

Welsh Government Financial Inclusion Steering Group

Tuesday 8th May 2018
Welsh Government Offices, Merthyr Tydfil

Minutes of the Meeting

Present:

Chair

Andrew Jacobs Welsh Government - Financial Inclusion Unit

Welsh Government Officials

Paul Neave Financial Inclusion Unit
Charlotte Anscombe Financial Inclusion Unit
Eryl Loring Financial Inclusion Unit
Neil Roberts Education

Members

Farida Aslam Monmouthshire Housing Association
Liz Emmons Welsh Illegal Money Lending Unit
Helene Hayes Citizens Advice Cymru
Leanne Herberg Cardiff and Vale Credit Union
Selina Moyo Community Housing Cymru
Lee Phillips Money Advice Service
Graham Roberts Department for Work and Pensions

Apologies:

Amelia John Deputy Director Communities, Welsh Government
Karl Thomas Housing Policy, Welsh Government
Jocelle Lovell Wales Co-operative Centre
Geraint Willington South East Wales Education Consortium
Sean O'Neill Children in Wales
Jonathan Brenchley Barclays Bank
Lisa Hayward WLGA
Iwan Williams Older People's Commissioner's Office

1. Welcome and Minutes of the Last Meeting

- 1.1 Andrew Jacobs (AJ) welcomed members to the sixth meeting of the Financial Inclusion Steering Group (FISG) and thanked everyone for attending. AJ welcomed Neil Roberts from the Welsh Government's Education Department who replaces Helen Freese, and also Eryl Loring who has recently taken over Lisa Wait's role in the Welsh Government's Financial Inclusion Unit.
- 1.2 The minutes of the last meeting held on 22 November 2017 were agreed as an accurate record and that all actions had been completed.
- 1.3 In relation to the action point arising from paragraph 2.9, a meeting has now been arranged with the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales for the 15 May 2018. The meeting will be with Welsh Government officials in the first

instance who will convey the importance of promoting Financial Inclusion and Financial Capability to improve the well-being of future generations in Wales. It is the intention that the meeting will lead to ongoing engagement with the Commissioner's office.

2. Money Advice Service (MAS) Update

- 2.1 Lee Phillips (LP) informed members that Financial Capability week will be taking place week beginning 12 November and as with last year, will be using the hashtag #talkmoneywales and #siaradariancymru to promote activity during that week.
- 2.2 LP circulated a Policy Map for Wales which illustrates how Financial Capability has direct links to the current Welsh Government portfolio areas, Strategies and Policies. The map will be made available on the MAS website should members wish to access it and can be shared more widely if required. AJ thanked LP for this very useful piece of work and was pleased to see the wide number of Welsh Government departments included in the map which bodes well for future engagement. LP expressed her gratitude to Sally Hunt from Welsh Government for co-ordinating the exercise. The policy map can be downloaded here [FinCap Policy Map for Wales](#).
- 2.3 Work is ongoing to ensure Financial Capability is embedded within the Maths and Numeracy Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) of the new curriculum through the 'What Matters' identification process.
- 2.4 MAS have 7 'What Works' projects underway in Wales. The final evaluation reports will be loaded onto the Evidence Hub of the FinCap Strategy website as they finish delivery and will be available to view [here](#).
- 2.5 The Talk Learn Do project is a parenting project that has been developed by MAS and is being piloted in Wales. The project's evaluation is currently at the 6 month stage and a meeting is being held with key funding partners and Welsh Government officials on the 9 May to discuss its findings. Results show that the project has been well received, both by parents and practitioners. The evaluation is ongoing – there will be a 12 month follow up and a final report will be published in the autumn. Talk Learn Do will be a UK wide initiative but its launch event will be held in Cardiff at the end of the year to mark the success of the pilot project in Wales.
- 2.6 The FinCap website is working on a youth practitioners Framework which has been trialled across the UK. On the fincap.org.uk website you can also find outcomes frameworks for children, young people and parents, adults, and teachers. The older people framework is also now available.
- 2.7 The National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA) now has a toolkit available to student advisors. They are currently promoting savings and raising awareness of payroll deduction once students enter employment. There is potential to promote this further in the next 'What Works' round of funding – there is around £3m of funding available for 2018/19 which will focus on the workplace, financial capability, debt advice and online resources.

