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Evaluation of the Council Tax and Housing Benefit Take-up Scheme in Wales

Evaluation of the Council Tax and Housing Benefit Take-up Scheme in Wales

KPMG in association with Oxford Economics

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Assembly Government

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Glossary

| | |
|-------------|--|
| ASHE | Annual Survey of Hours Earnings |
| BTUO | Benefit Take-up Officer |
| CAB | Citizens Advice Bureaux |
| CTB | Council Tax Benefit |
| DCLG | Department of Communities and Local Government |
| DWP | Department for Work and Pensions |
| DSD | Department for Social Development |
| ENR | Entitled non-recipients |
| ESA | Employment Support Allowance |
| GVA | Gross Value Added |
| HB | Housing Benefit |
| IS | Income Support |
| JSA | Jobseekers Allowance |
| LA | Local Authority |
| LSOA | Lower Layer Super Output Area |
| MIGs | Maximising Income Groups |
| ONS | Office for National Statistics |
| PC | Pension Credit |
| SHBE | Single Housing Benefit Extract |
| SSA | Standard Spending Assessment |
| VCS | Voluntary and Community Sector |
| VFM | Value for Money |
| WAG | Welsh Assembly Government |

I. Executive Summary

I.1. Introduction

The WAG has committed £4.5 million to Local Authorities (LAs) in four out of the last five years to help them increase Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) take-up.

KPMG, in partnership with Oxford Economics, were commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of the HB and CTB Take-up Scheme (the Scheme). The aims of this evaluation were to estimate the impact the Scheme has had in generating additional benefit take-up to date, gauge the likely future impact of the Scheme and evaluate the implementation of the Scheme.

The assignment was undertaken in five main phases:

- Phase A – Project Initiation
- Phase B – Desktop review of a range of literature on benefit take-up, LA action plans and associated progress reports as well as official statistics released by the Department for Work and Pensions.
- Phase C – Secondary analysis research undertaken by Oxford Economics to gauge the proportional impact of the scheme by estimating the potential unmet benefit take-up.
- Phase D – Fieldwork which included consultation with representatives from all 22 LAs and from the Local Government Finance Division within the Welsh Assembly; a survey of a sample of benefit claimants; and consultation with representatives from key partner organisations and specific interest groups.
- Phase E – Analysis and reporting of all findings.

I.2. Evidence Review

There are a wide range of well-documented barriers to benefit take-up known to impact on take-up rates. It is also clear that the barriers to benefit take-up have been documented for over a decade, indicating that they are long standing problems and so suggesting they are difficult to overcome. Research also indicates specific groups are less likely to claim; people from ethnic minorities, older people over 75 years, people from rural areas, and owner-occupiers are over-represented in the numbers of Entitled Non-Recipients (ENRs). The literature highlights various means to increase take-up, including targeting people at life changing events and using trusted intermediaries such as GPs. However, the literature also recognises that there is a need for more research and information, both on non take-up levels as well as evidence of what works best and for whom. Finally, an additional difficulty exists in assessing the impact of take-up activities and disentangling their impact from other events or activities.

This means there are particular challenges when designing targeted activities and in monitoring impact, while such activities may not realise the anticipated results and may lack an underlying, justifying evidence base. This needs to be considered in any evaluation of LAs' benefit take-up activities to date.

I.3. Review of HB and CTB Statistics

Based on official DWP statistics, between May 2005 and April 2010, the total number of people receiving HB and CTB in Wales increased by 18.2% and 16.8% respectively. However, it is noted that caseload also increased in 2007/2008 when there was no formal Scheme in place, although there were residual activities from 2006/2007, for the promotion of CTB in Wales.

Comparison between Wales and the North East of England suggests that both regions experienced increases in the number of recipients for HB and CTB.

However, increases in Wales were greater than the increases in the North East. This could suggest that the WAG Take-up Scheme was effective and had a positive impact on increasing the number of people accessing HB and/or CTB.

I.4. Quantifying and Analysis of HB and CTB Take-Up

DWP's official report on benefit take-up suggests that a substantial proportion of persons entitled to HB and CTB did not receive the benefit in 2008/09. In addition, DWP analysis suggests there are likely to be a number of individuals/households who are eligible for both HB and CTB but claiming neither. In caseload terms, CTB has the largest number of ENRs of all reported benefits, while HB unclaimed receipts are larger than other benefits. This provides justification for the focus of this Scheme, especially given the inter-dependence between HB and CTB.

Estimates of take-up rates for HB and CTB are not produced below GB level (e.g. for Wales) due to methodological and resource limitations. However, in order to provide some idea of the potential magnitude of ENRs, Oxford Economics calculated unofficial estimates which suggested that the number of HB ENRs in Wales in April 2010 ranges from 45,000 benefit units to 80,000, which could equate to unclaimed HB entitlements of between £120m and £210m per annum. The number of CTB ENRs in Wales in April 2010 ranges from 138,000 benefit units to 188,000 which would equate to unclaimed CTB entitlements of between £95m and £130m per annum. The number of ENRs and value of entitlements suggests there is a continuing rationale to focus on increasing take-up rates across HB and CTB.

In terms of assessing the impact of the Scheme, it is difficult to do so for a number of reasons, not least the lack of the information required to properly evaluate the impact of the Scheme separate from other factors, such as the recession and change in benefit eligibility rules. This means that the scope of what could be achieved by this analysis was limited.

Over the period August 2007 to April 2010, the number of HB and CTB recipients in GB increased by 17% and 14% respectively and, while not conclusive, there was some suggestion of a recession effect at GB level given that the majority of extra recipients have characteristics of persons who have potentially been made redundant (as opposed to persons already outside the labour market).

In Wales, the number of HB recipients increased at a rate just above the GB average while the number of CTB recipients in Wales increased at a rate equivalent to the GB average growth rate. Given that Wales has been one of the more affected GB regions economically during the recession, it perhaps might have been expected that benefit recipient numbers would have increased by more because of the Scheme and the relative severity of the recession. However, as HB and CTB recipient numbers in GB have tended to grow strongest in LAs where unemployment rates have not risen by as much, it may be that some of those additional persons who became unemployed in Wales during the recession lived in existing high unemployment areas and were already claiming HB (as, for example, they may have been on low incomes).

I.5. Overview of the Scheme

A review of action plans and progress reports suggests that the funding provided to date to all 22 LAs has enabled them to undertake a wide range of benefit take-up activities ranging from the employment of dedicated Benefit Take-up Officers, to targeting specific groups of people, to general advertising across a variety of media. There is clear evidence that LAs took a more focused and planned approach to take-up activities from 2008 and it is likely that the proposed three-year funding available helped in this regard and in particular in investing in staff resources.

LAs were provided with complete flexibility in terms of their take-up activities enabling them to utilise local knowledge and provide activities tailored to local needs.

This enabled LAs to try different approaches and provided some information on what, why and how different approaches worked better than other methods. LAs were also able to work on a partnership / collaborative basis with other stakeholder organisations, which included sharing knowledge as well as resources.

The Scheme has allowed LAs to undertake a proactive and sustained campaign to increase HB and CTB take-up rates. The Scheme has provided LAs with the opportunity to trial a series of approaches and methodologies and to target specific groups to determine those that work more effectively.

I.6. Implementation of the Scheme

Consultation with key stakeholders confirmed that all were satisfied with the current administration and implementation of the Scheme. The 2008-2011 implementation was supported by research and information initiatives which were positive developments and demonstrated WAG's learning from the 2006/2007 implementation, and commitment to supporting LAs.

However, the lack of standard reporting templates presents challenges in monitoring the overall impact of the Scheme and it is suggested that greater consideration is given to monitoring and recording outcomes in any future scheme.

I.7. Consultation with Stakeholders

Consultation with representatives from LAs suggests that almost all had been involved in a range of activities in order to increase benefit take-up. It was clear from consultation with LAs that the rollout of a three-year benefit take-up initiative encouraged LAs to give greater consideration to the use of their grant and to the type of activities possible in order to maximise benefit take-up. Learning, sharing and collaboration were key themes underpinning many LAs activities. It was clear that

many had learned lessons from the first year (2006/2007), gleaned information from other LAs and worked in partnership to maximise the use of and impact of their grant. Many LAs could identify tangible outcomes from partnership working including creating a less competitive and more customer focused approach with partners.

WAG had supported the implementation of the 2008 Scheme with research into barriers to take-up as well as presentations from Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan on their take-up activities and lessons learned. Many LAs had used this information which indicates that these two supporting activities had a positive impact. While generic advertising remained a part of most LAs' activities, most began to explore targeted approaches, recognising the limitations of generic approaches.

Anecdotal information from LAs suggests that barriers remained and there were challenges in reaching out to hard to reach groups. Many invested in Benefit Take up Officers (BTUOs) to reach out to those hardest to access and to support them through the application process. This approach was successful in overcoming several of the known barriers to take-up, namely stigma, lack of awareness of the benefit and/or eligibility and difficulties or disinclination to complete forms. Some LAs highlighted the challenges of identifying and targeting ENRs.

Most LAs considered that their take-up activities had had a positive impact, although in many cases these views were based on anecdotal evidence or evidenced by increases in caseload. However, many recognised the difficulties of accurately measuring this impact, acknowledging that increases in caseload and expenditure could be attributed to a range of factors. The need for greater monitoring of results was a key learning point.

Improved partnership working and improved service provision were identified as additional impacts of the Scheme and it is likely that these will continue long after cessation of the Scheme.

Although there were other agencies involved in benefit take-up, LAs considered that the Scheme enabled them to take a proactive approach to increasing take-up of HB and CTB and all considered that the absence of the Scheme would result in a substantial scaling down of LA take-up activities.

I.8. Feedback from Benefit Claimants

A survey of benefit recipients showed that the majority of people indicated they applied for HB and CTB because of a change in circumstances and in almost 40% of cases, respondents were aware of their entitlement from contact with a BTUO. This was particularly so among those aged over 64 years and among owner-occupiers. This would suggest that BTUOs are successful in reaching out to key groups including those where it is known that take-up is low.

Of those who have successfully applied for HB and CTB, the majority felt that they have more money, which was generally spent on fuel bills and everyday living. This suggests that the additional income goes to those who need it and it is spent locally thereby contributing to the local economy. This would suggest there is a clear rationale for the Scheme and substantial indirect benefits to local businesses.

Findings also show that there is a lack of knowledge about the application process and that there are concerns about the application process that deter people from claiming. This suggests that LAs could do more to help increase knowledge about benefits. However, it is encouraging to note that over two-thirds of respondents and especially those over 64 years did not consider there is a stigma associated with claiming benefits.

I.9. Impact and Effectiveness

A review of action plans and progress reports, supplemented by consultation with representatives from LAs and key stakeholder groups suggests that the employment

of BTUOs – who undertake personal contact to encourage take-up and assistance in completing applications – can produce very positive results. In addition, outcomes can be further enhanced by taking a targeted approach, often via partnership working such as utilising Pension Service scans. The success of other activities such as mail shots and leaflets can be improved through a targeted approach such as directing it at key groups, at specific times like billing or to coincide with changes in eligibility criteria.

Very positive results were reported by a number of LAs that had undertaken fairly detailed monitoring and so could measure the impact of the Scheme. These LAs included Anglesey reporting almost £400,000 in additional benefits being awarded, Bridgend reporting £700,000 in increased benefits awarded, Cardiff reporting £2.7m in additional benefits awarded (based on 18-month projections). Other LAs reported on successes in targeting specific groups such as older pensioners, in-work recipients and non-passported recipients with no benefit links.

This would suggest that in any future scheme LAs should consider investing in dedicated staff resources who can work with key partners such as The Pension Service to identify potential recipients and to overcome some of the known barriers by offering a personal service and assistance with all paperwork. In addition, publicity and advertising is likely to be more effective if targeted at specific audiences. While general advertising can help raise overall awareness, LAs may wish to refrain from campaigns which involve substantial expense such as radio, cinema and bus advertisements.

I.10. Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions are made based on all available evidence and it is recommended that any future take-up scheme should focus on the following activities and client groups and is underpinned by robust monitoring.

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Why Target</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There remains a substantial number of ENRs • The potential value of entitlements involved makes it worthwhile • Most respondents spent their money locally thereby contributing to the local economy. |
| <i>What Activities to Focus On</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment of dedicated BTUOs • Partnership working with other agencies • Targeted/focused publicity campaigns concentrated on key groups or at key times • Home visits especially for older people and often via trusted intermediaries. • Those which focus on key groups. |
| <i>Who to Target</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people (often those over the age of 75) • Older people from ethnic minorities • People living in more affluent areas, older people in rural areas • Non-passported population such as owner-occupiers. |
| <i>How to Manage It</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and record benefit take-up outcomes consistently. |

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In 2006/2007, WAG committed £1.5 million to LAs to help them increase CTB take-up with a focus on older people. A further £1 million per annum was then made available for the three financial years 2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011. In addition, the 2008/2011 Scheme was expanded to include HB and the scope was widened to include families with children, as well as older people.

