can choose whether they have the Fast Track service, whether they want to make a further appointment, or make paper applications which take around 19 days to process

Having services joined up in one location, with a common reception, means the Council can be more effective in picking up multi-issues for customers. There are further plans to integrate Travel Link, an ASB hotline and other Council services into First Point.

- Assisting Vulnerable Customers
Particular activity is targeted at reaching and helping vulnerable customers.
 - Older People
Targeted through Linkage agreement for welfare benefit take-up and through specific publicity campaigns
 - Working Age Families
Proactive work with customers of working age many of whom will be first time claimants during their period of economic instability is done through First Point and Benefit Take-up initiatives
 - Vulnerable Adults
Social Care undertakes home visits to vulnerable adults to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect them from financial exploitation. Revenues and Benefits work with vulnerable adults who may have issues of financial exclusion or an inability to manage their own finances to ensure that rent arrears do not accrue putting tenancies in jeopardy.
 - Extreme Financial Difficulties
Customers who apply to Revenues & Benefits for a Discretionary Housing Payment now receive a holistic advice service from a dedicated officer which focuses on budgeting and housing choices.
 - New Housing and Council Tax Benefits Customers through LA Gateway
The in home assessment service ensures that new claims for benefit are processed quicker, more accurately and via a much simpler process.
 - Care Receivers
Social Care undertake a home visit to every single customer requiring a care package to ensure that a full financial assessment is undertaken

Other Council Funded Services

In addition to the Council services, the Authority funds external providers on a grant based system to provide benefit advice on its behalf.

- Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB)
The CAB receives an annual core grant of £200k as part of a three year rolling Service Level Agreement (SLA), which is guaranteed on a 12 monthly basis. Outcomes are reported to the Council every 6 and 12 months. This is an unrestricted sum granted every year which supports

core services i.e. the open door, drop-in service for clients. The agreement does not stipulate specific services, except for some targeted support for ethnic minorities (an officer with minority languages), but is otherwise an open and unrestricted agreement. In 2009, as part of the 'Credit Crunch' package they also received an additional 'one-off' payment of around £76k to fund 2 full time staff at First Point.

- A4U
A4U is a user-led, voluntary, county wide organisation providing advice on welfare benefits, community care, housing and debt to disabled people and people with mental health problems. It receives 2 grants from Telford & Wrekin Council on 3 year agreements:
 - £12.5k from social services to cover the cost of a helpline to support form filling for 2-3 days per week in Telford
 - A £13.5k contribution from what was the Community Services portfolio to enable the delivery of legal advice.
- Employment Link
This service is for adults with mental health concerns, and/or disabilities which supports people in finding work experience and paid employment.
- Community Learning (Next Steps)
This service helps adults who want to improve their skills or want help or advice about applying for jobs

Partnership Initiatives

- Financial Inclusion Partnership
This was set up in 2008 to co-ordinate strategic joint working initiatives between partners during the economic downturn. The aim is to improve access to financial services/products/benefits, provide better budgeting and debt management advice, financial education and awareness. The group includes Revenue & Benefits, Social Care Finance, CAB, JCP, Wrekin Housing Trust and the Fair Share Credit Union and has recently extended membership to include the Children's Trust to pick up family issues. The group has produced a booklet aimed at helping people through the economic climate called Making Ends Meet which has been distributed widely. The partnership was initiated and is co-ordinated by the Financial Inclusion Officer from The Wrekin Housing Trust.
- The Linkage Partnership
This is a partnership between Telford & Wrekin Council's Benefits Service, Social Care Finance Team and the Pension Service. The aim of the partnership is to maximise the income of pension age people within the Borough. Predominantly this is through the promotion of Council Tax Benefit, Pension Credits, Attendance Allowance and Carer's Allowance.
- Wrekin Housing Trust Verification Partnership
Wrekin Housing Trust staff are trained and authorised to accept applications and evidence for Housing Benefits/Council Tax Benefit claims

on behalf of the council. All Wrekin Housing Trust shops around the borough have staff able to do this.

- Joint Promotions

The Council works with a variety of partners in the voluntary sector to ensure that their client groups, many of whom may be vulnerable, receive all their benefit entitlements. Examples are the CAB, Age Concern, MIND, Wrekin Housing Trust, A4U and the Carers Contact Centre.

The Council and partners undertake joint promotional activity such as regular attendance at road shows, community events and community forums to promote benefits like free school meals, council tax discounts, 2nd adult rebate, benefits for older people, assistance with paying Council Tax. Publicity campaigns have included prescription bags, posters, buses, Insight, Trust Talk magazines, trolley tokens.

There is a range of welfare benefits information on the council website including links to partner websites and specific credit crunch packages. A range of welfare benefits information leaflets is available in a variety of languages and as an audio file via the website.

External Organisations

We visited four of the larger organisations involved in benefit take-up work to find out more about how they work.

- Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB)

The CAB provides free, confidential and independent advice to help people resolve their debt, benefits, housing, legal, discrimination, employment, immigration, consumer and other problems and is available to everyone. In Telford & Wrekin, the service has been centralised in Ketley (although there is some outreach in Hadley, Madeley, Woodside, Donnington, Stirchley, Newport and the Equal Centre in Wellington), which provides a full time open-door service, as well as having 2 full-time staff based at First Point in Civic Offices.

There are 9 full-time and 15 part-time staff and 60 volunteers. The Telford CAB also provides accommodation for Welfare Benefit and Debt advisers funded by a Community Legal Services contract managed in partnership with Citizens Advice Shropshire so that people from Telford do not have to travel to Shrewsbury for this service. Resources are maximised so that volunteers deal with initial enquiries and filter those needing more specialist help to refer onto the specialist welfare benefit advisors. In terms of benefit maximisation customers are offered advice, eligibility assessment, help with filling in forms as well as debt and income maximisation advice and other inter-related advice.

The Telford & Wrekin CAB helps around 6,000 clients a year, an increase from around 4,000 over the last 2 years. Debt accounts for about 40% of client problems, welfare benefits about 35%, employment 7-8% and then housing and relationship problems. Often the problems are inter-related

and the workload increases as the benefit system becomes increasing complex, especially around tax credits.

Traditionally clients have tended to come from the lower income range in more deprived wards, with lower levels of literacy and numeracy. Many are lone parents and migrant workers without a friends and family support network. However, the service is now seeing an increased number of people from higher income brackets who have lost income through the recession which has put additional pressure on workloads.