- 2.8 Also, as part of 'What Works', MAS are looking at practitioner development and the introduction of a Competency Framework for advice providers. MAS has a dedicated person, Michaela Kirsop-Holdford, taking this forward who has been talking to Welsh Government, Agored and a number of practitioners to establish this.
- 2.9 The next Financial Capability Survey for Wales is due in 2018 and a supplier has been identified. The 2017 debt statistics on the over-indebtedness map indicates that Wales still has a significantly higher rate of over-indebtedness of 17.7% in comparison to the UK figure of 15.9%. LP recommended that members take a look at the statistics for further detail and agreed to provide the link for circulation.
- 2.10 Paul Neave (PN) asked whether the over-indebtedness map could be overlaid with the provision map. LP will seek advice and confirm.

Action Points:

1. LP to provide link to the over-indebtedness map which can now be found here: <http://overindebtednessmap.org/>.
 2. LP to explore possibility of overlaying over-indebtedness map with provision map.
- 2.11 The latest Financial Capability Strategy quarterly update is now available on the website but has also been embedded into the Welsh Government's Financial Inclusion Delivery Plan for information.

3. Citizens Advice Update

3.1 Helen Hayes (HH) delivered a presentation which covered:

- Citizens Advice Cymru's call to the FCA for cap on rent to own/doorstep lending;
- Money Talks evaluation - emerging findings;
- Mental health and money research emerging findings.

A copy of the presentation can be seen at Annex A.

3.2 Observations / Questions:

- 3.2.1 Liz Emmons (LE) informed members of a useful resource – 'Fair for You' where customers can purchase goods direct from suppliers with the use of a loan. Further information can be found on their website: <https://www.fairforyou.co.uk/>
- 3.2.2 Farida Aslam (FA) commented that Monmouthshire County Council has limited resources to support clients with mental health issues. They currently use the Dewis Cymru portal but advisors should also have a basic awareness of the provision available locally.
- 3.2.3 Universal Credit – two reports relevant to Wales were published in April of this year. The reports helped highlight some potential design flaws in UC, which can sometimes leave those in self employment at a financial disadvantage when compared to those earning the equivalent as employees. DWP are

looking to address the concerns raised. Graham Roberts (GR) recognised there are some issues concerning self-employment, but felt it was important to note that many people are in non viable self employment positions, which makes them reliant on tax credits. DWP will look to support owners of new businesses for a limited period of 12 months, but not prop-up businesses that are not viable longer term.

- 3.2.4 Charlotte Anscombe (CA) asked if the good take up with the Life Events initiative was linked to the 'warm referrals'. HH confirmed it was, good partnership links had been developed and although there was a change of focus from non-targeted to targeted support, good results were still achieved.
- 3.2.5 AJ asked if the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) had issued a response to the Citizens Advice suggested interest cap on rent to own. HH didn't believe so but would check.
- 3.2.6 FA queried whether the increase in wellbeing indicator was captured at the end of the project or after a period of time. HH confirmed it wasn't post project, it was a large scale survey carried out after a period of time.
- 3.2.7 AJ highlighted the mental health links with the work MAS is doing with Public Health Wales, LP agreed to send HH's presentation to Adam Jones in PHW who is leading on this work.

Action Points:

- 1. HH to share Money Talks evaluation final report when available, along with the emerging findings from the Mental Health and Money research.
- 2. HH to confirm whether the FCA has responded to the call to put a cap on interest in the rent to own market.
- 3. LP to forward presentation to Adam Jones PHW.