KPMG, in partnership with Oxford Economics, were commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of the Scheme. The aims of this evaluation were:

- To estimate the impact the Scheme has had in generating additional benefit take-up to date.
- To gauge the likely future impact of the Scheme, both in terms of additional benefit take-up and the associated benefits to LAs and their customers.
- To evaluate the implementation of the Scheme, in terms of whether it is administered effectively and what it costs WAG and LAs to do so vis a vis the additional benefit take-up it has generated.

1.2 The Need for an Evaluation

This evaluation has been prompted by a number of factors, including:

- WAG recognises that encouraging the take-up of benefits, as a means of maximising income, is fundamental both in working towards the 2020 child poverty objective and in delivering the ‘One Wales’ objectives to do with social justice, inequality and financial inclusion.

- Unemployment has risen drastically since the start of the recession in 2008, with the manufacturing industry hardest hit, along with people living in South East Wales valley communities and young males in particular. The implications of this economic downturn highlight the importance of policies that aim to maximise individual and household income. The recession has resulted in a greater reliance on the welfare system throughout Wales and so it is important that schemes such as these work effectively, and it must be ensured that the Scheme provides Value for Money (VFM).
- Levels of unemployment are likely to remain relatively high for the near future. Gauging the likely future impact of the scheme, both in terms of benefit take-up and the associated non-monetary benefits, as well as associated costs, is necessary to ensure that the current Scheme is run as effectively as possible and to allow effective planning of any future Scheme.
- WAG's commitment to identify any improvements to government-funded schemes, ensure maximum impact for people on low incomes and those most in need and VFM of administrative procedures.
- A wider government commitment to tackle poverty and unemployment, increase social and financial inclusion and to develop and provide services focused on customer needs.

1.3 Terms of Reference

The specific deliverables within the terms of reference for the Evaluation of the CTB and HB Take-up Scheme were as follows:

In relation to the impact of the Scheme:

- Analyse the trends in benefit take-up prior to and since the implementation of the Scheme (including the 2006/2007 scheme), with a view to establishing if:
 - a. any significant changes took place following its commencement; and
 - b. how the magnitude of these changes compares to previous ones.
- Compare the observed trends in Wales with a suitable comparator area to establish how trends in Wales compare with other areas where similar grant schemes have not been implemented.
- Estimate, using appropriate sub-national data sources, the potential unmet benefit take-up, as a means of gauging the proportional impact of the scheme within each LA area.
- Offer some analysis, through a range of scenarios, on the potential economic implications of the recent trends in take-up, focussing primarily on how any potential 'new income' may be used in different situations and by different types of people.
- Establish the extent to which the Scheme is a significant influence on people's decisions to take up benefits (or not).
- Provide some indication of how the Scheme affects different social groups and types of people.
- Provide some analysis of the effect of the economic downturn on benefit take-up rates and comment on the extent to which the influence of the Scheme is discernable above the 'noise' of the recession.
- Identify and explore associated impacts of the Scheme on LAs and their customers, other than increasing take-up (for example, improved partnership working, an enhanced range of services, or improving relations with specific minority groups).
- Offer, in light of the evidence gleaned from the above analysis and other sources (such as Barriers to Take-up Report), some recommendations on how to improve take-up in the LA areas.

In relation to the Scheme's implementation:

- Formulate an estimate of the administration/implementation cost of the Scheme to the Welsh Assembly Government.
- Weigh this against the additional benefit take-up attributable to the Scheme.
- Gather detailed information on how the Scheme is implemented and identify from it what elements of the processes could be improved and how this would contribute to furthering the objective of increasing take-up.

1.4 Methodology

The assignment was undertaken in five main phases:

- Phase A – Project Initiation

The purpose of Phase A was to initiate the project. KPMG met with WAG at the outset of the assignment to discuss the scope and key issues associated with the evaluation.

- Phase B – Desktop Review

KPMG undertook a desktop review of key documentation relating to the Scheme. This included a high-level review of all available LA action plans and associated progress reports on the costs and impacts of all activities.

KPMG also undertook an analysis of benefit take-up prior to and since the implementation of the Scheme, drawing on official statistics released by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). In addition, KPMG used the North East of England to compare benefit take-up trends with Wales.

- Phase C – Secondary Analysis

Research was undertaken by Oxford Economics to gauge the proportional impact of the scheme within each LA by estimating the potential unmet benefit take-up.

Oxford Economics examined GB official estimates of HB and CTB take-up rates and, as estimates of take-up rates for HB and CTB are not available below GB level, looked at estimating the number of Entitled Non-Recipients in Wales to ensure that the level of unmet need did not remain ‘un-estimated’.

- Phase D – Fieldwork

KPMG consulted with all 22 LAs involved in the management and operation of the Scheme, through a combination of one-to-one interviews and telephone consultation. Consultation was also undertaken with representatives from the Local Government Finance Division within the Welsh Assembly to determine the overall implementation of the Scheme.

KPMG also consulted with a sample of benefit claimants across 11 LAs via a postal survey to determine what motivated them to apply for HB and/or CTB, the impact of benefits received and their views generally on claiming HB and/or CTB benefits.

Finally, consultation was undertaken with representatives from key partner organisations and specific interest groups including Age Concern, Citizens Advice and The Pension Service.

- Phase E – Analysis and Reporting

The findings of all the above research have been consolidated into this report.

The following should be considered in relation to the findings contained in this report:

- Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.
- Percentages of less than 0.5% are usually recorded as 0%.
- Percentages will sum to more than 100 for multiple response questions.

- It must be stressed that consultation findings are the comments and the subjective views of consultees and KPMG cannot verify their factual accuracy.

1.5 Report Structure

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1.6 Acknowledgements

KPMG would like to thank those who have contributed to this evaluation report, particularly representatives from the LAs, Local Government Finance staff in the Welsh Assembly Government and other interested stakeholders as well as those benefit recipients who responded to our survey.

2 Evidence Review

2.1 Background

The Welsh Government has recognised for some time that encouraging the take-up of social security benefits, as a means of maximising income, is fundamental both in working towards the 2020 child poverty objective and in delivering the “One Wales” objectives to do with social justice, inequality and financial inclusion. To date it has committed £4.5 million to LAs to help them increase their CTB take-up and latterly their HB.

However, it is acknowledged that benefit take-up is a complex and multi-faceted issue and there is a high degree of consensus that there are a number of common barriers to benefit take-up that impact on take-up rates and the success or otherwise of associated take-up campaigns. This is demonstrated by the findings from a large body of literature relating to benefit take-up in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Much of this literature relates to research on older people and pensioners and to Income Support (IS) and Pension Credit (PC) but the key findings are applicable to other groups such as families and children and are transferable across other means tested benefits including CTB and HB. There has also been extensive scrutiny of government’s efforts to increase take-up, highlighting the importance of benefit take-up in tackling poverty and contributing to social inclusion and well-being.

2.2 Barriers

A review of research into the barriers to benefit take-up indicates that the main barriers include attitudinal perceptions among potential claimants regarding eligibility, stigma and fear of refusal or mistakes occurring, and systems or administrative barriers such as complex form filling or lack of knowledge and information.

Much of the research has also identified or made suggestions to overcome barriers and thereby to increase take-up, and consultation with benefit recipients has identified specific triggers to claiming and examples of improvements which would encourage more people to claim their eligible entitlement. Appendix 1 sets out a summary of reports reviewed.

2.3 Reasons for Not Claiming

The literature highlights a wide range of reasons for entitled non-recipients not claiming. These include:

- Lack of awareness or knowledge of availability of specific benefits.
- Lack of awareness of eligibility for specific benefits.
- A misunderstanding about the way benefits work and the complexity of the system.
- Stigma and negative associations related to claiming benefits, particularly means tested benefits.
- Concerns over the outcome of claims, a fear either of refusal or of how the outcome may impact on other benefits or of making a mistake and any subsequent impacts.
- Difficulties in completing official forms including difficulties understanding instructions and explanatory notes.
- Disinclination to complete forms / deal with bureaucratic processes.
- Reluctance to disclose personal information and a desire to safeguard privacy.
- Challenges in accessing benefit offices and associated waiting times involved.
- Perception that the amount awarded is not worth the effort required to apply.
- A view among some that they feel that they have sufficient income to live on.

2.4 Types of People who do not Claim

Various reports have highlighted that the following types of people are less likely to claim specific means tested benefits:

- Older people (often those over the age of 75)
- Older people from ethnic minorities
- People living in more affluent areas
- Older people in rural areas
- Owner-occupiers are substantially over-represented in the numbers of entitled non-recipients (ENRs) of CTB.

This would suggest that targeting these categories of people may have greater impact in increasing take-up.

2.5 Increasing Take-up

The literature reviewed has highlighted a broad range of ways to increase take-up. These include the following:

- The literature highlights that a proactive approach could be more successful than general publicity. Home visits were highlighted as a means to increase take-up, especially for older people.
- A key theme is the idea of personal contact, often by a trusted intermediary who could be a friend or professional contact. This would suggest a proactive approach from organisations engaged in benefit take-up activities.
- Changes in personal circumstances often act as a trigger to encouraging people to enquire about eligibility which would suggest targeting people at specific life changing moments such as a birth or death, reaching pensionable age or becoming unemployed.

- Many people are unaware of their eligibility and it is necessary to raise awareness.
- Large household bills can act as a trigger, especially if someone is finding it difficult to manage on their current income.
- The theme of partnership working was common and there was recognition that, while government could do more to encourage take-up, it could not overcome all barriers on its own. Partnership working ranged from informal partnerships with, for example, government departments and LAs to formal partnerships with the voluntary and community sector (VCS), and to working with trusted intermediaries such as GPs. Some evidence suggested that long term established partnerships were more effective than new partnerships in funded initiatives.
- It was recognised that targeting at local levels could be improved by bringing together data sources and by data sharing (where legitimately allowed).

2.6 Evaluation

The importance of evaluation was a strong theme across various reports and a related theme was the need for evidence-based decisions on approaches adopted. It is recognised that benefit take-up activities can be relatively inexpensive and, while they can have substantial impact, there is often a lack of strong robust evidence on their overall effectiveness. This meant it was more difficult for organisations to determine where and how to concentrate their efforts. It was recognised there was a need for further research into what works, for whom and in what circumstances.

In addition, it was recognised that there are challenges in assessing the impact of specific activities and disentangling outcomes solely attributable to those activities from what may have resulted from other contact. However, this does not negate the need to assess the effectiveness of take-up activities.

Related to reviewing effectiveness, it was acknowledged that current information on non-take-up levels is inadequate which means it is difficult for organisations to determine where best to focus resources. This also impacts on setting realistic yet stretching targets for benefit take-up initiatives.

2.7 Summary and Conclusions

There are a wide range of well-documented barriers to benefit take-up known to impact on take-up rates. These include a lack of knowledge of availability of or eligibility for benefits, stigma associated with claiming means-tested benefits, reluctance to disclose personal information, difficulties in completing official forms, and concerns over the outcome of claims.

It is also clear that the barriers to benefit take-up have been documented for over a decade, indicating they are long standing problems and so suggesting they are difficult to overcome. Research also indicates specific groups are less likely to claim including people from ethnic minorities, older people over 75 years, people from rural areas, and owner-occupiers are over-represented in the numbers of ENRs.

The literature highlights various means to increase take-up, including targeting people at life changing events and using trusted intermediaries such as GPs. However, the literature also recognises that there is a need for more research and information, both on non take-up levels as well as on evidence of what works best and for whom. Finally, an additional difficulty exists in assessing the impact of take-up activities and disentangling their impact from other events or activities.

This means there are particular challenges when designing targeted activities and in monitoring impact, while such activities may not realise the anticipated results and may lack an underlying, justifying evidence base. This needs to be considered in any review of LAs' benefit take-up activities to date.

3 Review of HB and CTB Benefit Statistics

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter examines statistics on the number of people in receipt of HB and CTB (i.e. caseload) in Wales. It also looks at how trends in Wales compare with the North East of England.

3.2 Statistics on Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

KPMG accessed National Statistics published by the DWP¹ to analyse recent trends in caseload in Wales and elsewhere. In particular, KPMG sought to compare benefit caseload² prior to and since the implementation of the Scheme (including the 2006/2007 Scheme), to establish whether there were any significant increases following commencement of the Scheme.