- Pension Service

The Pension Service is part of the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) which is an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It is responsible for State Pension, Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Carers Allowance. It provides customers with pensions, benefits and retirement information to retired people or people coming up to retirement, and this is usually done during home visits.

The Pension Service Local Service has a team of 31 covering Shropshire, Dudley and Wolverhampton with around 8 covering the Shropshire area. Government cuts have meant the team has been reduced in size over recent times, but the team does more work in Telford & Wrekin than in the other areas, attributed to the effectiveness of local partnership arrangements and referral networks.

The service works with the Council and with an extensive network of partners such as the Primary Care Trust, the Senior Citizens' Forum, Wrekin Housing Trust, Age Concern, A4U, Citizens Advice Bureau and tries to focus activity on rural communities and BME groups. There are also quarterly mid-morning broadcasts on Radio Shropshire. Customers are also advised about other support measures such as security, fire alarms, heating/insulation schemes and are referred to the appropriate agency.

- Jobcentre Plus (JCP)

JCP administers Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit and Jobseekers Allowance. JCP has a remit to help and support people into, or back into, work. In terms of benefit maximisation, this includes making sure that customers are claiming the correct benefits entitlement for JCP administered benefits. They refer customers to the CAB for a full benefit assessment for non-JCP benefits.

JCP has a Partnerships Manager who is responsible for developing relationships with partners, to make sure they understand what out of work support and in-work benefits are available. A training session is being held in June 2010 for around 160 delegates of front-line staff from across partner organisations to educate them about in-work benefits.

A significant area of work during the economic downturn has been supporting people who are facing redundancy. The key is to get into the firm before people finish work so they can be advised on entitlements, how to claim and about employment support programmes. If 20 or more people are being made redundant then the employer has to give statutory notification 30-90 days in advance and JCP will work with the company to provide redundancy support and where appropriate bring in contracted support to work with redundant workers prior to them leaving the company. Revenues & Benefits are also brought in to provide housing benefit advice. JCP also picks up on announcements made in the press, even if it is only for 1 or 2 people, or pick up clients who come into the office.

JCP has just launched a new In and Out of Work service. In and out of work means JCP acts as a single point of contact for customers claiming certain benefits who move into and out of employment and then shares the information with HM Revenues and Customs and Local Authority housing benefit teams. This is now operating in Telford & Wrekin.

JCP has just launched a new In and Out of Work service whereby clients can call the JCP phone number to get help with sorting out housing benefits, out of work benefits and tax credits when moving into work with one phone call. This is now being piloted in Telford & Wrekin.

The “JCP of the Future” and the Support Contract initiatives were launched last year and saw a shift to more individualized, flexible and long-term support packages, recognizing the fact that there may be many barriers people need to overcome before they are job-ready. A “Journey to Work” catalogue has been developed for Shropshire which includes information about the support that is available to help people back to work, including healthy life-styles, confidence building and training.

Data sharing across organizations is a national issue. The DWP has just undertaken a review of data sharing across the public sector and a report is due out in summer of 2010. There are also data sharing pilot projects between JCP and Local Authorities in Kent and Leeds. In Telford & Wrekin, JCP has a local agreement with Connexions so that when the Connexions Personal Advisors hold group sessions, they ask clients to sign an agreement so that information can be shared.

- A4U

A4U is a user-led, voluntary, county wide organisation providing advice on welfare benefits, community care, housing and debt to disabled people and people with mental health problems. 1 in 6 people in Telford & Wrekin are classified as disabled, and 1 in 4 have mental health problems at some point in their lives.

There are 14 paid staff (8-9 FTE) and 26 volunteers. This includes 4 case workers, one of whom is a litigator, each specialising in housing, debt, welfare benefits or community care advice. A case worker is based one

day per week at First Point in Civic Offices, although receives no specific funding from the Council for this presence.

In 2008-09, 885 clients were assisted with specialist legal welfare rights cases, and over £848,490 was raised in weekly benefit awards. The volunteers dealt with 1300 enquiries, and helped complete 363 form fills.

The bulk of A4U's funding in 2008-09 came from Community Legal Services and Shropshire Council, along with smaller contributions from projects, the PCT, donations and other sources. Telford & Wrekin Council allocates 2 grants, mentioned previously, totalling £26k.

60% of clients helped are from Telford & Wrekin and 40% from the rest of Shropshire. This was attributed to the concentrated demographic in Telford. The organisation has a user-led ethos, so clients are met by people with a disability so it is easier to establish a rapport. Many referrals are word of mouth. A4U uses "champions" in local communities such as the Red Cross.

A4U receive referrals from CAB, DWP, JCP, Age Concern, WHT, Bromford and other organisations, and refers clients with special needs to specialist providers such as education or self-help providers, or to public law solicitors and social security commissioners.

Other Entitlements, Allowances and Support

In addition to the primary state welfare benefits there are a number of other entitlements, allowances and discounts available both from the council and other agencies including:

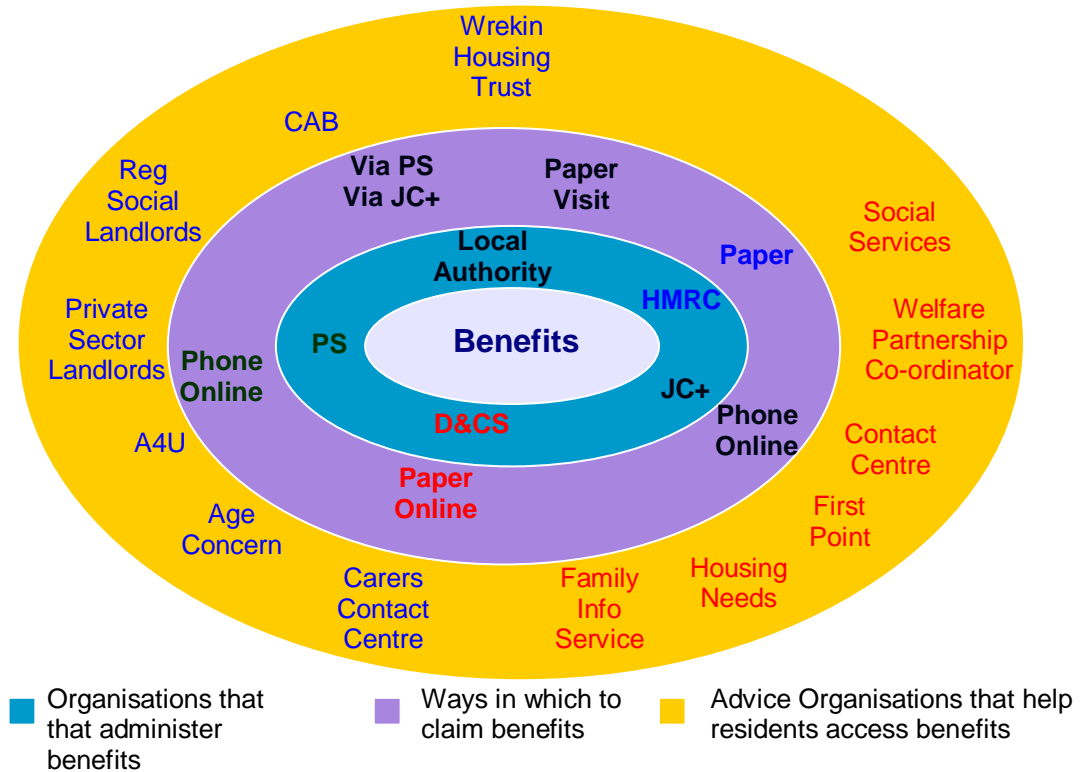
- Blue Badge
- Home Improvement Grants
- Energy Efficiency Funding
- Free School Meals
- Disabled Facilities Grant
- Free/Discounted Leisure Facilities
- Student Grants/Loans
- Education Maintenance Allowance
- Council Tax Discounts/Exemptions
- Free Music Lessons
- Free Prescriptions/Medical Treatments
- Community Care Grants
- Maternity Grants
- Wheels to Work
- Job Grants
- Concessionary Travel

We also surveyed Business Managers across the authority to find out what other services and support, either monetary or in-kind, are available to help to

meet specific needs or improve the quality of life for target groups. These are shown as Appendix 1 of this report.

Summary

The diagram below illustrates the organisations administering benefits, the other advice organisations and the methods by which people can make claims.



4. KEY FINDINGS AND ISSUES

- Data sharing

Data sharing between government departments is an issue that has been raised nationally. DWP has recently undertaken a review of data sharing across the public sector and report is due out in summer 2010. This could be followed by a White Paper and consultation on new arrangements.

Internally, there is a review planned of data sharing across the Council, with the aim of developing a data sharing protocol. There may be opportunities to explore increased benefit/service take-up derived from data sharing, but this clearly has to be carefully considered in the context of data protection legislation and both customer expectation and privacy.

- Identifying key target groups

A clear issue is the difficulty of identifying individuals who may have a benefit entitlement but who are not claiming. People who actively seek help, or are already in the system, are much easier to plug into the whole benefit system – there is a “spin out” effect once a person comes forward to seek advice – but the real problem comes with people who are just not on the “radar” or looking for help. There is particular concern that people who made redundant as a result of the recession, and who may have never used the benefits system before, may not be coming forward to make claims or receive debt and mortgage advice. There could be an assumption by them that if they have savings, or a redundancy pay-out, that they will not be entitled to benefits.

Corporate data is used to try to identify potential areas of under-claim so that, where additional take-up work is possible, it is targeted at the right areas.

- Impact of the recession on workload and performance

The recession has had a big impact on the workload of many organisations with new claimants coming forward. We have already noted that 2,355 of the 3,500 visitors using the First Point service in March 2010 were Revenues & Benefits Customers.

This has put increasing pressure on services which has, in some cases, had an impact on the waiting time for appointments (including form filling), and the number of abandoned calls. As of the end of April 2010, the Telford CAB had been advised by the Community Legal Services Partnership that they were unable to take on any welfare benefits appeals or reviews for the foreseeable future, and that the number of referrals to A4U meant that they were booked up until mid-June.

The Council has introduced more effective performance management and resource planning which has meant that some of the best ever performance has been achieved at a time of escalating workloads:

➤ Revenues & Benefits caseload:

The number of benefit claims in payment has increased by a further 9% since May 2009, an increase of 18% over the last two years. The amount of Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit that we have awarded this year has increased by 19%, to £72.9 million.

Although it was a struggle to keep on top of the increased workload at the start of 2009, by September a combination of overtime and the new staff completing their training (employed with the DWP additional funding) meant that significant inroads were made. In early September, it was taking 6 weeks before to look at incoming assessment work for the first time. By the end of March 2010, this had reduced to just 10 days, and is on track to reach the target of 3 days by early June.

In the first two quarters of 2009-2010, the average number of days to assess a new claim had increased to around 28 days. By the last quarter of the year, this was down to a consistent average of 19 days – which represents the best ever performance on new claims in the Service. The target for new claims was set at 25 days for 2009/10, and the final out-turn figures show this was exceeded by over half a day, out-turning at 24.22 days. The change of circumstances performance shows the number of days taken to assess is down to 7.42 on a target of 8 days.

Across other areas of benefits there have been improvements in the out-turn performance times for Blue Badge applications, Free School Meals (which is now down to just 2.75 days) and Discretionary Housing Payments.

CIPFA Benchmarking data will be available for the service from August 2010 which will enable the Authority to compare our costs and performance against other Local Authorities, but it is anticipated that Telford & Wrekin will for the second year compare very favourably against the national averages.

➤ Revenues & Benefits Corporate Contact Centre caseload:

There has been a 17% increase in the numbers of customers that have been dealt with year on year by the Contact Centre. The number of customers visiting the Revenues & Benefits service has increased by 17.54% between 2007/08 and 2009/10 which equates to an additional 1,120 person hours between 2007/08 and 2009/10, with no increase in staffing.

An increase in the abandoned call rates, resulting from increased customer contacts due to the recession, has been flagged up as an issue for action. The number of calls abandoned increased by 454 between 2008/09 and 2009/10 on an overall increase in calls received of 8,814. The abandonment rate has decreased from 28.59% in 2008/09 to 27.06% in 2009/10. The number of abandoned calls is not the number of customers who were not provided with a service, as

many will have rung back and been dealt with but this an area for ongoing improvement.

- Partnership working

Effective benefit up-take work relies on good cross-partner working and referral networks. We found the formal structures for joint working between key partners in Telford & Wrekin generally to be strong and effective. The Financial Inclusion Partnership co-ordinates cross-partner activity at a strategic level, while the joint working group enables the sharing of information, referral of clients and planning of work at an operational level through a formal partnership agreement.