4. Welsh Government Update

- 4.1 PN provided an update on Advice Services and informed members that the Information and Advice Action Plan (IAAP) has undergone its second annual review by the National Advice Network (NAN) and is in the process of being finalised before submission to the Minister for Housing and Regeneration early in July.
- 4.2 Information and Advice Quality Framework (IAQF) – there has now been engagement with all Quality Standard Owners and the design of the assessment process is complete. Citizens Advice Cymru is in a position to submit their quality assurance standards for assessment by the end of June with other standard owners looking to submit theirs by October. At the end of May, providers can apply to become one of the 'pathfinder providers' which MBARC will be working with to reach quality assured standard. MBARC are also in the process of recruiting freelance assessors who can be called upon for assessment and accreditation purposes across Wales, including use by Welsh Government.
- 4.3 PN noted that there had been an increase in the number signing up to the Dewis Cymru portal following the IAQF provider workshops. He also commented that

the NAN recognises the need for more local engagement with providers to encourage them to input their service details on Dewis Cymru. AJ opened this topic out to the group for further discussion and asked how it could be addressed:

- FA commented that Monmouthshire County Council has a system in place where good practice can be shared and confirmed that Dewis Cymru can be promoted using this system. Selina Moyo (SM) agreed that it can and should be shared using internal networks.
- FA raised the question whether Welsh Government could do more to promote Dewis Cymru. AJ explained that one organisation doesn't have the reach to do this alone and the responsibility for its promotion is one that lies cross-agency and relies on the delivery of a consistent message from all those involved.
- LP asked whether WG could make it a condition of funding that providers need to be registered on the Dewis Cymru portal before applying for funding. AJ confirmed that WG could certainly encourage providers to join Dewis Cymru but is optimistic that they would want to be on the portal for reasons other than as a condition of funding.
- It was acknowledged that Lisa Hayward from the WLGA wasn't present to comment, however as Dewis Cymru is owned by the WLGA it is likely to be moderated to ensure it meets a certain standard of providing quality information.
- CVCs have fed back concerns that they were being asked to complete details on Dewis Cymru when there is already an existing information directory. This could lead to a risk of duplication or inconsistencies between the two systems moving forward. FA asked whether the two databases could be merged or whether Dewis Cymru could replace the other database.
- AJ concluded the discussion by confirming this matter will be raised with the WLGA and HH suggested that WCVA may also be able to help as they have a similar portal for finding services locally.

Action Point: Issues with Dewis Cymru to be discussed with Lisa Hayward from WLGA and a contact obtained from WCVA.

4.4 Single Financial Guidance Body (SFGB) - AJ provided a brief update. Following an initial delay, the establishment of the SFGB is now progressing quickly. It has been through the House of Commons, the House of Lords and is currently awaiting Royal Assent. Recruitment of the Chair and Chief Executive Officer is underway. Dialogue with DWP and the Treasury has been on hold due to the initial delays but is now ongoing.

4.5 CA provided an update on the Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) and confirmed it had achieved a higher spend this year with 75,000 applications, 35,000 emergency payments and 4,500 grants awarded. It is on course to further improve spend during 2018/19. Officials have focussed on improving the

success rate of partner supported applications, which currently stands at 86%. It is intended to offer an 'in principle' award for those applications that may be missing some information, such as address or National Insurance Number, but clearly demonstrates the need for support. Supported applications are always encouraged and want to demonstrate this by working more closely with partners, enabling barriers to be identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity. CA also advised that similarly, where UC has been applied for but the applicant is waiting for the first payment and unable to provide confirmation to DAF, partners can now confirm their client's circumstances - that UC has been applied for, in order to obtain an Emergency Payment in the interim.

- 4.6 LP asked how repeat applications can be reduced. CA explained that the forthcoming Resolution and Resilience project, which is being delivered in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Carmarthenshire, will look at encouraging households to remain actively engaged with a provider (after their problem has been resolved) to tackle underlying issues that contributed to their need to approach the DAF, which should, in turn, reduce the number of repeat applications to the DAF.
- 4.7 Credit Unions – 19 projects have been successful in securing funding for 2018 - 20. There are again a variety of projects, all linked to financial inclusion, including prison savers, school savers and payroll promotion.
- 4.8 AJ informed the group that the Wales Against Scams Partnership (WASP) are planning to host a national event bringing together key stakeholders to discuss how to combat postal, doorstep and phone scams in Wales later this year.