3.3 Housing Benefit Statistics

3.3.1 Caseload

Between May 2005 and April 2010³, the number of HB recipients in Wales increased by 18.2% (n=36,360 recipients). This figure varied significantly, from 7.0% in Merthyr Tydfil (where it has been suggested that benefit take-up has frequently been

¹ It is necessary to highlight that until August 2007 DWP released quarterly statistics on HB and CTB recipients for each LA. These statistics were based on clerical returns made by individual LAs of the aggregate number of people claiming HB and CTB at a specific point in time. However, since August 2009, DWP provided monthly information based on the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE)¹ data source (which is a monthly electronic scan of claimant level data direct from LA computer systems). This change in how data is gathered involved a lengthy development process and has resulted in data gaps for 2007, 2008 and 2009. This places some restrictions on data analysis, particularly in looking at caseload and expenditure changes over the duration of the 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 Scheme.

² DWP statistics on CTB recipients exclude Second Adult Rebate cases.

³ The most recently available data.

high, and so would not be expected to increase significantly) to 29.8% in Denbighshire.

Although HB was not included in the 2006/2007 Scheme, it is worth noting changes in caseload over this period as it is reasonable to assume that CTB take-up activities had the potential to impact to some extent on HB take-up.

It is interesting to note that there was a very slight decrease in the number of HB recipients between May 2006 and May 2007 (502 recipients, a decrease of 0.2%) despite the 2006/2007 CTB Take-up Scheme and that there had been a small rise in caseload in the previous year.

Perhaps more significantly, between August 2007⁴ and April 2010, the number of HB recipients in Wales increased by 17.6% (35,280).

Table 1 demonstrates the number of recipients at key intervals before and over the duration of the Scheme and percentage change overall and Chart 1 demonstrates the upward trend over this timeframe.

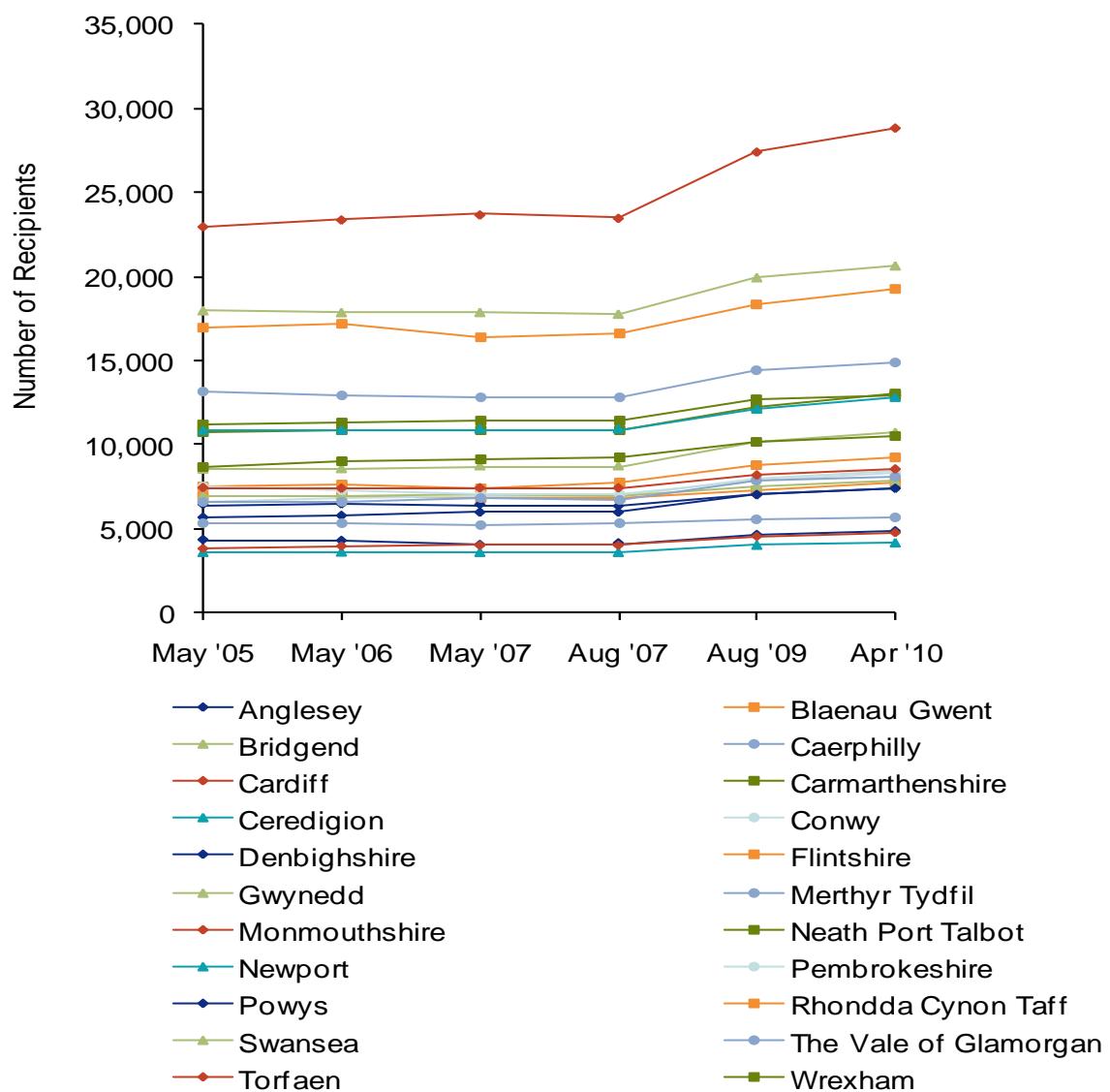
⁴ The 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 Scheme began after April 2008. However, given the data gaps resulting from DWP data collection changes, the best comparator data to use is from August 2007.

Table 1: HB Recipients by LA in Wales

| Local Authority | May-05 | May-06 | May-07 | Aug-07 | Aug-09 | Apr-10 | % Difference May-05-Apr-10 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------------------|
| Anglesey | 4,300 | 4,245 | 4,000 | 4,100 | 4,600 | 4,820 | 12.1% |
| Blaenau Gwent | 6,900 | 6,897 | 6,800 | 6,800 | 7,330 | 7,710 | 11.7% |
| Bridgend | 8,500 | 8,532 | 8,700 | 8,700 | 10,120 | 10,690 | 25.8% |
| Caerphilly | 13,100 | 12,897 | 12,800 | 12,800 | 14,430 | 14,860 | 13.4% |
| Cardiff | 23,000 | 23,403 | 23,700 | 23,500 | 27,420 | 28,840 | 25.4% |
| Carmarthenshire | 10,715 | 10,901 | 10,900 | 10,800 | 12,270 | 13,020 | 21.5% |
| Ceredigion | 3,600 | 3,621 | 3,600 | 3,600 | 4,020 | 4,160 | 15.6% |
| Conwy | 6,600 | 6,804 | 6,900 | 6,900 | 7,940 | 8,370 | 26.8% |
| Denbighshire | 5,700 | 5,806 | 6,000 | 6,000 | 7,020 | 7,400 | 29.8% |
| Flintshire | 7,500 | 7,665 | 7,400 | 7,700 | 8,800 | 9,190 | 22.5% |
| Gwynedd | 6,950 | 6,947 | 7,000 | 6,900 | 7,490 | 7,800 | 12.2% |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 5,300 | 5,309 | 5,200 | 5,300 | 5,490 | 5,670 | 7.0% |
| Monmouthshire | 3,800 | 3,957 | 4,000 | 4,000 | 4,560 | 4,790 | 26.1% |
| Neath Port Talbot | 11,150 | 11,262 | 11,400 | 11,400 | 12,690 | 12,910 | 15.8% |
| Newport | 10,800 | 10,822 | 10,900 | 10,900 | 12,100 | 12,810 | 18.6% |
| Pembrokeshire | 7,490 | 7,298 | 7,100 | 7,100 | 7,810 | 8,270 | 10.4% |
| Powys | 6,400 | 6,420 | 6,400 | 6,300 | 7,030 | 7,420 | 15.9% |
| Rhondda Cynon Taff | 16,900 | 17,211 | 16,400 | 16,600 | 18,360 | 19,260 | 14.0% |
| Swansea | 18,000 | 17,889 | 17,900 | 17,800 | 19,930 | 20,620 | 14.6% |
| The Vale of Glamorgan | 6,600 | 6,629 | 6,800 | 6,700 | 7,820 | 8,120 | 23.0% |
| Torfaen | 7,415 | 7,377 | 7,400 | 7,400 | 8,150 | 8,500 | 14.6% |
| Wrexham | 8,700 | 9,010 | 9,100 | 9,200 | 10,110 | 10,550 | 21.3% |
| Total | 199,420 | 200,902 | 200,400 | 200,500 | 225,490 | 235,780 | 18.2% |

Source: DWP

Chart 1: HB Recipients by LA in Wales



Source: DWP

3.4 Council Tax Benefit Statistics

3.4.1 Caseload

Between May 2005 and April 2010, the number of CTB recipients in Wales increased by 16.8% (46,180 recipients). This figure varied from 8.5% in Pembrokeshire to 27.9% in Monmouthshire.

Similar to HB, there was very little fluctuation in the number of CTB recipients between May 2006 and May 2007, despite the 2006/2007 CTB Take-up Scheme.

However, between August 2007 and April 2010 (when the 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 Scheme was in place) the number of CTB recipients in Wales increased by 13.8% (38,880). This increase ranged from 7.1% in Merthyr Tydfil to 18.7% in the Vale of Glamorgan.

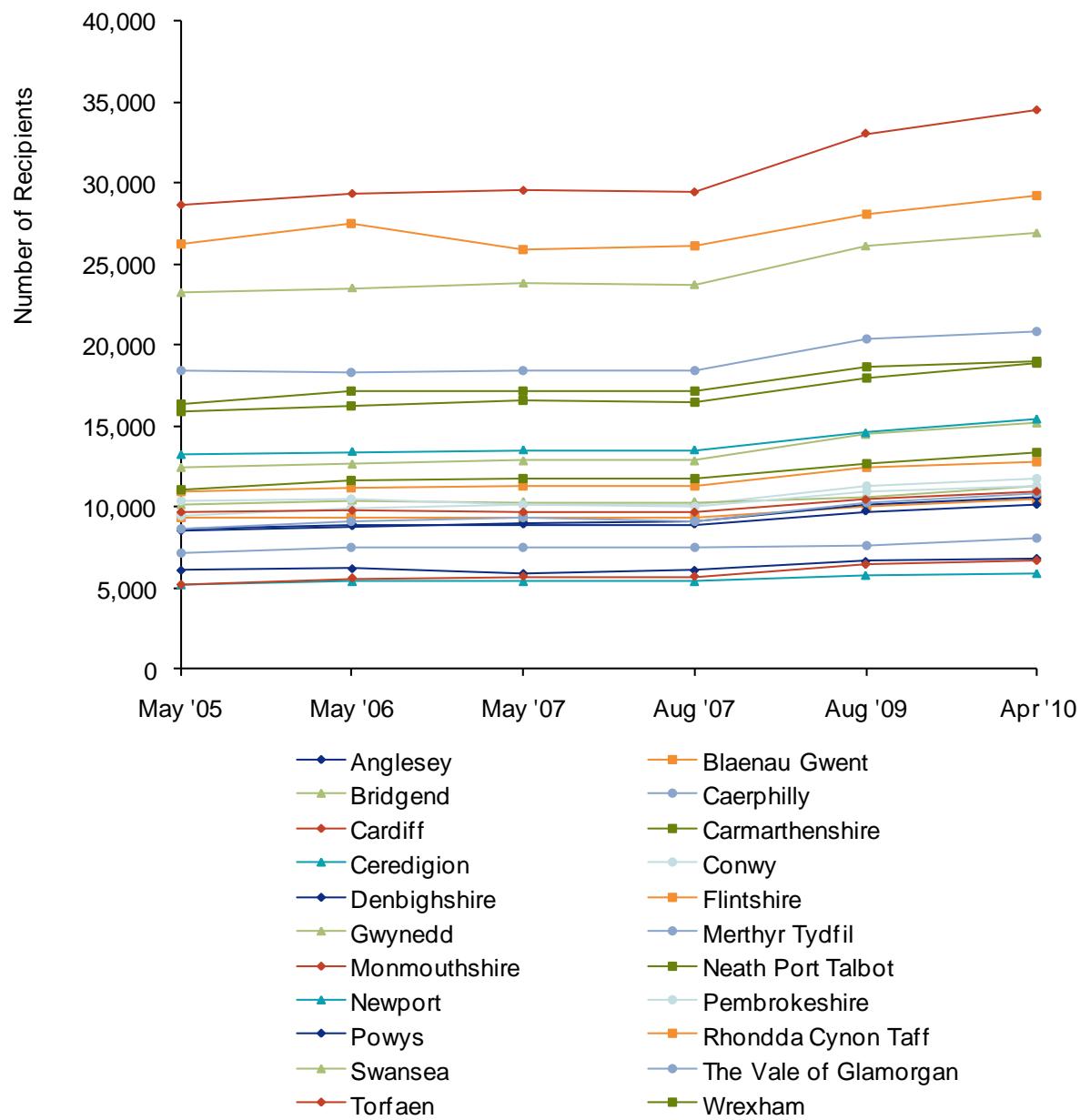
Table 2 demonstrates the number of CTB recipients at key intervals before and over the duration of the Scheme and percentage change overall and Chart 2 demonstrates the upward trend over this timeframe.

