



Dinas a Sir Abertawe

Nodiadau Cyfarfod y Gweithgor Craffu - Diwygio Lles

Ystafell Bwyllgor 5 - Neuadd y Ddinas, Abertawe

Dydd Llun, 14 Ionawr 2019 am 10.00 am

Yn Bresennol: Y Cynghorydd L S Gibbard (Cadeirydd) oedd yn llywyddu

Y Cynghorydd(wyr) **Y Cynghorydd(wyr)**

Y V Jardine
L R Jones

S M Jones
L V Walton

Hefyd yn bresennol

Mary Sherwood Aelod y Cabinet - Cymunedau Gwell

Swyddog/ion)

Liz Jordan
Rachel Moxey

Swyddog Craffu
Pennaeth Tlodi a'i Atal

Ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb

Y Cynghorydd(wy): C A Holley, H M Morris, S Pritchard a/ac G J Tanner

1 Datgeliadau o fuddiannau personol a rhagfarnol.

Ni dderbyniwyd unrhyw ddatganiadau o gysylltiadau.

2 Adroddiad Er Gwybodaeth

Roedd Jackie Preston o Gyngor ar Bopeth yn bresennol a rhoddodd adroddiad i'r Gweithgor am y 12 mis diwethaf ers cyflwyno Credyd Cynhwysol yn Abertawe. Fe'i hariennir gan yr awdurdod lleol i ddarparu gwasanaethau ac mae'n canolbwytio ar ddiwygio lles.

Trafodwyd y prif faterion canlynol:

- Dechrau gweld cynnydd yn nyled aelwydydd fel a ragwelwyd
- Mae hanner y cynnydd yn y galw am dalebau bwyd oherwydd Credyd Cynhwysol
- Mae Cyngor ar Bopeth yn ymdrin ag ymholiadau ynghylch taliadau annibynnol personol o hyd
- Mae Cyngor ar Bopeth wedi dod ar draws rhai landlordiaid didrwydded. Dan Gredyd Cynhwysol, nid oes rhaid i'r Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau wirio am achrediad â Rhentu Doeth Cymru felly mae tenantiaid ar drugaredd landlordiaid. Roedd y Gweithgor yn poeni y gallai pobl fod yn byw mewn tai sy'n is na'r safon.
- Gall pobl dderbyn taliadau am dai drwy Gredyd Cynhwysol o hyd, hyd yn oed os nad yw'r landlord wedi cofrestru â Rhentu Doeth Cymru

- Nid yw system TG yr Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau'n ddigonol ac mae'n gwneud cyfrifiadau anghywir, er enghraifft, ar gyfer treth ystafell wely. Mae Cyngor ar Bopeth wedi hysbysu'r Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau ac mae'r broblem yn cael ei datrys
- Didynnir arian o Gredyd Cynhwysol ar gyfer gordaliadau budd-daliadau etifeddiaeth
- Mae'r system budd-daliadau tai wedi newid, sy'n gadarnhaol
- Mae gan Gyngor ar Bopeth berthynas dda â Threth y Cyngor

3 Adroddiad Diwygio Lles

Roedd Mary Sherwood, Aelod y Cabinet dros Gymunedau Gwell (Pobl) a Rachel Moxey, Pennaeth Tlodi a'i Atal yn bresennol. Cyflwynont yr adroddiad, gan amlygu'r prif faterion ac ateb cwestiynau.

Trafodwyd y prif faterion canlynol:

- Ychydig iawn o ddyletswydd statudol sydd gan yr awdurdod lleol (ALI) yn y maes hwn. Mae'n talu budd-daliadau ar ran yr Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau
- O safbwyt ataliol, mae gwneud pobl yn ymwybodol o'r hyn y mae ganddynt hawl iddo o fantais i'r awdurdod
- Mae gan y tîm Hawliau Lles gyfradd lwyddiant o 95% ar gyfer apeliadau
- Nid yw'r rhan fwyaf o'r bobl sy'n derbyn budd-daliadau'n ymwneud o gwbl â'r ALI. Dim ond y bobl sydd mewn trafferthion mawr sy'n gwneud hynny
- Mae'r Adran Refeniw a Budd-daliadau'n gweithio ar bolisi i ganiatáu rhannu rhywfaint o ddata. Bydd yn targedu pobl sy'n hysbys drwy fudd-daliadau tai a budd-dal treth y cyngor i'w hysbysu am y cyngor a'r cymorth sydd ar gael gan yr awdurdod. Caiff llythyr ei anfon o'r Adran Refeniw a Budd-daliadau i ddechrau ac, os byddant yn ymateb, byddant yn cael eu rhoi mewn cysylltiad â'r Tîm Tlodi a'i Atal. Teuluoedd gyda phlant sydd ar fin troi'n 5 oed fyddai'r bobl gyntaf i gael eu targedu
- Mae Aelod y Cabinet yn meddwl ei bod yn hanfodol bod y Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol yn gofyn i bobl am eu sefyllfa ariannol pan fyddant yn ymweld â'u cartrefi'n gyntaf
- Byddai'n ddefnyddiol i'r Tîm Hawliau Lles gysylltu â'r Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol ac aelodau staff rheng flaen eraill a bod yn ymwybodol o'r llinell gyngor ar gyfer Hawliau Lles. Byddai hefyd yn ddefnyddiol i gynghorwyr gael eu hatgoffa am hyn.
- Mae'r awdurdod yn gweithio'n fwyfwy mewn ffordd drawsffiniol ac yn ymdrechu i ddefnyddio ymagwedd ataliol. Gall roi cyngor i bobl ar gyllido, dysgu sgiliau newydd etc
- Byddai'n ddefnyddiol i bawb sy'n gweithio yn y gymuned dderbyn hyfforddiant gan Hawliau Lles neu gardiau fflach neu ryw fath o restr wirio i'w defnyddio pan fyddant allan
- Mae'r gweithgor yn pryderu bod nifer mawr o weithwyr asiantaeth gan fod swydd gweithiwr cymdeithasol yn llawn straen a lefelau salwch yn uchel. Mae hyn yn ei wneud yn anodd sicrhau eu bod yn ymwybodol o ddeddfwriaeth a chyngor diweddar. Mae'r Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol yn lleihau nifer y gweithwyr asiantaeth yn raddol

- Nid oes gan yr awdurdod lawer o gyswilt â'r Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau na dylanwad arni, ond mae'n meddwl bod rhai pethau y gallem eu gwneud yn lleol a gallem fanteisio ar y berthynas dda sydd gennym â'r Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau'n lleol.
- Nid yw'r Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau'n cynnal unrhyw asesiadau fforddadwyedd. Teimla'r Gweithgor a'r awdurdod lleol fod yn rhaid cynnal y rhain yn enwedig ar allu pobl i ad-dalu blaendaliadau Credyd Cynhwysol.
- Nid yw llawer o bobl yn ymwybodol o'r ffaith nad oes rhaid iddynt symud i Gredyd Cynhwysol nes i'r broses fudo lawn fynd rhagddo gan y gallent fod mewn sefyllfa waeth. Mae'n rhaid defnyddio ffyrdd o atgyfnerthu'r neges hon. Gall y tîm Hawliau Lles ddefnyddio cynghorwyr yn fwy i ledaenu'r neges.
- Mae cylchlythyr o'r enw 'Quids In' wedi cael ei ddosbarthu i lyfrgelloedd a'r holl gynghorwyr. Dylid ailddosbarthu hwn i gynghorwyr er mwyn iddynt hwy ei ddosbarthu.
- Gallai fod swyddog hawliau lles mewn timau yn yr awdurdod megis Tai, Rhentu etc a allai wneud gwahaniaeth. Mae'r tîm Hawliau Lles ar hyn o bryd yn darparu hyfforddiant i adrannau, sef yr opsiwn ail orau. Mae'r adran yn edrych ar sut y darperir hyfforddiant i geisio cynyddu'r dylanwad.
- Mae'r tîm Hawliau Lles yn llunio bwletin hyfforddiant. Byddai'n ddefnyddiol i'r holl gynghorwyr dderbyn hwn.
- Byddai'n ddefnyddiol i'r gweithgor dderbyn holl adroddiadau 'Policy in Practice' fel y gallent weld y cyd-destun a'r hanes llawn.

4 Trafodaeth a Chwestiynau

Trafododd y gweithgor gynnydd a daeth at y casgliadau canlynol:

1. Argymhellwn ein bod yn gweithio cyn gynted â phosib gyda'r Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau'n lleol i sicrhau bod pobl yn derbyn A) y cyngor cywir ynglŷn ag a ddylent symud i Gredyd Cynhwysol ai peidio a B) cymorth digonol fel, os na fyddant yn gallu ymdopi heb ragdaliad, cynhelir asesiad fforddadwyedd bob amser i wneud yn siŵr bod yr ad-daliadau'n rhesymol.
2. Hoffem gammol y tîm am y gwaith mae'n ei wneud – am yr ymagwedd ragweithiol ac ataliol mae'n ei gymryd.
3. Hoffem fynegi'n pryder ynghylch Cofrestr Landlordiaid Rhentu Doeth Cymru. Mae angen i'r system hon newid oherwydd, mewn rhai achosion, gall rhai landlordiaid dderbyn rhent dan Gredyd Cynhwysol hyd yn oed os nad ydynt wedi cofrestru.
4. Mae'r gweithgor yn falch bod gan y tîm berthynas waith dda â'r Adran Tai ond teimlwn y gall mwy gael ei wneud gyda'r Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol – mwy o hyfforddiant etc.
5. Teimlwn ei bod yn llawer gwell i ni gael staff parhaol a chanddynt wybodaeth leol dda ac sy'n pryderu, er enghraifft, ynghylch y defnydd o weithwyr asiantaeth mewn gwasanaethau cymdeithasol.
6. Hoffem weld yr awdurdod yn archwilio cael swyddog Hawliau Lles mewn timau gwahanol megis Tai.

7. Teimlwn ei fod yn gam cadarnhaol y bydd polisi ar waith yn fuan fel y gellir rhannu rhywfaint o ddata. Dylai hyn ein galluogi i dargedu pobl i'w hysbysu am y cyngor a'r cymorth sydd ar gael gan yr awdurdod.
8. Teimlwn y gallai'r tîm Hawliau Lles ddefnyddio cynghorwyr yn fwy i ledaenu'r neges am y cyngor a'r cymorth sydd ar gael. Dylai gwybodaeth gael ei rhannu'n rheolaidd â chynghorwyr fel bod cyfrifoldeb ar y ddwy ochr. Er enghraifft, byddai'n ddefnyddiol i gynghorwyr dderbyn y cylchlythyr 'Quids In' i'w ddosbarthu.
9. Hoffem weld yr holl staff, yn enwedig y cynghorwyr a'r staff rheng flaen, yn derbyn hyfforddiant hawliau lles. Teimlwn y byddai'n werth chweil darganfod a ellir cynnal yr hyfforddiant hwn ar-lein.

Yn dilyn y cyfarfod hwn:

- Caiff llythyr ei ysgrifennu oddi wrth gynullydd y Gweithgor i Aelod y Cabinet sy'n crynhoi'r drafodaeth ac yn amlinellu meddyliau ac argymhellion y Gweithgor.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11.45am



To:
Councillor Mary Sherwood
Cabinet Member for Better Communities
(People)

Please ask for:
Gofynnwch am: Scrutiny
Scrutiny Office
Line: 01792 637314
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Date
Dyddiad: 05 February 2019

Summary: This is a letter from the Welfare Reform Working Group to the Cabinet Member for Better Communities (People) following the meeting of the Working Group on 14 January 2019. It is about the impacts of welfare reform in Swansea.

Dear Cllr Sherwood

The Welfare Reform Scrutiny Working Group met on 14 January to look at the impacts of Welfare Reform in Swansea and works / measures in place to support citizens and mitigate problems. It also received evidence from Citizen's Advice Swansea Neath Port Talbot in respect of Universal Credit (UC) queries handled by them during the 12 months since the roll out of UC in Swansea. This letter provides you with feedback from that meeting.

We would like to thank you and Rachel Moxey for attending to present the report and answer questions and Jackie Preston for providing the evidence from Citizens Advice. We appreciate your engagement and input.

Whilst the Working Group found the meeting informative and interesting, it did have some concerns and we would like to make the following comments.

The Working Group discussed the evidence from Citizens Advice:

- We heard that they are funded by the Authority to provide services and are concentrating on welfare reform.
- We heard that we are starting to see household debt increase as predicted and that half of the increase in demand for food vouchers is due to UC. We were not surprised to hear this but it is a concern.
- We also heard that Citizens Advice is still dealing with queries around personal independent payments.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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- We were informed that Citizens Advice has come across some unlicensed landlords and that under UC the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) do not have to check for Rent Smart Wales accreditation. People can still receive payments for housing through UC even if the landlord is not registered with Rent Smart Wales. We expressed our concern that tenants are at the mercy of landlords and the worry that people could be living in substandard housing.
- We heard that the DWP's IT system is not adequate and is making wrong calculations, for example for bedroom tax. We were pleased to hear that Citizens Advice has informed DWP and it is being rectified.
- It was positive to hear that the Authority's Housing Benefit system has changed for the better and that Citizens Advice has a good relationship with the Council Tax department.
- We were informed that deductions for overpayments of legacy benefits are being taken from UC. We were very concerned to hear this.
- We were pleased to hear that there is an agreement with DWP for Citizens Advice nationally to deliver a new UC Support Service offer from April 2019.