Each key partner in turn works with a wider network of other organisations and community groups in order to maximise their reach. The Primary Care Trust, the STAY homelessness project, Connexions, Wrekin Housing Trust and other housing associations, Age Concern, health centres, the Carers Contact Centre, the Senior Citizens' Forum, Telford Breatheasy Group, Telford Macular Group, Alzheimers Group, Multiple Sclerosis Society, Parkinsons Society, the National Drug Treatment Agency give a flavour of some of the extended range of partners that are used as channels to various groups.

- Accessibility and customer service

Different organisations offer various ways for people to access advice and benefits. This includes telephone help lines, websites, paper and on-line applications, visits to offices and home visits. DWP is trialling voice recognition technology nationally with the aim of eliminating paperwork and delays. The key is to offer customers a choice to suit their needs. Often, a home visit is the customer's preferred option.

Revenues & Benefits provide an in-home service to 55% of claimants, and this has speeded up the service, eliminated paperwork and gets around issues of privacy or embarrassment about using the benefits office. The Pension Service found it more effective to visit people in their own homes for similar reasons – all the paperwork is to hand, and it is more convenient and private for customers. The CAB and A4U also offer a limited number of home visit service, but this is naturally restricted by resources and health and safety regulations.

First Point is located in the town centre to be accessible to residents across the borough. It is open Monday-Friday 8.30am-6.00pm and until 8.00pm on Thursday, and 9.00am-1.00pm on Saturday. The CAB found that the number of customers rose following the centralisation of services in Ketley; communication links are good, and moreover the office is open full time. Opening hours were found to be more important to users than the location of the service.

- Marketing - targeting hard to reach groups

Reaching the client group is problematic when it is difficult to identify exactly where and who they are, although claim patterns and corporate

data is used to identify potential pockets of under-claim, and existing claimants who may have become eligible for additional benefit as legislation changes.

The officers we interviewed felt that in their experience, by far the most effective way to raise awareness and improve up-take of benefits is through face-to-face contact. There remains the problem of reaching people who do not take part in community events where they are likely to hear about benefits, or to read publicity material. In an ideal world, the way to reach them would be by a door-knocking exercise, but clearly resources preclude this. The next best solution is for officers and partners to maximise contact with the public through community groups, such as Community Matters meetings, community centres, mother & toddler groups etc. and we have seen earlier that partners use a wide range of channels to achieve this but there is more that could be done, resources permitting.

Nonetheless, publicity is important. There are national awareness raising campaigns – the CAB and JCP launched national campaigns last year – and there have been a number of joint local campaigns described earlier in this report. The Customer Services team is now working with Corporate Communications on the development of a marketing strategy which may include advertising in Council and partner publications and a press and radio campaign. This will consider how best to target the hard to reach groups.

The out-of-hours service at First Point in particular needs to be promoted so the public have a clear message that the Council is not a “9 to 5” organisation, and is open for business at other times.

- Funding

Resources are clearly an issue with some organisations saying that they struggle to meet demand in the current climate. JCP was an exception and had recruited about 50% extra staff over the last year.

The Authority is facing budget cuts at a time when demand for services has risen as a result both of the recession, and as a result of the improvements the Council has made to its customer services with First Point and the Corporate Contact Centre. Even when the recession eases up, the base case load is likely to be higher because the new ways of working have improved the identification of customer needs and customer access to services.

The CAB was concerned about the impact that a reduction of funding could have. The increased workload has already put such pressure on staff that some clients are waiting longer than desired for help, and this is a matter of concern. The core funding also helps lever in additional funding, so has a multiplier effect, and a loss could have wider implications for service users.

From 2003-08, the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA2) funded a Welfare Advice Co-ordinator, shared jointly with partners. Benefit maximisation targets were set for Attendance Allowance, Pension Credits, Carers Allowance and Council Tax. The post had a real impact and all targets were exceeded, with the exception of Council Tax which achieved 60% of target. The funding ran out in 2008 and there has been no further finance available since then.

It is likely that the increased demand will have to be met by more effective performance management, resource planning and partnership working. The Corporate Contact Centre has already undertaken a number of LEAN reviews that have streamlined processes and brought about considerable performance improvements, and the aim is that further improvements will be delivered through further LEAN reviews that will further streamline processes and increase individual productivity.

- The allocation of Council funding
The Council allocates funding on a grant based system and service level agreements to external organisations to provide welfare benefit advice, and there is a lack of transparency and equity about how the funding is awarded. Some local authorities, such as Birmingham, have moved away from a grant based system to a more commissioning structure, and a review of how the Council works with the voluntary sector and current funding processes underway at Telford & Wrekin.
- Information sharing and knowledge of front-line staff
In addition to the statutory benefits, there is a wide range of other support schemes that people could be entitled to. Front-line staff are generally aware of statutory benefits, but understandably, given the number, may not always be aware of other schemes to be able to advise customers about them. A survey of Business Unit Managers across the Council identified a range of support programmes of which internal and partner staff may not be aware. This is attached as Appendix 1 of this report.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our reason for undertaking this review was that we were concerned that there are residents, especially those suffering as a result of the recession, may not be aware of, or claiming, the benefits that they are entitled to. One of the big issues is not knowing exactly who and where those people might be. We wanted to find out whether more could be done to increase the level of awareness about benefits, particularly for hard-to-reach groups, to improve the uptake of benefits and the customer experience.

Members have been reassured that the Council and its partners are working very hard together to address this issue, particularly at a time of increased pressure on workloads and within limited budgets. The First Point initiative has been a success in helping to improve access, ease and speed of benefit services for local people. We would like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of the organisations we met in the work they do to support the residents of Telford & Wrekin.

However, there are some recommendations that the members wish to make which we hope will enhance this work. We are fully conscious of the budget pressures facing the Council, and the recommendations aim to maximise existing resources rather than requiring additional expenditure.

There is a huge range of benefits and schemes available, and understandably, customers and front line staff may not be aware of all of these. There is a need to educate front-line staff and keep them up to date with information and legislation relating to statutory benefits, and other non-statutory schemes so that they can advise customers about these. There is currently no one single document that clearly lays these out, either for staff, or for customers.

Recommendation 1

To develop and maintain a catalogue of all statutory and non-statutory benefits and help available for local people offered by public sector organisations, and including schemes operated through the private sector (e.g. trade-in discounts for energy efficient boilers). This should be incorporated into training for all front-line staff, Member training and available to the public in printed and electronic formats. This should build on the survey undertaken as part of this review.