Table 2: CTB Recipients by LA in Wales

| Local Authority | May-05 | May-06 | May-07 | Aug-07 | Aug-09 | Apr-10 | % Difference May-05-Apr-10 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------------------|
| Anglesey | 6,100 | 6,200 | 5,900 | 6,100 | 6,660 | 6,850 | 12.3% |
| Blaenau Gwent | 9,300 | 9,400 | 9,300 | 9,400 | 10,000 | 10,500 | 12.9% |
| Bridgend | 12,500 | 12,700 | 12,900 | 12,900 | 14,490 | 15,180 | 21.4% |
| Caerphilly | 18,400 | 18,300 | 18,400 | 18,400 | 20,390 | 20,870 | 13.4% |
| Cardiff | 28,600 | 29,300 | 29,500 | 29,400 | 33,040 | 34,490 | 20.6% |
| Carmarthenshire | 15,900 | 16,200 | 16,600 | 16,500 | 17,960 | 18,920 | 19.0% |
| Ceredigion | 5,200 | 5,400 | 5,400 | 5,400 | 5,790 | 5,910 | 13.7% |
| Conwy | 9,500 | 9,900 | 10,100 | 10,100 | 11,270 | 11,800 | 24.2% |
| Denbighshire | 8,500 | 8,800 | 9,000 | 9,100 | 10,120 | 10,570 | 24.4% |
| Flintshire | 10,900 | 11,200 | 11,300 | 11,300 | 12,400 | 12,750 | 17.0% |
| Gwynedd | 10,100 | 10,400 | 10,300 | 10,300 | 10,660 | 11,260 | 11.5% |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 7,200 | 7,500 | 7,500 | 7,500 | 7,580 | 8,030 | 11.5% |
| Monmouthshire | 5,200 | 5,600 | 5,700 | 5,700 | 6,420 | 6,650 | 27.9% |
| Neath Port Talbot | 16,400 | 17,100 | 17,200 | 17,200 | 18,610 | 19,000 | 15.9% |
| Newport | 13,200 | 13,400 | 13,500 | 13,500 | 14,570 | 15,440 | 17.0% |
| Pembrokeshire | 10,400 | 10,500 | 10,200 | 10,000 | 10,960 | 11,280 | 8.5% |
| Powys | 8,600 | 8,900 | 8,900 | 8,900 | 9,730 | 10,140 | 17.9% |
| Rhondda Cynon Taff | 26,200 | 27,500 | 25,900 | 26,100 | 28,020 | 29,190 | 11.4% |
| Swansea | 23,200 | 23,500 | 23,800 | 23,700 | 26,130 | 26,950 | 16.2% |
| The Vale of Glamorgan | 8,600 | 9,100 | 9,300 | 9,100 | 10,290 | 10,800 | 25.6% |
| Torfaen | 9,700 | 9,800 | 9,700 | 9,700 | 10,480 | 10,990 | 13.3% |
| Wrexham | 11,100 | 11,600 | 11,700 | 11,800 | 12,670 | 13,410 | 20.8% |
| Total | 274,800 | 282,300 | 282,100 | 282,100 | 308,240 | 320,980 | 16.8% |

Source: DWP

Chart 2: CTB Recipients by LA in Wales



Source: DWP

3.5 Comparison with the North East

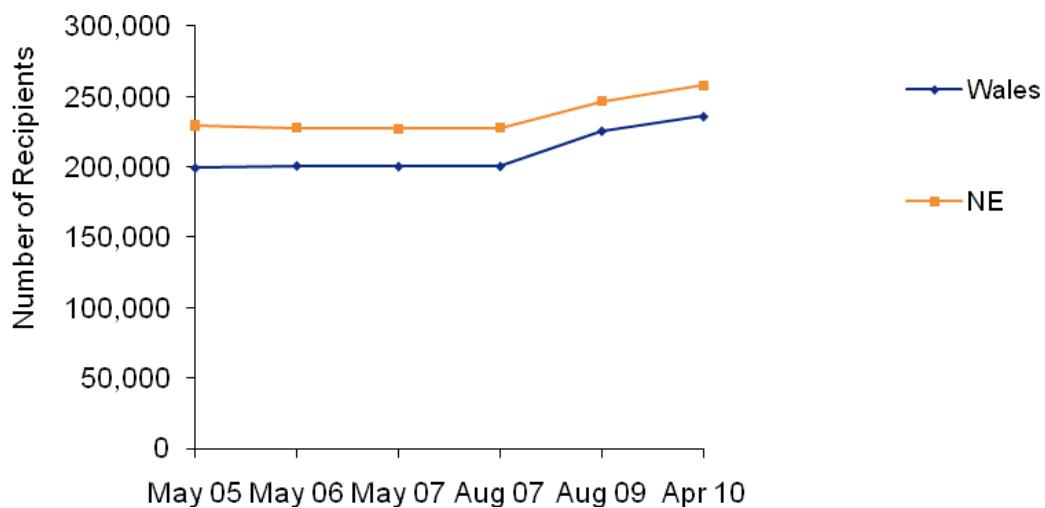
In order to establish how trends in Wales compared with other areas where similar grant schemes had not been implemented, comparison was made with the North

East of England⁵. The North East of England was selected because, of the English regions, it is the most similar to Wales across a range of socio-economic indicators including employment rates, earnings, health outcomes, welfare recipients and industrial legacy.

3.5.1 *Housing Benefit Caseload*

Both regions experienced an increase in HB caseload. However, the overall percentage increase between May 2005 and April 2010 was higher in Wales (18.2%) than in the North East (13.2%). This could suggest that the WAG Take-up Scheme was effective and had a positive impact on increasing HB recipients in Wales.

Chart 3: HB Recipients in Wales and the North East



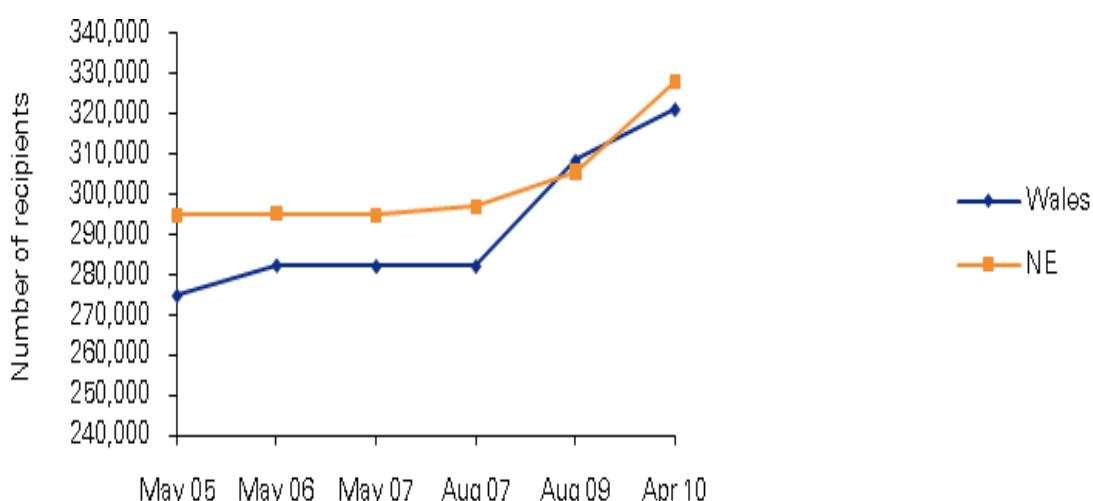
Source: DWP

⁵ Consultation with LAs in the North East suggested there was no regional take-up scheme similar to the WAG Scheme over this timeframe, although it is noted that DWP undertook a national advertising campaign in 2006.

3.5.2 CTB Caseload

As with HB, the increase in CTB recipients between May 2005 and April 2010 was higher in Wales (16.8%) compared to the North East (11.3%). Again, this could suggest that the WAG Take-up Scheme was effective and had a positive impact on increasing CTB recipients in Wales.

Chart 4: CTB Recipients in Wales and the North East



Source: DWP

3.6 Summary and Conclusions

- Between May 2005 and April 2010, HB and CTB caseload in Wales increased by 18.2% and 16.8% respectively. It is noted that there was a very slight decrease in the number of HB and CTB recipients between May 2006 and May 2007. DWP did not produce official statistics between August 2007 and August 2009 which makes it difficult to comment on increases from April 2008 to current.
- Comparison between Wales and the North East suggests that both regions experienced increases in the number of recipients for HB and CTB but that

increases in Wales were greater than the increases in the North East, where there was no dedicated take-up scheme. This could suggest that the WAG Take-up Scheme was effective and had a positive impact on increasing the number of people accessing HB and/or CTB.

Chapter 4 explores HB and CTB take-up in more detail, examining the proportional impact of the Scheme by considering the potential unmet benefit take-up and the impact of social-economic factors such as the recession.

4 Quantifying and Analysis of HB and CTB Take-Up

4.1 Introduction

Research was undertaken by Oxford Economics to gauge the extent of benefit uptake and proportional impact of the Scheme across Wales as a whole by estimating the potential unmet benefit take-up. This research also looked to analyse changes in HB and CTB recipient numbers over time, controlling for economic factors where possible, in order to assess the possible impact of the Scheme from inception to the present period.

4.2 GB Official Estimates of HB and CTB Take-Up Rates⁶

The key publication which presents latest estimates (and annual time series) for take-up of means-tested benefits in Great Britain - covering Income Support (IS), Pension Credit (PC), HB, CTB and Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) (Income Based) – is the 'Income Related Benefits Estimates of Take-Up in 2008-09' report (<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/irb.asp>) produced by the DWP.

4.2.1 Latest GB Benefit Take-Up Rate Estimates

Table 3 presents a summary of headline 2007/08 and 2008/09 take-up estimates for GB for HB and CTB⁷.

⁶ Benefit take-up refers to the receipt of a particular benefit, for example, HB or CTB by an 'eligible' individual. An 'eligible' recipient is an individual whose circumstances satisfy the particular benefit criteria, thereby qualifying them to be 'eligible' to claim the benefit.

⁷ The self-employed are excluded from these estimates due to a lack of information on self-employed incomes, although the majority of self-employed may not, in any case, be entitled to housing or council tax benefits.

Table 3: GB HB and CTB Take-Up Estimates (2008/09)

| | Housing Benefit | | Council Tax Benefit | |
|--|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 |
| Caseload | | | | |
| No. recipients (000s) | 3,940 | 4,030 | 4,950 | 5,010 |
| Range of ENRs (000s) | 600 : 990 | 680 : 1,180 | 2,330 : 3,060 | 2,130 : 2,930 |
| Range of take-up rates | 80 : 87 | 77 : 86 | 62 : 68 | 63 : 70 |
| Expenditure | | | | |
| Total claimed (£m) | 14,080 | 15,770 | 3,760 | 3,960 |
| Range of entitled non-recipient unclaimed (£m) | 1,350 : 2,470 | 1,780 : 3,410 | 1,570 : 2,160 | 1,490 : 2,150 |
| Range of take-up rates | 85 : 91 | 82 : 90 | 63 : 70 | 65 : 73 |

Source: DWP

The key messages from Table 3 are as follows⁸.

- *Housing Benefit*: Between one-fifth and one-sixth of persons entitled to HB in GB do not receive HB. In 2008/09, this equated to between 0.7m and 1.2m benefit units⁹ and between £1.8bn and £3.4bn extra in HB which could have been claimed (an average of £2,600 per case) if take-up rates were 100%.
- *Council Tax Benefit*: Approximately one-third of persons entitled to CTB in GB do not receive CTB, which in 2008/09 equated to between 2.1m and 2.9m persons and between £1.5bn and £2.2bn in unclaimed entitlements (an average of £700 per case). One reason for the lower take up of CTB may be the lower eligible claim amount on average (i.e. £2,600 for HB versus £700 CTB per case).

⁸ Readers are advised to refer to the DWP report for detailed caveats surrounding these estimates.