5. Financial Inclusion Delivery Plan (FIDP) Update

- 5.1 In response to feedback at the last FISG meeting in November 2017, officials have been working on redesigning the format of the Delivery Plan. It is the intention to mirror the MAS Wales Strategy which provides updates as a snapshot in time as opposed to an accumulation of information. AJ thanked members who had met with Eryl Loring (EL) to assist with the restructure.
- 5.2 In relation to the update for Action 2.1 AJ asked HH to provide further information on the Swansea and Neath Port Talbot Citizens Advice Advisory Group who are looking at research in respect of Digital Inclusion and UC.

Action Point: HH to provide further details on the above.

- 5.3 FA asked what action would be taken to mark the first year of the FIDP. AJ advised that officials were intending to produce an Annual Report which would capture progress to date. FA went on to enquire how the Housing sector could be encouraged to report against the FIDP actions. AJ suggested promotion amongst networks and encouraging practitioners to provide contributions. FA

agreed and added she would be happy to raise this with her own Housing Sector and report back at the next FISG meeting. LP also suggested further promotion during Financial Capability week.

Action Points:

1. FA to work with SM to promote reporting against Actions in the FIDP within the Housing Sector.
2. LP to tweet the Financial Capability Policy Map for Wales and all FISG members to re-tweet to their networks.

5.4 PN drew members' attention to update 12.2 - WG are working with Local Authorities, who recognise that public money being used to finance in-house finance advice services needs to be spent on quality assured services and are keen to have in-house services linked to an IAQF Accredited Quality Standard. There are already some good in-house advice service models operational within RSL's, e.g., Monmouthshire and Melin Homes.

5.5 Neil Roberts (NR) provided an update on the new curriculum which will be available by April 2019 for feedback and operational in Wales from 2022. It is clear that financial capability sits across two Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) – Maths and Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing.

5.6 Leanne Herberg (LH) asked how schools can become involved. NR explained that the new curriculum is being developed by teachers and practitioners through a network of Pioneer Schools, further details can be found [here](#).

5.7 The National Network of Excellence in Mathematics (NNEM) was launched in July 2017 and there is a dedicated area on the HWB website specifically for this with resources available to teachers to support learning.

5.8 LH requested that the update under Action 20.1 be verified as she believes the Financial Wings activity has now ceased. FA also asked for the update under Action 20.3 to be withdrawn as this is now out of date and she will provide a further update when available.

Action Point: EL to update the FIDP to reflect the above points.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 LH reported an issue last week with the credit union prepayment card 'Contis' which couldn't be updated for a number of days. This card is provided by NatWest Bank and is used by a number of credit unions. The issue affected all cards but has now been resolved.

6.2 LP asked members what plans could be put in place in preparation for Financial Capability week. AJ suggested that Steering Group members actively promote

'FinCap week' as they have done in the past and perhaps they could commission updates from providers and stakeholders within their networks. It is important that people understand how their work can be celebrated and promoted during this week. AJ asked that members take every opportunity to promote their own work by tweeting it along with the hashtag, and for other members to re-tweet the message.

Action Point: Steering Group members to promote financial capability activity by posting it on Twitter using the hashtag #moneywales or #siaradariancymru, during Financial Capability week which commences 12 November 2018.

6.3 PN suggested that as we may have the new SFGB in place by then, it would be advantageous if they could actively promote financial capability week. AJ agreed this would be an excellent opportunity if timings allow. AJ also suggested setting up a specific Working Group to consider and implement plans leading up to financial capability week and confirmed this would be added to the Agenda for the next FISG meeting. LP informed members that MAS would be producing a promotional information pack and will circulate to the group.

Action Points:

1. Financial Capability Week Working Group to be added as an Agenda item for the next FISG meeting.
2. LP to send promotional information pack to EL when available for onward circulation to group members.

7. Date of Next Meeting

7.1 It was agreed the next FISG meeting will be held mid to late September 2018.