Recommendation 2

To evaluate the Jobcentre Plus training event on 17th June 2010, and to consider this as a model for future events and, if required, allocate a reasonable amount from the corporate training budget for this.

The best way of reaching potential customers is through face-to-face activity rather than publicity. There are already some established links into the community through a range of partners, but the Council could maximise the level of front-line staff activity directly in the community to reach as many people as possible.

Recommendation 3

To develop an awareness raising programme so that officers attend community events to maximise face-to-face contact with customers, prioritising hard-to-reach communities. This should involve officers working in the benefit-related services, but also look to maximise the front-line resources of staff across the Council and partners.

Recommendation 4

Targeted, face-to-face work is a very effective way of promoting and helping people to access Council services. Face-to-face work in the community should be considered across priority areas as a mechanism for delivery of the Council's priorities.

Data sharing would improve the level of referrals and eliminate duplication of work for both customers and officers, but is restricted by data protection legislation. This has been identified as an issue at national level, and within the Council.

Recommendation 5

To review the findings of the DWP report on data sharing in the public sector due out in summer of 2010, and to take part in any ensuing consultation.

Recommendation 6

Identify service areas where data sharing could be used to improve the promotion and up-take of benefits, and to work with Information Governance to put in place data sharing agreements, in advance of the current Council-wide data sharing review.

The Council currently allocates funding to voluntary sector partners to provide benefit advice on its behalf. We were concerned about a lack of transparency and equity in the way this is allocated, and that funding allocations should be made in line with the Council's priorities.

Recommendation 7

To review the process for allocating funding to voluntary sector organisations to deliver benefit advice on the Council's behalf, including how the Council can move from distributing grants for service delivery towards a commissioning system. This should involve identifying and specifying the services needed in line with Council priorities, and operating an open tender process with robust contract management arrangements to ensure the Council receives best value for money through a transparent process.

As part of this, there should be an initial assessment of whether the Council would get best value from funding in-house welfare benefit advisors, or from commissioning this service externally. Whichever option is agreed, activity should focus on proactive targeting of hard-to-reach groups and benefit checks to ensure people are claiming the correct entitlement.

First Point has been very successful in bringing partners (internal and external) together to offer a comprehensive service to customers. There are plans to migrate staff from other Council service areas to First Point to further improve public access to the integrated Council services. As the Putting People First agenda with the shift towards individualised care packages comes on stream, we would like to see adult social care become an integrated part of the offering.

Recommendation 8

To integrate social care for older people into the First Point service so that older people can access co-ordinated services around the Putting People First agenda.

6. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are summarised in the table below. We have assigned a priority level to each of the recommendations, and given an indication of the cost.

It is not possible to provide detailed costings for the recommendations within this report without a considerable amount of additional work being undertaken by both scrutiny and finance officers. However, the recommendations have been placed into one of three categories as follows:-

- Low cost indicates that the recommendation could be funded from within existing resources, although not necessarily in the current year.
- Medium cost indicates that the recommendation is anticipated to cost up to £10,000 which is not currently budgeted.
- High cost indicates that the recommendation is expected to cost more than £10,000 which is not currently budgeted.

Recommendation	Indication of cost	One-off/on-going
<p><u>Recommendation 1</u> To develop and maintain a catalogue of all statutory and non-statutory benefits and help available for local people offered by public sector organisations, and including schemes operated through the private sector (e.g. trade-in discounts for energy efficient boilers). This should be incorporated into training for all front-line staff, Member training and available to the public in printed and electronic formats. This should build on the survey undertaken as part of this review.</p>	<p>Medium for development and production.</p> <p>Low for on-going maintenance</p>	<p>One-off</p> <p>On-going</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 2</u> To evaluate the Jobcentre Plus training event on 17th June 2010, and to consider this as a model for future events and, if required, allocate a reasonable amount from the corporate training budget for this.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>One-off or on-going depending on what is required.</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 3</u> To develop an awareness raising programme so that officers attend community events to maximise face-to-face contact with customers, prioritising hard-to-reach communities. This should involve officers working in the benefit-related services, but also look to maximise the front-line resources of staff across the Council and partners.</p>	<p>Low</p>	

<p><u>Recommendation 4</u> Targeted, face-to-face work is a very effective way of promoting and helping people to access Council services. Face-to-face work in the community should be considered across all priority areas as a mechanism for promoting services and identifying customer views to support delivery of the Council's priorities.</p>	<p>Medium for training or awareness sessions</p> <p>Low for on-going work</p>	<p>One-off</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 5</u> To review the findings of the DWP report on data sharing in the public sector due out in summer of 2010, and to take part in any ensuing consultation.</p>	<p>Low</p>	
<p><u>Recommendation 6</u> Identify service areas where data sharing could be used to improve the promotion and up-take of benefits, and to work with Information Governance to put in place data sharing agreements, in advance of the current Council-wide data sharing review.</p>	<p>Low</p>	
<p><u>Recommendation 7</u> To review the process for allocating funding to voluntary sector organisations to deliver benefit advice on the Council's behalf, including how the Council can move from distributing grants for service delivery towards a commissioning system. This should involve identifying and specifying the services needed in line with Council priorities, and operating an open tender process with robust contract management arrangements to ensure the Council receives best value for money through a transparent process. As part of this, there should be an initial assessment of whether the Council would get best value from funding in-house welfare benefit advisors, or from commissioning this service externally. Whichever option is agreed, activity should focus on proactive targeting of hard-to-reach groups and benefit checks to ensure people are claiming the correct entitlement.</p>	<p>Low</p>	
<p><u>Recommendation 8</u> To integrate social care for older people into the First Point service so that older people can</p>	<p>Low</p>	

access co-ordinated services around the Putting People First agenda.		
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all those listed below who have contributed their time to participate in this review, and have shared information and views with us.

Jacqui Seymour	Cabinet Member
Paul Clifford	Corporate Director
Angie Astley	Head of Customer Service and Business Transformation
Lee Higgins	Benefits Manager, Revenues & Benefits
Jan Evans	Assessment Team Manager, Adult Social Care Finance
Andrew Meredith	Customer Services Manager
Martyn Clarke	Partner/Customer Liaison Manager, Pension Service
Lyn Brayne	Service Director, Telford & Wrekin CAB
Kairen Francis	Partnerships Manager - Marches District, Jobcentre Plus
Marion Youens	A4U

We would also like to thank all Service Delivery Managers who took part in the services survey.