⁹ Readers are advised to refer to the technical definitions for an explanation of the term 'benefit unit'. Note the range in ENRs appears much larger than the range in take-up estimates as the denominator in the take-up calculation is a much larger figure than ENRs (it is the sum of recipients and ENRs).

In addition, DWP's estimates report shows the following:

- There are likely to be a number of individuals/households who are eligible for both HB and CTB but claiming neither (although for some of these people, the amount of unclaimed benefit, in monetary terms, may be small).
- In pure caseload number terms, CTB has the largest number of ENRs compared with all other reported welfare benefits, while HB unclaimed receipts are larger than other reported benefits.

In terms of the implications for this evaluation, this provides some justification for the focus on targeting take-up of HB (where there is the highest unclaimed receipts) and CTB (where there is the largest number of ENRs), and even more so given the inter-dependence between these two benefits.

4.2.2 Wales Official Estimates of HB and CTB Take-Up Rates

Estimates of take-up rates for HB and CTB (and other means-tested benefits), similar to those presented for GB, are not available below GB level although some basic regional analysis is produced in the DWP estimates report. This regional analysis looks at the GB share of entitled recipients and ENRs of each region. Where the share of ENRs is larger for a region than the share of entitled recipients, this implies that the region has a below GB-average take-up rate¹⁰.

Table 4 sets out this regional analysis. As indicated, the main message for Wales is that for both HB and CTB, the GB share of ENRs and entitled recipients is the same

¹⁰ This type of simplistic analysis needs to be treated with caution. According to DWP, the underlying data is not corrected for biases that may be inherent in estimates of entitlement to income-related benefits, and share figures are rounded to whole percentages (which make a large difference for smaller regions such as Wales).

(at least when rounding to whole percentages), implying that Wales has similar benefit take-up rates to GB as a whole.

Interestingly, according to this analysis, the North East and Scotland would appear to have above GB average benefit take-up rates (as their share of GB ENRs is lower than their share of GB entitled recipients). In contrast, the more economically prosperous regions (Eastern, South East and South West) appear to have below GB average take-up rates for HB and CTB, a result that might be expected.

Table 4: GB Regions HB and CTB Entitled Recipients and ENRs (2008/09)

| | Housing Benefit | | | Council Tax Benefit | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------|------------|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| | % GB ENRs | % GB ERs | Difference | % GB ENRs | % GB ERs | Difference |
| North East | 4.0% | 6.0% | 2.0 | 4.0% | 7.0% | 3.0 |
| North West | 12.0% | 14.0% | 2.0 | 13.0% | 14.0% | 1.0 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | 9.0% | 9.0% | 0.0 | 9.0% | 9.0% | 0.0 |
| East Midlands | 8.0% | 7.0% | -1.0 | 9.0% | 7.0% | -2.0 |
| West Midlands | 7.0% | 9.0% | 2.0 | 9.0% | 10.0% | 1.0 |
| East of England | 9.0% | 7.0% | -2.0 | 10.0% | 7.0% | -3.0 |
| London | 21.0% | 15.0% | -6.0 | 12.0% | 13.0% | 1.0 |
| South East | 11.0% | 10.0% | -1.0 | 11.0% | 10.0% | -1.0 |
| South West | 8.0% | 6.0% | -2.0 | 9.0% | 7.0% | -2.0 |
| Wales | 5.0% | 5.0% | 0.0 | 6.0% | 6.0% | 0.0 |
| Scotland | 7.0% | 11.0% | 4.0 | 8.0% | 10.0% | 2.0 |
| GB | 101.0% | 99.0% | - | 100.0% | 100.0% | - |

Source: DWP

4.2.3 Wales Non-Official Estimates of HB and CTB Take-Up Rates

Given that estimates of take-up rates for HB and CTB are not available below GB level, Oxford Economics has estimated the number of ENRs for HB and CTB in Wales to ensure that the level of unmet need does not remain ‘un-estimated’, albeit the estimates must be accompanied with a number of caveats. This is to give some

picture of the scale of ‘unmet need’, as opposed to operating in a ‘vacuum’ of information on the potential scale of target persons for take-up schemes.

Two methods of estimation were used, both of which involved applying the latest GB benefit take-up rates to the latest underlying Welsh aggregate data. One was a simple method and the other was slightly more sophisticated where aggregate overall recipient group is broken down into specific categories for which different GB take-up rates are available. This way the aggregate or overall take-up rate for Wales may differ from the overall GB average based on underlying Welsh demographic and economic characteristics¹¹.

- Based on the simple method, the number of HB ENRs in April 2010 ranges from 38,000 housing units (i.e. households / individuals) to 70,000; and the number of CTB ENRs ranges from 138,000 to 188,000 benefit units. This is demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Wales HB and CTB Estimate of ENRs (April 2010) – Simple Method

| | Housing Benefit | | Council Tax Benefit | |
|--|-----------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|
| | Lower bound | Upper bound | Lower bound | Upper bound |
| Caseload | | | | |
| No. recipients (000s) - as of April 2010 | 236 | 236 | 321 | 321 |
| Range of ENRs (000s) | 38 | 70 | 138 | 188 |
| Range of take-up rates | 77 | 86 | 63 | 70 |

Source: DWP, Oxford Economics

- Based on the slightly more sophisticated method, the estimated number of HB ENRs in April 2010 ranges from 45,000 benefit units to 80,000 (compared to 38,000-70,000 for the simple approach); and the aggregate take-up rate is

¹¹ There is however a constraint in that the category type chosen depends on recipient data being available at this level of detail, and ideally for both Wales and Welsh LAs (if the same methodology is to be applied for the two spatial levels). For HB, recipient data is available by tenure.

estimated as 75%-84% (compared to the GB take-up rate of 77%-86% in 2008/09 – See Table 3). Results are demonstrated in Table 6. Unfortunately, for CTB, no breakdown is available in a usable form to apply this method.

Table 6: Wales HB Estimate of ENRs (April 2010) – More Sophisticated Method

| | Housing Benefit | |
|---|-----------------|-------------|
| | Lower bound | Upper bound |
| Caseload | | |
| No. recipients (000s) - as of April '10 | 236 | 236 |
| Social rented | 162 | 162 |
| Private rented | 74 | 74 |
| Range of ENRs (000s) | 45 | 80 |
| Social rented | 12 | 24 |
| Private rented | 33 | 56 |
| Range of take-up rates (%) | 75 | 84 |
| Social rented | 87 | 93 |
| Private rented | 57 | 69 |

Source: DWP, Oxford Economics

Furthermore, it is worth highlighting the potential monetary value of unclaimed entitlements:

- Assuming a similar monetary value of unclaimed entitlements per case as for GB (£2,600), this would equate to unclaimed HB entitlements of between £120m and £210m per annum for Wales.
- Assuming a similar monetary value of unclaimed entitlements per case as for GB (£700), this would equate to unclaimed CTB entitlements of between £95m and £130m per annum for Wales.

In terms of the implications for this evaluation, this suggests there are substantial numbers of ENRs for both HB and CTB and this, together with the monetary value

involved, would provide justification and rationale for WAG to consider to fund a future HB and CTB Take-up Scheme.

4.3 Relationship between HB and CTB Recipients and Socio-Economic Factors

This section explores the relationship between recipient numbers and socio-economic factors such as, for example unemployment, in order to identify socio-economic drivers of benefit levels. An understanding of these relationships then helps us to understand relationships over time with benefit recipient trends. This analysis is undertaken at both GB regional level and Welsh LA level¹².

4.3.1 Housing Benefit

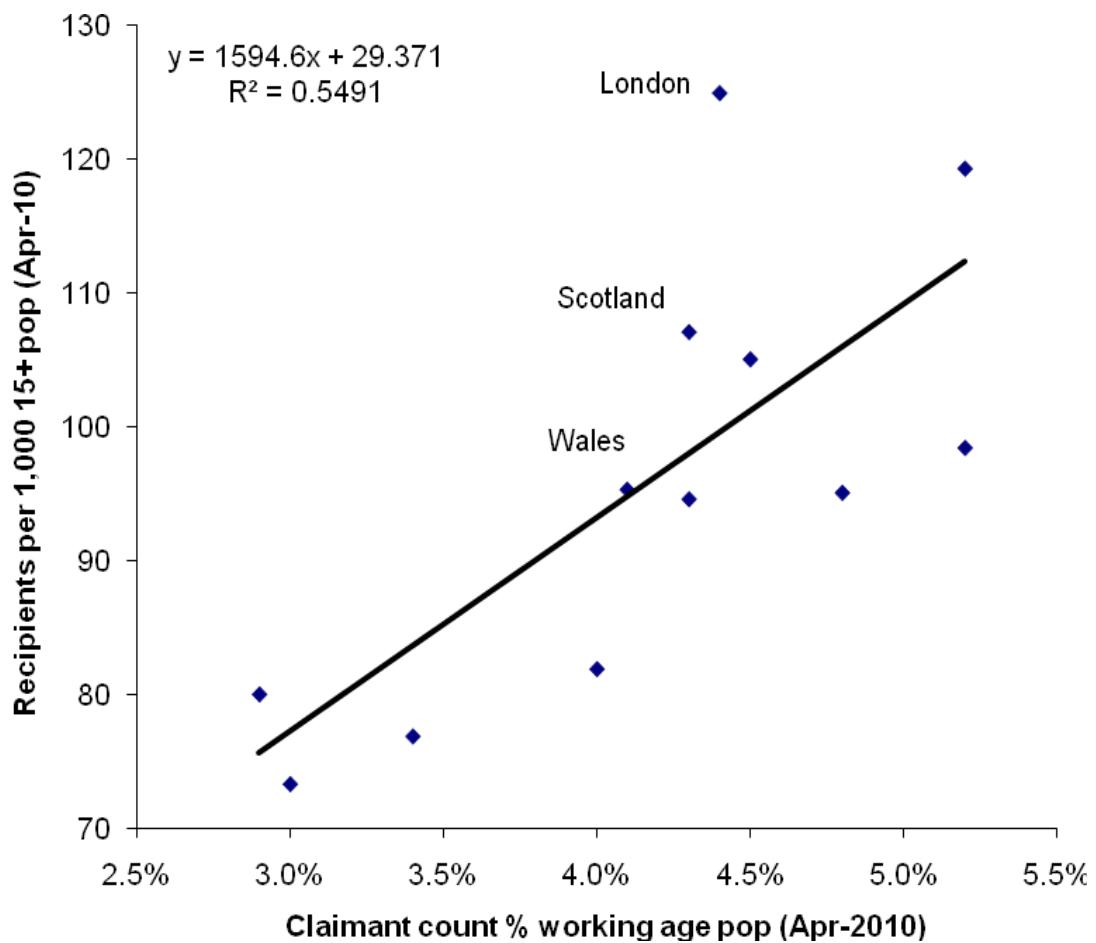
The relative concentration of HB recipients in Wales, per population aged 15+ and as a share of households, is similar to the GB average, but lower than economically similar regions such as the North East.

Furthermore, the relative concentration of HB recipients across local authorities in Wales, per population aged 15+ and as a share of households, varies significantly. The concentration is lowest in local authorities such as Powys, Monmouthshire and Ceredigion, and highest in Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent.

Statistical analysis shows that there is a strong correlation between unemployment rates and the relative concentration of HB recipients at both a regional and Welsh LA level. This is demonstrated in Chart 5 which shows that regions with higher unemployment tend to have higher concentrations of HB recipients.

¹² Additional details are contained in Appendix 2.