We then moved on to discuss the report from the Cabinet Member for Better Communities (People):

- We were informed that the Local Authority (LA) has little statutory duty in this area. It pays benefits on behalf of DWP.
- We agreed with your comment that from a preventative point of view it is in the Authority's interests to make people aware of what they are entitled to
- We were very pleased to hear that the Welfare Rights Team has a 95% success rate for appeals.
- We heard that most people who are on benefits do not have any involvement with the LA. Only people who are in major difficulty and trigger some sort of intervention from the Authority do.
- We were pleased to hear that Revenue and Benefits are working on a policy to enable some data sharing. They will target people who are known through Housing Benefit and Council Tax to inform them of the advice and support available from the Authority. A letter would be sent from Revenue and Benefits initially and if they respond they would be put in touch with the Poverty and Prevention team. The first people to be targeted would be families with children about to turn 5.
- You informed us that you think it is vital that when Social Services first go into people's homes they are asked about their financial situation.
- We feel it would be useful for Welfare Rights to have contact with Social Services and other front line staff and for them to be aware of the advice line for Welfare Rights. It would also be useful for councillors to be reminded about this.
- We were pleased to hear that the Authority is increasingly working in a cross cutting way and trying to take a preventative approach, and is able to advise people on budgeting, learning new skills etc.
- We feel it would be useful for everyone working in the community to have training from Welfare Rights or to have flashcards or some sort of checklist to take out with them.
- The Working Group is concerned that as the job of social worker is stressful and sickness levels are high there are a large number of agency workers. This makes it difficult to ensure they are aware of recent legislation and advice. We were

informed that Social Services are gradually reducing the number of agency workers.

- We heard that the Authority has little involvement and influence over DWP nationally but that there are some things we could do locally and take advantage of the good relationship we have with DWP locally.
- We also heard that DWP do not do any affordability assessments. The Working Group feels these need to be undertaken especially on people's ability to pay back UC advances.
- We expressed our concern that many people are unaware that they do not need to go onto UC until the full migration takes place and that they could be worse off on UC. We feel the Authority needs to use ways to reinforce this message. Welfare Rights could use Councillors more to get the message out.
- We heard that there is a newsletter called 'Quids In' which has been circulated to libraries and all councillors. We feel this should be redistributed to councillors for their onward circulation.
- We heard that there could be a Welfare Rights Officer situated within teams in the Authority such as Housing, Rents etc which could make a difference. And that a Welfare Rights are currently providing training to departments which is the second best option. We also heard that the Department is looking at how training is provided to try and increase the reach.
- We were informed that Welfare Rights produce a training bulletin. We feel it would be useful for all Councillors to receive this.
- You suggested that it would be useful for the Working Group to see all the Policy in Practice reports so we can see the full context and history.

Following the meeting, we discussed progress and made the following conclusions:

1. We recommend that as a matter of urgency we work with the DWP locally to ensure people are A) given the correct advice as to whether or not they need to go onto UC and B) given sufficient help such that if they will not be able to manage without an advance payment then an affordability assessment is always carried out to make sure the repayments are reasonable.
2. We would like to commend the team on the work that they are doing – for the proactive approach and the preventative approach that they are taking.
3. We would like to express our concern about the Rent Smart Wales Register of landlords. This system needs to change, as, in some instances, landlords can still get rent paid under UC even if they are not registered.
4. We are pleased that the team has a good working relationship with Housing but we feel more could be done with Social Services – more training etc.
5. We feel it is much better to have permanent staff with good local knowledge and are concerned about the use of agency workers, particularly in Social Services.
6. We would like to see the Authority explore having a Welfare Rights officer in different teams such as Housing.

7. We feel it is a positive step that there will soon be a policy in place to allow some data sharing. This should enable the targeting of people to inform them of the advice and support available from the Authority.
8. We feel that Welfare Rights could use Councillors more to get the message out about the support and advice available. Information should go out regularly to councillors so that it is more of a two-way street. For example, it would be useful for Councillors to have the 'Quids In' newsletter to pass on.
9. We would like to see all staff, especially councillors and front line staff receiving welfare rights training. We feel it is worth exploring if this training could be undertaken online.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We are interested in hearing your thoughts about the issues raised and would ask that you respond to the 9 points in our conclusions by Monday 25 February 2019.

Yours sincerely

**COUNCILLOR LOUISE GIBBARD
CONVENER, WELFARE REFORM SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP
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