Appendix 1

Results of Service Delivery Managers Survey

The name of benefit	Details of what is provided	Eligibility criteria	The providing organisation (if not the Council)	How the benefit is promoted and by whom - please include ALL methods of formal and informal communication	Contact details of the provider
Free home monitoring software to every family with a child in Telford & Wrekin	The software is provided via a school code and allows downloading of Cyber Sentinel software free of charge (normally retails at 50-00)	Every family with a child in Telford & Wrekin		Company- Forensic Software (Product Cyber Sentinel)	Richard Lawson ICT for Learning Manager Tel.380801
Health Through Warmth Scheme	Co-ordination of insulation & heating measures and grants & donations for residents (owner occupiers and private tenants) with cold and damp related illnesses. A crisis fund covers 50% of the cost to financially vulnerable people who are not eligible for grants (any tenure). Also provide energy advice, access benefit checks and referral to other schemes.	Suffering with a cold and damp related illness such as: respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular illness, diabetes, mental health, terminal illnesses.	This is a partnership scheme with Npower, PCT and Telford & Wrekin Council	It is promoted through training key workers and any department or agencies that have contact with vulnerable clients who become referrers to the scheme. Also promoted through PR and website. Exhibitions at various outlets, presentations to various groups such as Paul Brown building at PRH, over 50's groups. This is carried out by the Affordable Warmth Team.	Affordable Warmth Team: 01952 381864 or 01952 381856

Affordable Warmth Advice	An indepth advice service to those who are struggling paying their fuel bills. The affordable warmth co-ordinator would advice the resident either over the phone, at FirstPoint or at a home visit how they can reduce their fuel bills through energy efficiency advice, looking at their fuel bills and if they are on the best fuel tariff and if not helping them to change tariff, accessing any relevant grants to help towards insulation and heating measures, referring to any other relevant grants, schemes and services that is relevant for the resident.	Any resident that is struggling to pay their fuel bills or suffering from fuel poverty.		At Firstpoint Centre. Also a randomly selected mailshot to residents who receive income related benefit (this is an additional benefit to collecting data for the National Indicator 187), referral from other services. This is carried out by the affordable warmth team.	Affordable warmth co-ordinator. 01952 381866 or at First Point: 388865
Disabled Facilities Grants	Mandatory grant of up to £30k to provide facilities in the home of a disabled person	Permanent and substantial disability Lives in the Borough as main residence Means tested Adaptations to meet		Details on website Leaflet available	Telford & Wrekin Council's Home Improvement Agency. Tel: 01952 381855. Web: www.telford.gov.uk/hia

		TWC policy			
Home Repairs and Improvements	Range of grants and affordable loans to help low income homeowners to bring their home up to a decent standard	On benefits or a low income Home needs repairs Equity required for some loan products		Adverts on buses, in local press and on local radio Press releases Details on website, inc video in range of languages Launch events Presentations to local groups	Telford & Wrekin Council's Home Improvement Agency. Tel: 01952 381855. Web: www.telford.gov.uk/hia
Housing Options Advice	Helping older people to decide whether to stay at home, or move on to more suitable accommodation	Upon request		Press releases / radio interview	Telford & Wrekin Council's Home Improvement Agency. Tel: 01952 381855. Web: www.telford.gov.uk/hia
Handyperson Service (HOMEfix)	Handyperson service to carry out small repair jobs in the home of older people	Over 60 Costs £15 for 1 st hour, then £5 per hour (max 4 hours)		Press releases / Local press Website Presentations to local groups Newport Town Guide	Telford & Wrekin Council's Home Improvement Agency. Tel: 01952 381855. Web: www.telford.gov.uk/hia
Home Safety Check Service (HOMEsafe)	Free home safety check for people over 60, including security, fire safety, falls prevention, home maintenance and energy efficiency. Includes free fitting of smoke alarms, window locks, door chains, etc..	Over 60 Visit upon request		Press releases Website Presentations to local groups Networking with stakeholders	Telford & Wrekin Council's Home Improvement Agency. Tel: 01952 381855. Web: www.telford.gov.uk/hia

Gardeners List	List of approved gardeners			Local press Networking with stakeholder Via Age Concern	Telford & Wrekin Council's Home Improvement Agency. Tel: 01952 381855. Web: www.telford.gov.uk/hia
Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit	<p>Housing Benefit is a rebate designed to help people who have a low income meet the cost of any rent they may have to pay.</p> <p>Council Tax is calculated in a similar way and offers a rebate for people on low income against their Council Tax charge.</p>	Anyone who feels that their personal circumstances are such that they may be entitled to help should make a claim for benefit. This includes people receiving state benefits such as Income Support, Employment Support Allowance, Working/Child Tax Credits or Pension Credits and also people who are working, but on a low wage, currently out of work, or self employed and only making a low profit.		<p>Housing and Council Tax Benefit can be claimed by completing an application form which must be supported with documents to verify your details, or calling to arrange a home visit from one of our mobile working team who in most cases can assess your claim in your home without the need to complete a form.</p> <p>Customers can also check whether they may be entitled to benefit themselves by using our online calculator on our website.</p>	Lee Higgins Benefits Manager Tel. 383835
Council Tax rebate	A Council Tax rebate of up to 25%	If you have others adults living in your household other than your partner, who themselves are on a low income. This will most likely apply to single adults with either a resident parent or an		Housing and Council Tax Benefit can be claimed by completing an application form which must be supported with documents to verify your details, or calling to arrange a home visit from one of our mobile working team who in most cases can assess your claim in your home	Lee Higgins Benefits Manager Tel. 383835

		adult son or daughter living in the property. This benefit is called Second Adult rebate.		without the need to complete a form. Customers can also check whether they may be entitled to benefit themselves by using our online calculator on our website.	
Free School Meals	Your child may be entitled to receive free school meals	If you have a child aged between 4 years and 8 months and 19 years old, who is attending a school or college in the Telford & Wrekin area, and you are in receipt of: Income Support or Income based Jobseekers Allowance, or Employment & Support Allowance (Income Related), or The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit, or The Maximum Child Tax Credits, and have an annual taxable income of less than £16,040 and if in work, do not work more than 16 hours per week.		For further information or to request an application form, customers should call our free school meals helpline on 01952 383983 or speak to the administrator at their child's school. Forms can also be downloaded from our website.	Lee Higgins Benefits Manager Tel. 383835

		Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999			
Blue Badge (Disabled Parking Badge)	The blue badge scheme provides a national arrangement of parking concessions for people with severe walking difficulties who travel either as drivers or passengers. It allows badge holders to park close to their destination, but the national concessions apply only to on-street parking.	<p>The blue badge scheme provides a national arrangement of parking concessions for people with severe walking difficulties who travel either as drivers or passengers. The scheme applies to registered blind people, and people with very severe upper limb disabilities who regularly drive a vehicle but cannot turn a steering wheel by hand. You can get one if:</p> <p>You receive the higher rate of the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance.</p> <p>You receive War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement.</p>		You can obtain an application form by telephoning us on 01952 383838, or download a copy of the form from our website	Lee Higgins Benefits Manager Tel. 383835

		<p>You use a motor vehicle supplied for disabled people by a government health department.</p> <p>You are registered blind.</p> <p>You have a severe disability in both upper limbs, regularly drive a motor vehicle but cannot turn the steering wheel of a motor vehicle by hand even if that wheel is fitted with a turning knob.</p> <p>You have a permanent and substantial disability which means you are unable to walk or have considerable difficulty in walking. In this case you may be asked to answer a series of questions to help the local authority determine whether you are eligible for a badge. People with a psychological disorder will not normally qualify unless their impairment causes very</p>			
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		considerable, and not intermittent, difficulty in walking.			
Wider Family Learning	This funding stream is targeted at engaging both parents and children in learning together, to help the parents to learn how support their child's learning more effectively.	In partnership with schools to target families in need.	Learning & Skills Council (LSC)		Richard Probert Lifelong Learning Manager Lifelong Learning Telford & Wrekin Council Environment & Regeneration Civic Offices PO Box 59 Telford TF3 4WZ Telephone: 01952 382880
Family Language, Literacy and Numeracy	Supporting parents with their literacy and numeracy skills and in most cases leads to the parents gaining a formal qualification in English and/or Maths	Targeted at families in need, and is delivered in partnership with the schools in deprived areas.	Learning & Skills Council (LSC)		Richard Probert Lifelong Learning Manager Lifelong Learning Telford & Wrekin Council Environment & Regeneration Civic Offices PO Box 59 Telford TF3 4WZ Telephone: 01952 382880
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	Supporting third-sector organisations to build their capacity to deliver learning opportunities to the community and		Learning & Skills Council (LSC)		Richard Probert Lifelong Learning Manager Lifelong Learning Telford & Wrekin Council Environment & Regeneration

	concentrate some of this funding on developing skills for jobs (CV workshops and interview preparation for example)				Civic Offices PO Box 59 Telford TF3 4WZ Telephone: 01952 382880
Employment Link: Care Leavers Grant	Grant for Care Leavers to help them set up home	Care Leavers to help them set up home	Employment Link Adults Community and Well-being		Peter Fletcher Corporate Parenting Manager
Employment Link: Maximise Individual / household income	A bespoke one to one service which takes on a holistic approach to the person's current circumstances.	Individuals apply to the service who have a Physical or Learning Disabilities, Mental Health concerns, Acquired Brain Injury, Substance Misuse, Autism / Aspergers Can be out of work or in work.	Employment Link Adults Community and Well-being	Word of mouth Job Fairs Promotional talks to interested parties. Information Leaflets. First Point. Jobcentre Plus	Employment Link Artisan unit8 Madeley, Workshops Madeley, Telford TF7 5EF Tel; 01952 381501/3 Fax; 01952 381510 david.caird@telford.gov.uk
Employment Link: During profile establish a working partnership encouraging the persons motivation towards employment	Vocational profile	Individuals apply to the service who have a Physical or Learning Disabilities, Mental Health concerns, Acquired Brain Injury, Substance Misuse, Autism / Aspergers Can be out of work or in work.	Employment Link Adults Community and Well-being	Word of mouth Job Fairs Promotional talks to interested parties. Information Leaflets. First Point. Jobcentre Plus	Employment Link Artisan unit8 Madeley, Workshops Madeley, Telford TF7 5EF Tel; 01952 381501/3 Fax; 01952 381510 david.caird@telford.gov.uk
Employment Link: Consideration / action towards; debt, housing / homelessness needs,	In-work calculations	Individuals apply to the service who have a Physical or Learning Disabilities, Mental		Word of mouth Job Fairs Promotional talks to interested parties. Information Leaflets.	Employment Link Artisan unit8 Madeley, Workshops Madeley, Telford TF7 5EF

child care, factual information on wage v benefits		Health concerns, Acquired Brain Injury, Substance Misuse, Autism / Aspergers Can be out of work or in work.		First Point. Jobcentre Plus	Tel; 01952 381501/3 Fax; 01952 381510 david.caird@telford.gov.uk
Employment Link: For the person to acknowledge their achievements and skills which enhances self recognition	CV	Individuals apply to the service who have a Physical or Learning Disabilities, Mental Health concerns, Acquired Brain Injury, Substance Misuse, Autism / Aspergers Can be out of work or in work.	Employment Link Adults Community and Well-being	Word of mouth Job Fairs Promotional talks to interested parties. Information Leaflets. First Point. Jobcentre Plus	Employment Link Artisan unit8 Madeley, Workshops Madeley, Telford TF7 5EF Tel; 01952 381501/3 Fax; 01952 381510 david.caird@telford.gov.uk
Employment Link: Enlightening the person to what could be achieved	Career AG	Individuals apply to the service who have a Physical or Learning Disabilities, Mental Health concerns, Acquired Brain Injury, Substance Misuse, Autism / Aspergers Can be out of work or in work.	Employment Link Adults Community and Well-being	Word of mouth Job Fairs Promotional talks to interested parties. Information Leaflets. First Point. Jobcentre Plus	Employment Link Artisan unit8 Madeley, Workshops Madeley, Telford TF7 5EF Tel; 01952 381501/3 Fax; 01952 381510 david.caird@telford.gov.uk
Employment Link: Assistance in applying for free bus pass to gain greater independence in the community	Mobility training	Individuals apply to the service who have a Physical or Learning Disabilities, Mental Health concerns, Acquired Brain Injury, Substance Misuse, Autism / Aspergers Can be out of work or in work.	Employment Link Adults Community and Well-being	Word of mouth Job Fairs Promotional talks to interested parties. Information Leaflets. First Point. Jobcentre Plus	Employment Link Artisan unit8 Madeley, Workshops Madeley, Telford TF7 5EF Tel; 01952 381501/3 Fax; 01952 381510 david.caird@telford.gov.uk