Chart 5: Relationship between Claimant Unemployment Rate and HB Recipients (April 2010) – GB Regions



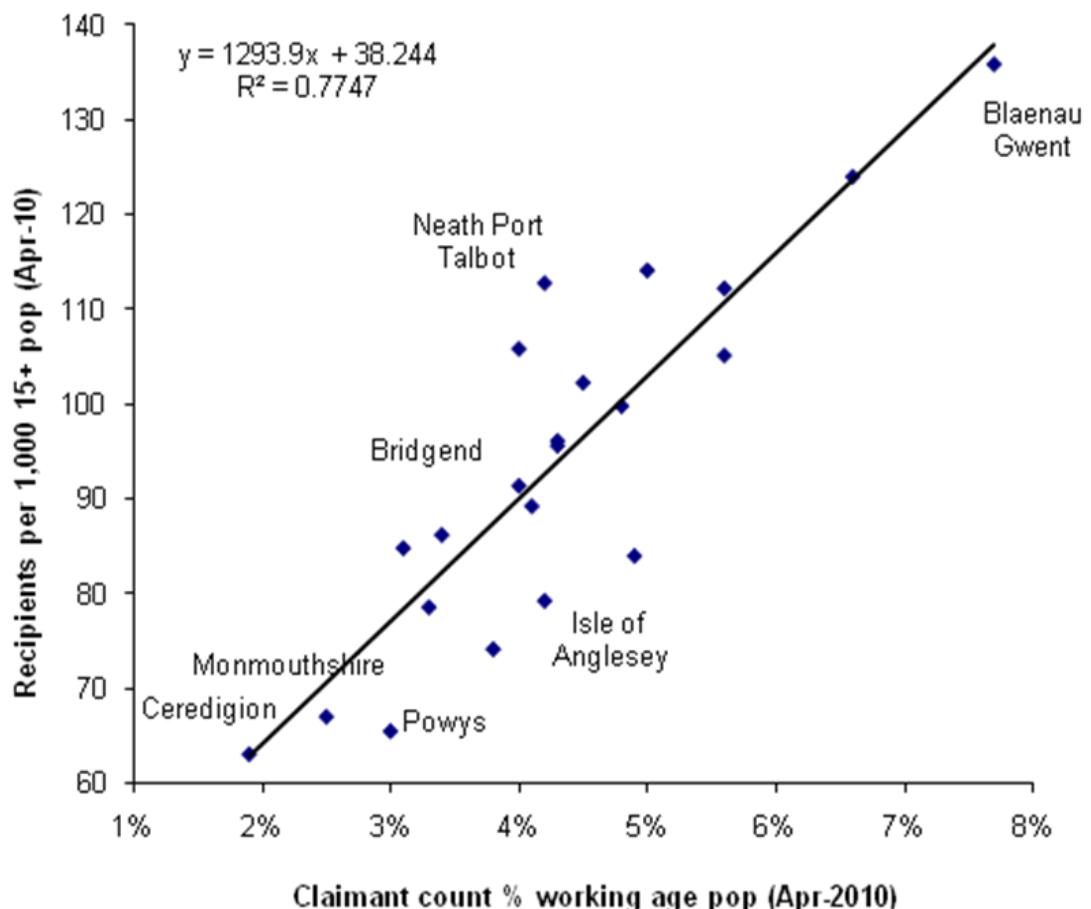
Source: NOMIS, Oxford Economics, DWP

Chart 6 demonstrates that this strong correlation also holds for LAs. This shows that Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil, which have high levels of unemployment, also have high concentrations of HB recipients while Powys, Monmouthshire and Ceredigion have low levels of unemployment and low concentrations of HB recipients.

This means that when unemployment increases, there are similar increases in the number of HB recipients. However, given the already high concentration of HB recipients in specific areas such as Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent, it may be that

these areas have less potential for substantial growth in new claimants. This would help explain the lower levels of increase in HB recipients in these LAs over the duration of the Scheme (See Table 1, Chapter 3).

Chart 6: Relationship between Claimant Unemployment Rate and HB Recipients (April 2010) – Welsh LAs



Source: NOMIS, Oxford Economics, DWP

An examination of the relationship between the concentration of HB recipients and a wider range of other socio-economic factors was undertaken; these other social-economic factors included workplace Gross Value Added (GVA), resident wages, house prices, top 10 and top 50 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) and industrial legacy (proxied by manufacturing's share of total employment, 1991).

Statistical analysis shows:

- There is a strong negative correlation between the relative concentration of HB recipients and house prices i.e. LAs with a higher share of higher tax band houses tend to have lower concentrations of HB recipients.
- There is a strong correlation between the relative concentration of HB recipients and deprivation i.e. LAs with a higher share of more deprived super output areas tend to have higher concentrations of benefit recipients.

More detailed statistical analysis of these socio-economic variables shows that the best predictors of concentration of HB recipients are unemployment, deprivation and the retired share of total population. This helps explain why the concentration of HB recipients is lowest in local authorities such as Powys, Monmouthshire and Ceredigion and is highest in Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent.

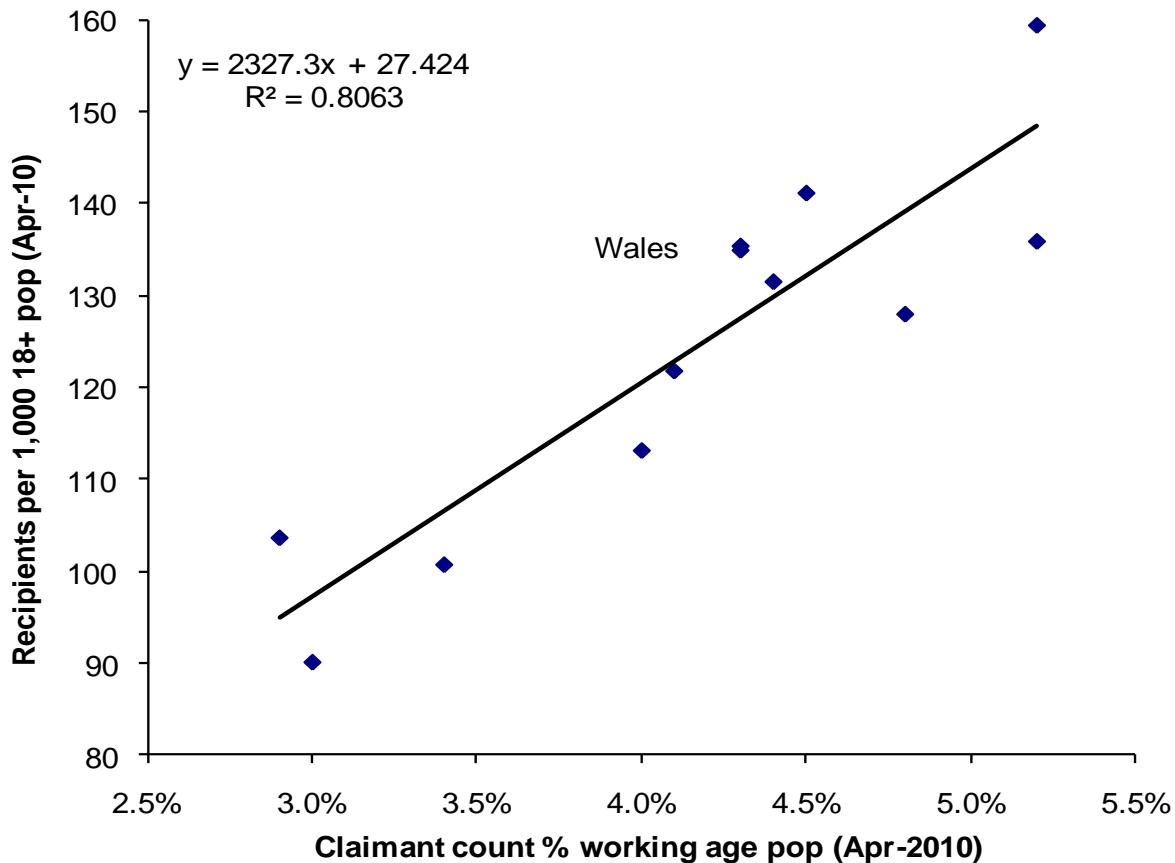
4.3.2 *Council Tax Benefit*

The relative concentration of CTB recipients in Wales, per population aged 18+ and as a share of households, is above the GB average but, similar to HB, the concentration is lower than economically similar regions such as the North East.

The relative concentration of CTB recipients across LAs in Wales, per population aged 18+ and as a share of households, again varies significantly, with the same set of LAs ranked towards the bottom and top as for HB.

Again, as for HB, a similar strong correlation exists between unemployment rates and the relative concentration of CTB recipients at both regional and Welsh LA level. This is demonstrated in Chart 7 which shows that regions with higher unemployment tend to have higher concentrations of CTB recipients.

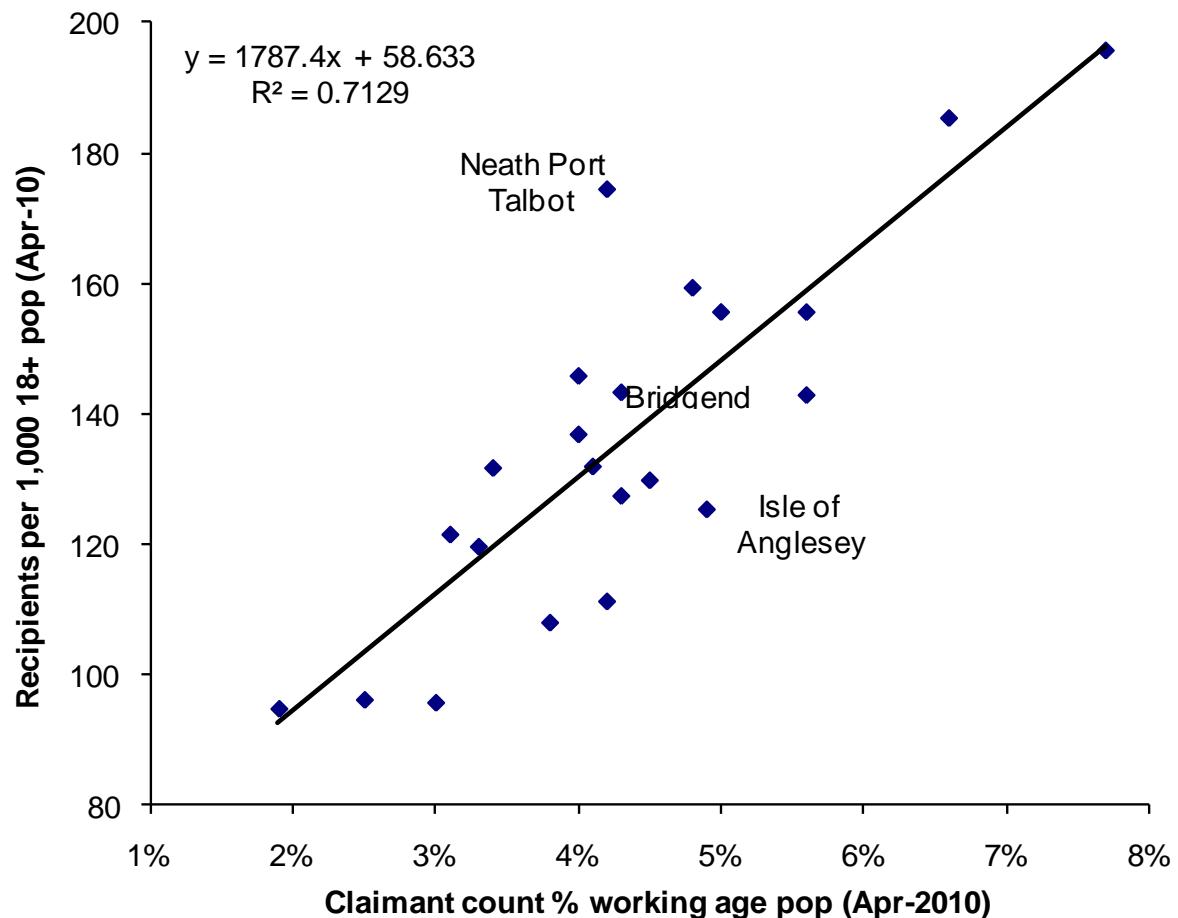
Chart 7: Relationship between Claimant Unemployment Rate and CTB Recipients (April 2010) – GB Regions



Source: NOMIS, Oxford Economics, DWP

Chart 8 demonstrates the strong correlation within LAs. As for HB, this shows that Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil, which have higher levels of unemployment, also have higher concentrations of CTB recipients while Powys, Monmouthshire and Ceredigion have low levels of unemployment and low concentrations of HB recipients.

Chart 8: Relationship between Claimant Unemployment Rate and CTB Recipients (April 2010) – Welsh LAs



Source: NOMIS, Oxford Economics, DWP

Again, this means that when unemployment increases, there are similar increases in the number of CTB recipients. However, given the already high concentration of CTB recipients in specific areas such as Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent, it may be that these areas have less potential for substantial growth in CTB recipients. This would help explain the lower levels of increase in CTB recipients in these LAs over the duration of the Scheme (See Table 2, Chapter 3).

Again, as for HB, an examination of the relationship between the concentration of CTB recipients and a range of other socio-economic factors was undertaken. This statistical analysis shows:

- There is a strong negative correlation between the relative concentration of CTB recipients and house prices i.e. LAs with a higher share of higher band houses tend to have lower concentrations of CTB recipients.
- There is a strong correlation between the relative concentration of CTB recipients and deprivation i.e. LAs with a higher share of more deprived super output areas tend to have higher concentrations of benefit recipients.

More detailed statistical analysis of these socio-economic variables shows that the best predictors of concentration of CTB recipients are unemployment, house prices and deprivation. This again helps explain why the concentration of CTB recipients is lowest in local authorities such as Powys, Monmouthshire and Ceredigion and is highest in Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent.

