

**Private Tenant Forum**  
**15<sup>TH</sup> June 2011**  
**Room 3 2pm Norfolk House**

<b>1.</b>	<b>Minutes of last meeting</b>
	The minutes of the last meeting held on 23rd March 2011 were read through and agreed.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Incapacity Benefit /Sickness Benefit migration to ESA</b>
	<p>The migration of all existing customers in receipt of Incapacity Benefit or Income Support ( paid on the grounds of sickness or disability) to Employment Support Allowance or Jobseekers Allowance will take place over the next 3 years.</p> <p>The Job Centre have now begun contacting recipients by phone and in writing to offer advice on what action they need to take, and what to expect from the changes. The contact will be at least 2 weeks in advance.</p> <p>Burnley and Aberdeen have piloted the first migration cases. The results show that 40% of cases have been transferred to Job Seekers Allowance (JSA).</p> <p>All existing claimants are entitled to some transitional protection and the new levels of benefit will be brought in gradually.</p> <p>If the Department for Works and Pensions determine the claimant is capable of work their existing claim will end and the customer must reapply for Job Seekers Allowance, or appeal against the decision with the Department for Works and Pensions.</p> <p>As yet there are no details or percentage results from successful or unsuccessful appeals against the decision not to award ESA</p> <p><b>Landlord/tenant experience of the migration;</b>  Landlords have reported their tenants had not been advised in writing in advance of the migration date.</p> <p>Claimants are asked to perform a variety of actions by the DWP to demonstrate their capabilities and to assess the type of work they can undertake.  These include;  Ability to put something in top pocket.  Remembering 5 words.</p>

	<p>Landlords Changes UK, dealing with tenants with alcohol and drug related issues, advised he had formed useful links with the Recovery Champion at the Job Centre Plus.</p>
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>LHA changes 2011 – 2013 update</b></p>
	<p><b>Update - Room restriction for single claimants under 35 Years</b></p> <p>Landlords expressed concern at the new regulation to restrict LHA to the shared room rate for single tenants under 35 years old. Landlords have reported they are no longer offering 1 bedroom flats to single occupants less than 35 years of age. This is in advance of the change start date in January 2012.</p> <p>There are currently 1633 cases in payment at the 1 bed self contained rate for tenants aged under 35 years.</p> <p>There will be two exemptions for the new age group: homeless people who have slept rough or who are at risk of sleeping rough; and ex-offenders who could pose a risk of serious harm to the public</p> <p>Transitional protection will be available for exiting tenants to allow them time to adjust to the changes.</p> <p>In practice, this means that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• single claimants under age 35 making new claims to HB on or after 1 January 2012 will be entitled to the shared accommodation rate rather than the one-bedroom self-contained rate.</li> <li>• existing claimants at that date who are receiving 9 months transitional protection, following the April 2011 LHA changes, will move to the shared accommodation rate at the same time as their transitional protection ceases.</li> <li>• existing claimants not receiving transitional protection, i.e. those whose claims are made on or after 1 April 2011 but before 1 January 2012, will move to the shared accommodation rate on the anniversary date of their claim</li> </ul> <p>Please note that tenants who have claimed benefit for the same property continually from a date before the introduction of Local Housing Allowance (i.e pre April 2008) will also experience a change in their Housing Benefit at the end of their annual review. The new rent levels will be provided by the valuation service and will depend on each individual property.</p>

4.	<p><b>System and General changes</b></p>
	<p><b>Gandlake</b> An introduction and early preview of examples of the new Benefit Service notification letters.</p> <p>The existing benefit notification letters will continue to be sent to Landlords and claimant as we are obliged to advise in full for each benefit period including in-depth details of the benefit calculation.</p> <p>Gandlake summarises the benefit calculation or overpayments into an easy to understand version.</p> <p><b>Self Serve</b></p> <p>Birmingham Benefit Service will shortly be introducing a new self serve programme allowing tenants to apply for Housing and Council Tax benefit, including Local Housing Allowance applications, online. The facility will be accessed through the Birmingham City Council website.</p> <p>A presentation was made to Landlords and included a look at the London Borough of Sutton's Self-Serve programme situated on their Website to give an idea of how the new functions will appear.</p> <p>The new system will be available shortly following extensive testing to ensure it is robust enough to cope with the number of applicants. It is anticipated the new service will be available via the main <a href="http://www.birmingham.gov.uk">www.birmingham.gov.uk</a> website in July or August.</p> <p>Initially the programme to apply on line will be for new benefit claims only, however there are plans to introduce a facility for tenants to report changes of circumstances.</p>
5	<p><b>Private Tenant (HB and LHA update)</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of private tenancy cases currently stands at 32525. This is a 10.46% increase compared to April 2010.</li> <li>• of these cases are LHA claims, which equates to 76% of the workload.</li> <li>• There are currently 25375 LHA claims of which 21332 (84 per cent) are paid directly to the claimant. The remaining 3635 (16 per cent) are paid to the landlord. These figures have remained static for the last 6 months.</li> <li>• 87% of backdate requests are granted on application.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 86% cases are paid via BACS directly into customers Bank/Building Society accounts.</li> <li>• Average days to pay Housing Benefit (including Local Housing Allowance) new applications or changes of circumstance stands at 13.92 days.</li> </ul>
6.	<b>Changes to Direct Payment for Landlords - April 2011</b>
	<p>Further discussion around the new regulations for direct payment to Landlords prepared to maintain or reduce their rent levels in line with the new Local Housing Allowance rates introduced in April 2011.</p> <p>The LHA safeguard application form has been amended to include the new regulations around Direct Payment.</p> <p>An electronic copy of the updated application form will be emailed with meeting minutes and is also available to download from the Birmingham City Council website.</p>
7.	<b>Any Other Business and questions raised in meeting.</b>
	<p><b>Suspension Reports</b> Several Landlords again raised the issue of cases suspended and whether a suspension report could be provided to alert them to the issue.</p> <p><b>Individual Landlords</b> and organisations raised specific cases and issues which were dealt with on a one to one basis following the end of the meeting.</p>
	<b>Date of next meeting</b>
	Next meeting set for Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> September 2011 At 2 pm Room 3, Norfolk House