Employment Link: Moral support during interview negotiated with the employer. Job coaching for the client to learn the job along side the worker to ensure successful induction. Establish alternative ways of communicating tasks	Support at interview Job coaching	Individuals apply to the service who have a Physical or Learning Disabilities, Mental Health concerns, Acquired Brain Injury, Substance Misuse, Autism / Aspergers Can be out of work or in work.	Employment Link Adults Community and Well-being	Word of mouth Job Fairs Promotional talks to interested parties. Information Leaflets. First Point. Jobcentre Plus	Employment Link Artisan unit8 Madeley, Workshops Madeley, Telford TF7 5EF Tel; 01952 381501/3 Fax; 01952 381510 david.caird@telford.gov.uk
Employment Link: Confidential discussions re persons diagnosis, advice on access to work, aids & adaptations Moral support during medical reviews, disciplinary, sickness absence reviews	Negotiation & working with Employers Representation & support during official appointments	Individuals apply to the service who have a Physical or Learning Disabilities, Mental Health concerns, Acquired Brain Injury, Substance Misuse, Autism / Aspergers Can be out of work or in work.	Employment Link Adults Community and Well-being	Word of mouth Job Fairs Promotional talks to interested parties. Information Leaflets. First Point. Jobcentre Plus	Employment Link Artisan unit8 Madeley, Workshops Madeley, Telford TF7 5EF Tel; 01952 381501/3 Fax; 01952 381510 david.caird@telford.gov.uk
Employment Link: Allows the person to fully understand financial implications avoiding myths from other sources	Experience & trained staff to assist apply for CT. HB. TC. ESA. DLA. AA. IS. PC. BWB. DF.	Individuals apply to the service who have a Physical or Learning Disabilities, Mental Health concerns, Acquired Brain Injury, Substance Misuse, Autism / Aspergers Can be out of work or in work.	Employment Link Adults Community and Well-being	Word of mouth Job Fairs Promotional talks to interested parties. Information Leaflets. First Point. Jobcentre Plus	Employment Link Artisan unit8 Madeley, Workshops Madeley, Telford TF7 5EF Tel; 01952 381501/3 Fax; 01952 381510 david.caird@telford.gov.uk
Social Inclusion –	Individual Person-	Referrals are accepted		By social workers completing	Prevention and Rehabilitation

<p>Prevention and Rehabilitation</p>	<p>centred assessments completed by appropriately qualified and experience practitioners.</p> <p>Short-term intervention, based upon the needs of the individual service user and amount of support needed to accomplish goals.</p> <p>Listening to and acknowledging service users, families and carers' experiences, beliefs, concerns. Acting upon or providing advice about acting upon concerns.</p> <p>Introducing strategies to develop and maintain independence; reduce reliance upon other people and/or services and, where appropriate, minimise the need for/size of</p>	<p>through Physical Disabilities/Sensory Impairment Social Work Team, Older People's Social Work Team, Joint Community Learning Disability Team and Social Work Access Team.</p>		<p>community care assessments and reviews</p> <p>By word of mouth from service users to friends/family/acquaintances</p>	<p>Team, Social Inclusion, off Barker Court, Station Road, Madeley, TF7 5AL. Telephone – 01952 381555 Fax – 01952 381556 E-mail – frances.whyte@telford.gov.uk</p>
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	<p>care packages.</p> <p>Advice, guidance and support to access community activities/groups, i.e. Walking for Health,</p>				
First Steps	<p>Targeted at giving people their 'first steps' back in to learning, and is structured to offer people a route from low level learning through to accredited qualifications up to level 2. It integrates with other provision offered by local providers e.g. TCAT, and is designed so that they can progress from First Step courses directly onto the colleges own courses</p>		<p>Learning & Skills Council (LSC</p>		<p>Richard Probert Lifelong Learning Manager Lifelong Learning Telford & Wrekin Council Environment & Regeneration Civic Offices PO Box 59 Telford TF3 4WZ Telephone: 01952 382880</p>
Personal Community Development Learning	<p>Designed to support learning for its 'own intrinsic value' and does not have to be targeted at skills for jobs. This money is used to support community</p>		<p>Learning & Skills Council (LSC</p>		<p>Richard Probert Lifelong Learning Manager Lifelong Learning Telford & Wrekin Council Environment & Regeneration Civic Offices PO Box 59 Telford</p>

	engagement and community cohesion, as well as supporting older people to stay active in their retirement and develop skills to promote their wellbeing e.g. learning to use email or do shopping online (both valuable for those with limited mobility).				TF3 4WZ Telephone: 01952 382880
Music Lessons in Schools	Music lessons are provided for school children, in most Telford & Wrekin Schools during school hours	All children are eligible at a cost of £70.00 per term for 10 lessons, however if the child is in receipt of Free School Meals then the lessons are free or if the parents are in receipt of WTC then there is a 25% reduction.		Usually via schools, or music teachers carrying out demos in schools, or word of mouth between pupils, also on the Council website with a link	Telford & Wrekin Music – 01952 380981 for any further information
Flexi – Student Bus travel	A subsidised bus ticket that will enable a student to travel on local authority college services and at any time on ARRIVA services seven days a week during term time	Student to be over 16 and under 19 years of age before 1 st September in the academic year		Promoted at all colleges and at schools with a 6 th form via leaflets, roadshows etc Also on website, information at Travelink and via posters	Contact 01952 384621
Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme	This allows free travel on local bus services throughout England	Bus card for people aged 60 years and over or for those who are in one or		Promoted via website, leaflets, posters, at libraries, roadshows, at Travelink	Contact 01952 200 005

	<p>between 9.00 a.m and 11.00 pm Mondays to Fridays and at anytime on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays</p>	<p>more of the following categories; Registered blind or partially sighted, having either total or a high degree of visual loss Profoundly or severely deaf and/or without speech Someone who has a disability or injury which has substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to walk Someone who does not have arms or has long term loss of the use of both arms Someone who has a learning disability, that is, a state of arrested or incomplete development of mind, which includes significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning Someone who has been or refused a driving licence on certain medical grounds</p>			
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