4.3.3 LA Estimates of HB and CTB Take-Up Rates

One of the useful ways in which the socio-economic information described above can be used is to predict the expected benefit recipient levels and compare them to actual levels. For example, given demographics, unemployment and deprivation in an LA, what would its benefit recipient rate be expected to be (a rough proxy for eligible recipients) compared to the actual level?

Where actual recipients of HB and CTB are less than expected, this suggests that benefit take-up rates are below average. This analysis can then be combined with earlier estimates of Welsh aggregate take-up rates and ENRs to produce “unmet demand” estimates for LAs. However, this analysis is far from precise and only

indicative of possible divergences in take-up rates across LAs. The results should therefore be treated with caution.

The results of the actual versus expected analysis are presented in Table 7. This shows that the actual concentrations of benefit recipients for both HB and CTB are lower than predicted in some LAs. Anglesey, Flintshire and Caerphilly are examples of such LAs. The opposite is true for Conwy, Pembrokeshire, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot where actual recipients are higher than predicted. There do not, however, appear to be patterns in the differences between actual and expected recipients across the LAs e.g. there is no particular pattern of lower take-up rates in less deprived / wealthier local authorities.

Table 7: HB and CTB Recipients per 15+ and per 18+ Population Actual versus Expected (April 2010) 000s¹³

| | Housing Benefit | | | Council Tax Benefit | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------|
| | Actual Recipients (000s) | Expected Recipients (000s) | Difference | Actual Recipients (000s) | Expected Recipients (000s) | Difference |
| Anglesey, Isle of | 84 | 99 | -15% | 125 | 144 | -13% |
| Blaenau Gwent | 136 | 133 | 2% | 196 | 190 | 3% |
| Bridgend | 96 | 98 | -2% | 143 | 144 | -1% |
| Caerphilly | 105 | 114 | -8% | 155 | 164 | -5% |
| Cardiff | 102 | 100 | 3% | 130 | 130 | 0% |
| Carmarthenshire | 86 | 89 | -3% | 132 | 138 | -5% |
| Ceredigion | 63 | 67 | -5% | 95 | 98 | -4% |
| Conwy | 89 | 84 | 6% | 132 | 126 | 5% |
| Denbighshire | 91 | 88 | 4% | 137 | 132 | 3% |
| Flintshire | 74 | 82 | -10% | 108 | 115 | -6% |
| Gwynedd | 79 | 82 | -4% | 119 | 123 | -3% |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 124 | 126 | -2% | 185 | 182 | 1% |
| Monmouthshire | 66 | 69 | -5% | 96 | 90 | 6% |
| Neath Port Talbot | 113 | 105 | 7% | 174 | 163 | 7% |
| Newport | 112 | 105 | 7% | 143 | 144 | -1% |
| Pembrokeshire | 85 | 78 | 9% | 121 | 114 | 6% |
| Powys | 67 | 66 | 2% | 96 | 96 | 0% |
| Rhondda Cynon Taff | 100 | 110 | -9% | 159 | 164 | -3% |
| Swansea | 106 | 91 | 16% | 146 | 132 | 11% |
| The Vale of Glamorgan | 79 | 84 | -6% | 111 | 110 | 1% |
| Torfaen | 114 | 103 | 11% | 155 | 150 | 4% |
| Wrexham | 96 | 94 | 2% | 127 | 134 | -5% |

Source: DWP, ONS, Oxford Economics

¹³ Note while the model for both HB and CTB is based on deprivation data for 2008, it is still valid to use this data for actual versus expected analysis in 2010 as there is unlikely to have been considerable change in LA deprivation ranks. In any case, 2008 is the latest year deprivation data is available for Wales.

Caveat: It must be borne in mind that this analysis is far from precise and only indicative of possible divergences in take-up rates across LAs. The results should therefore be treated with caution.

It is possible to use results in Table 7, combined with earlier estimates of Welsh aggregate take-up rates and ENRs, to produce estimates of ENRs for LAs. This is done by adjusting the assumed GB take-up rates for each LA, although again, these adjustments are indicative rather than precise¹⁴.

As Table 8 shows, the largest number of ENRs in a single LA is, not surprisingly, in Cardiff, given it is the largest LA in population terms.

While these figures for ENRs may appear high in some LAs, it must be remembered that the figures are consistent with GB take-up rates and underlying demographics of LAs, and there is no way of knowing whether the actual number of ENRs falls closer to the lower or upper bound of estimates (which makes a big difference).

¹⁴ Strictly speaking, the above actual minus expected percent differences cannot be read across directly to adjust take-up rates, but can be used to make indicative adjustments.

Table 8: Wales LA HB and CTB Estimates of ENRs (April 2010) 000s

| | Housing Benefit | | Council Tax Benefit | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|
| | Lower bound | Upper bound | Lower bound | Upper bound |
| Anglesey, Isle of | 1.4 | 2.3 | 3.7 | 5.0 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 1.4 | 2.4 | 4.6 | 6.2 |
| Bridgend | 2.4 | 4.1 | 6.6 | 9.0 |
| Caerphilly | 3.0 | 5.1 | 10.2 | 13.8 |
| Cardiff | 5.6 | 9.7 | 15.0 | 20.5 |
| Carmarthenshire | 2.7 | 4.7 | 8.2 | 11.2 |
| Ceredigion | 1.3 | 2.1 | 2.6 | 3.5 |
| Conwy | 1.8 | 3.2 | 5.1 | 7.0 |
| Denbighshire | 1.9 | 3.3 | 4.6 | 6.3 |
| Flintshire | 2.0 | 3.4 | 6.2 | 8.4 |
| Gwynedd | 1.5 | 2.6 | 4.9 | 6.7 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 1.0 | 1.7 | 3.5 | 4.8 |
| Monmouthshire | 0.8 | 1.4 | 2.6 | 3.5 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 2.0 | 3.8 | 7.3 | 10.1 |
| Newport | 1.8 | 3.4 | 6.7 | 9.2 |
| Pembrokeshire | 1.4 | 2.5 | 4.3 | 6.0 |
| Powys | 1.5 | 2.6 | 4.4 | 6.0 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taff | 5.0 | 8.3 | 12.7 | 17.3 |
| Swansea | 2.4 | 4.9 | 9.1 | 12.8 |
| The Vale of Glamorgan | 2.4 | 3.9 | 4.7 | 6.4 |
| Torfaen | 0.6 | 1.5 | 4.8 | 6.5 |
| Wrexham | 1.6 | 2.8 | 5.8 | 8.0 |
| Wales (000s) | 45 | 80 | 138 | 188 |

Source: Oxford Economics

4.4 Change in HB and CTB – Impact of the Scheme

This section attempts to analyse changes in HB and CTB recipient numbers over time, and in particular over the timeframe during which the Scheme has been in place to assess, where possible, the impact of the Scheme on the number of HB and

CTB recipients who otherwise may not have claimed benefits they were entitled to (and thereby the impact on take-up rates). It is highlighted that this is extremely difficult to do, not least because benefit recipient data for Wales is not typically available in the level of detail required to help to isolate different effects, e.g. a breakdown by pensioner / non-pensioner, tenure and economic activity status.

As a result, the scope of what can be achieved is limited to analysis of GB HB and CTB recipient trends, including breakdowns of aggregate trends where possible, analysis of GB regional aggregate HB and CTB recipient trends and analysis of Welsh LA aggregate HB and CTB recipient trends.

4.4.1 *GB HB and CTB Recipient Trends*

- **Housing Benefit:** Over the period August 2007¹⁵ to April 2010, the number of HB recipients in GB has risen by 0.7m or 17% (over the same period GB claimant unemployment levels increased by 80%).

Broken down by housing tenure, much of this growth has been from individuals/households living in private rented accommodation. There has been a fall in the last year in pensioner recipients, while the number of under 65 recipients has risen by 0.8m or 30% since November 2008.

Table 9 sets out HB recipient trends, demonstrating the substantial increases over time of those in private rented accommodation and the fall in the number of recipients over 65 years.

¹⁵ Ideally, time-series analysis would commence when the recession started in the UK / Wales (or when the Scheme commenced). The UK economy officially went into recession in 2008 Q3 (following two successive quarterly declines in GDP). Claimant unemployment in Wales started rising noticeably around the same time (summer 2008), and the seasonally adjusted ILO unemployment rate, from the Labour Force Survey, marginally earlier. We have however had to use August 2007 as the pre-recession reference period for benefit recipient data, because data for parts of 2008 are not available due to the development process involved in the production of SHBE.

Table 9: GB HB Recipient Trends

| | Housing Benefit | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Aug-07 | Nov-08 | Aug-09 | Apr-10 |
| Total recipients (000s) | 4,041 | 4,172 | 4,495 | 4,746 |
| Social rented sector | 3,100 | 3,109 | 3,193 | 3,295 |
| Private rented sector | 941 | 1,055 | 1,273 | 1,449 |
| Aged under 65 | na | 2,653 | 2,958 | 3,467 |
| Aged over 65 | na | 1,515 | 1,536 | 1,279 |
| Single person with no dependent child | na | na | na | 2,698 |
| Single person with dependent child | na | na | na | 1,083 |
| Couple with no dependent child | na | na | na | 493 |
| Couple with dependent child | na | na | na | 473 |

Source: DWP

Though by no means conclusive, there is some suggestion here of a recession effect at GB level, given that the majority of extra recipients have characteristics of persons who have potentially been made redundant (e.g. working age under 65 and not living in the social rented sector), as opposed to persons outside the labour market.

- **Council Tax Benefit:** Over the period August 2007 to April 2010, the number of CTB recipients in GB has risen by 0.7m or 14%. There has been relatively little change in the last year in pensioner recipients, but a 20% rise in under 65 recipients since November 2008 (see Table 10 overleaf). Again there is some evidence here of a recession effect.

Table 10: GB CTB Recipient Trends

| | Council Tax Benefit | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Aug-07 | Nov-08 | Aug-09 | Apr-10 |
| Total recipients (000s) | 5,079 | 5,157 | 5,527 | 5,780 |
| Aged under 65 | na | 2,947 | 3,301 | 3,550 |
| Aged over 65 | na | 2,202 | 2,217 | 2,230 |
| Single person with no dependent child | na | na | na | 3,278 |
| Single person with dependent child | na | na | na | 1,058 |
| Couple with no dependent child | na | na | na | 925 |
| Couple with dependent child | na | na | na | 521 |

Source: DWP

4.4.2 GB Regional HB and CTB Aggregate Recipient Trends

It is noted that across GB, Wales has been one of the more affected regions economically during the recession, experiencing the fourth largest increase in its claimant unemployment rate.

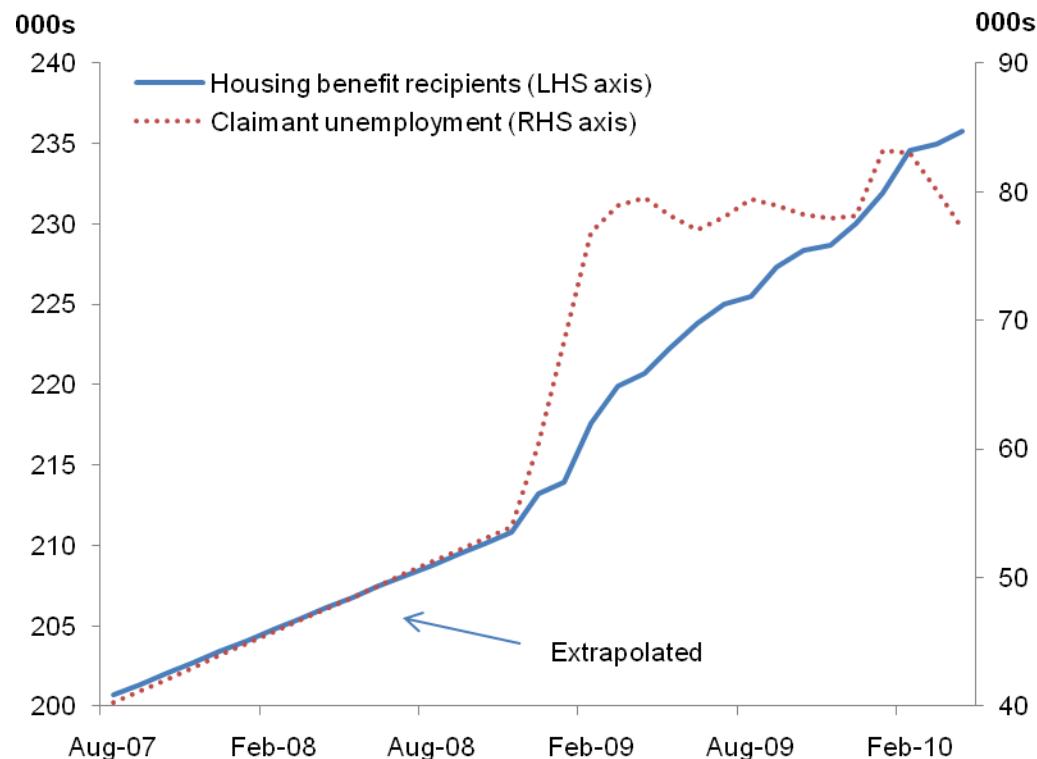
- **Housing Benefit:** The number of HB recipients in Wales, from August 2007 to the latest period available (April 2010), has grown at a rate (18%) just above the GB average (17%).

Across GB, the number of benefit units receiving HB has tended to increase most in percentage terms in regions where unemployment rates were initially lower and have not risen as fast (although statistically this association is not particularly strong). However, this may suggest a lack of potential for significant additional growth in HB in regions such as the North East, even though they have been more affected by the recession i.e. there is limited scope in some localities to increase benefit take up further.

Despite this lack of positive relationship for unemployment and HB claimants, it is clear from Chart 9 that claimant unemployment and HB recipients have tended to

increase together. This indicates a recession effect on recipient numbers, as recipient numbers started to grow faster when unemployment picked up.¹⁶

Chart 9: GB Regions Change in HB Recipients and Change in Claimant Unemployment



Source: DWP, NOMIS

- **Council Tax Benefit:** The number of CTB recipients in Wales, from August 2007 to the latest period available (April 2010), has grown at a rate (14%) which is equivalent to the GB average growth.

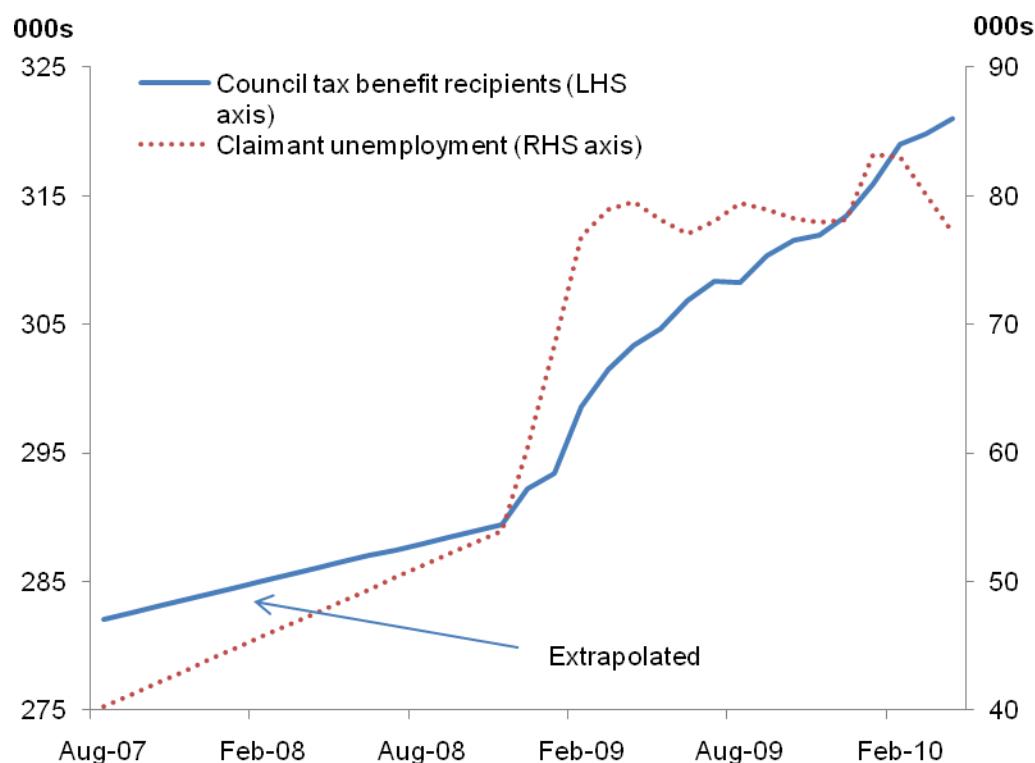
Similar to HB, the number of benefit units receiving CTB has tended to increase most in percentage terms in regions where unemployment rates were initially

¹⁶ It is noted that this analysis is somewhat limited by a lack of 2008 recipient data.

lower and have not risen as fast (however, it is highlighted that this relationship is not very strong).

Nevertheless, as demonstrated in Chart 10, Welsh claimant unemployment and CTB recipients have tended to move together suggesting a recession effect.

Chart 10: GB Regions Change in CTB Recipients and Change in Claimant Unemployment



Source: DWP, NOMIS

4.4.3 Wales Local Authority HB and CTB Aggregate Recipient Trends

Across Wales, there has been quite considerable variation in the change in claimant unemployment rates amongst LAs. The trend has generally been for LAs with higher starting unemployment rates to have experienced greater increases in unemployment during the recession.

- **Housing Benefit:** The growth in benefit units claiming HBs across local authorities in Wales, from August 2007 to April 2010, has similarly varied, as was the case for regions.

Furthermore, as for GB regions, areas where HB recipient numbers have tended to grow strongest have been areas where unemployment rates have not risen by as much. Again, this might suggest that some of those additional persons who became unemployed during the recession in existing high unemployment areas were already claiming HB (as, for example, they may have been on low incomes). This could explain the lower increases in HB recipients in Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent than in other LAs.

- **Council Tax Benefit:** The story for CTB across LAs is broadly similar. There has been wide variation in recipient growth and lack of a positive relationship between recipient and unemployment change.

4.5 Summary

- Official government estimates suggest that substantial numbers of persons entitled to HB and to CTB in GB did not receive the benefit in 2008/09, equating to substantial unclaimed monies. Indeed, HB has the largest unclaimed receipts and CTB has the largest number of ENRs. Furthermore, there are likely to be a number of individuals/households who are eligible for both HB and CTB but claiming neither.

DWP does not produce official take-up estimates below GB level. However, unofficial estimates by Oxford Economics estimated that the number of HB ENRs in Wales in April 2010 ranges from 45,000 benefit units to 80,000, and this would equate to potential unclaimed housing benefit entitlements of between £120m and £210m per annum. The number of CTB ENRs in Wales in April 2010 is estimated to range from 138,000 benefit units to 188,000, equating to potential unclaimed council tax entitlements of between £95m and £130m per annum.

These official estimates provide some justification for the focus on targeting take-up of HB and CTB while the unofficial estimates provide justification and rationale for WAG to consider funding a future HB and CTB Take-up Scheme.

- In assessing the impact of the Scheme, over the noise of the recession, a lack of all of the required information limits the level of analysis which could be undertaken. Nevertheless, an assessment of GB HB and CTB recipient trends shows an increase over the period August 2007 to April 2010 and there was some suggestion here of a recession effect at GB level given that the majority of extra recipients have characteristics of persons who have potentially been made redundant (as opposed to persons already outside the labour market). This was reinforced by the time series of GB and Welsh claimant unemployment and benefit recipients which tended to move together. This means that all of the increase over time cannot be attributed to the HB and CTB Take-up Scheme.

However, at both GB level and across Welsh LAs, the number of benefit units receiving HB and those receiving CTB have tended to increase most in percentage terms in regions where unemployment rates were initially lower and have not risen as fast i.e. areas less affected by the recession. This could suggest more a lack of potential for significant additional growth in recipients in regions such as the North East, and in Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil even though they have been more affected by the recession. For example, some of those additional persons who became unemployed during the recession in existing high unemployment areas may already have been claiming HB and/or CTB (as for example they may have been on low incomes).

In conclusion, there is a need for more detailed monitoring and recording information on benefit recipients including their reasons and rationale for coming forward in order to comment more conclusively on the impact of the Scheme over the noise of the recession.

5 Overview of the Scheme

5.1 Introduction

To date the WAG has committed £4.5 million on benefit take-up activity since April 2006, funding a one-year intervention in 2006/2007 and then embarking on a three-year intervention from 2008 to 2011.

In December 2005, it was announced as part of the budget report for 2006/2007 that £1.5m was being made available to LAs to fund a CTB Take-up Scheme. The Scheme was intended to boost take-up of benefit by reaching those people who were entitled to CTB but who were not claiming. At this time, there was widespread concern about the impact of council tax increases on people on fixed income, particularly pensioners and those whose properties had risen up the value bands because of a 2005 revaluation. As a result, the 2006/2007 CTB Take-up Scheme was focused on increasing take-up by older people on state pensions.

A further £1 million per year was committed to the Scheme for the three years 2008-2011. In order to maximise the impact of the Scheme, it was expanded to include HB take-up. The scope was also widened so that it targeted families with children as well as older people on state pensions.

Funding allocation was based on a Standard Spending Assessment (SSA)¹⁷ formula with the amount of funding allocated to each LA ranging from £20,000 (£30,000 in 2006/2007) to Merthyr Tydfil to £98,000 (£148,000 in 2006/2007) to Cardiff.

¹⁷ The formula to calculate SSAs makes use of information which reflects the differing characteristics of Welsh local authorities, ranging from the rural, sparsely populated authorities of North, Mid and West Wales to the urban authorities of South East Wales. The formula is derived by a needs based calculation using information reflecting demographic, physical, economic and social characteristics. It also reflects the relative costs of providing comparable services between different authorities.

Appendix 3 sets out the allocation of funding across each LA for the Scheme since 2006/2007.

In order to allow LAs to utilise their knowledge of their local population, to respond to any particular local characteristics and to provide LAs with complete flexibility over the use of this funding, WAG did not set any restrictions or parameters on how the funds should be spent, deciding instead to give LAs freedom to choose how best to use their grants to support local take-up. However, LAs were required to produce an action plan for approval and a final progress report highlighting the impact of the Scheme in their area.

This Chapter provides an overview of the benefit take-up activity that has been initiated by the LAs, based on a review of available action plans and progress reports and provides some commentary on their effectiveness and impact.

5.2 Overview of Activities of the 2006/07 Scheme

A review of available reports in relation to the 2006/2007 Scheme suggested a number of common themes.

A recurring theme that was prominent from the information that was available was joint and collaborative working among authorities. For example:

- Six LAs (Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Cardiff, Monmouthshire, Powys and Torfaen) joined to purchase new software from an IT supplier for an e-benefits solution. This enables LAs to complete an electronic form on a claimant's behalf and offering a more efficient and speedy administrative process for claimants and was adopted to help overcome one of the known barriers to benefit take-up – completion of claims forms. This initiative would not have gone ahead in the absence of Scheme funds. In addition, this joint approach enabled the LAs involved to negotiate a 50% discount on the initial costs,

representing a total saving of £350k. The specific LA costs varied according to the size and number of users but each LA received a 50% discount.

- Six North Wales LAs (Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd and Wrexham) collaborated on a local radio advertising campaign in North Wales.
- Four LAs (Ceredigion, Conwy, Neath Port Talbot and the Vale of Glamorgan) joined to promote CTB take-up through their software supplier. This involved their software provider telephoning all CT payers who were not claiming CTB and offering them a benefits check. If it was established that they might be eligible, then the customer could complete a form over the phone or a form could be posted out to them. Again, collaboration across the LAs provided some economies of scale for the provider and some cost savings for the LAs.
- There was also evidence of partnership working with other government agencies, relevant stakeholder organisations such as housing associations and with voluntary and community organisations (VCS). Many LAs worked with The Pensions Service to target specific pension claimants who were not in receipt of CTB and to assist them in filling out application forms. Similarly, many LAs collaborated formally or informally with VCS organisations such as Citizen's Advice and Age Concern. LAs adopted different approaches to these partnerships reflecting local needs and existing relationships. A number of examples are worth highlighting:
 - Cardiff held a meeting with VCS organisations, asking them to submit proposals for increasing CTB take-up. As a result, it used part of its funds to fund a part-time welfare advice worker. It further strengthened partnership working by doing this on a joint basis with the Vale of Glamorgan. Cardiff

also trained existing Age Concern welfare advice workers to verify CTB application forms of behalf of the LA.

- Pembrokeshire entered into a partnership with CAB under the Better Advice Better Health Initiative.
- Gwynedd developed closer working relationships internally, with its Social Services Department, and externally, with housing associations. Rhondda Cynon Taff took a similar approach.

A second theme was the range of activities and types of initiatives LAs undertook in order to increase benefit take-up. This included both targeted activities and broader marketing type activities.

- Many LAs produced advertising and promotional materials. This included posters for display in locations such as local GP practices, public libraries, post offices and other similar public places; leaflets explaining the availability of CTB included with council tax bills and rent notices. For example, Newport undertook a mail shot across specific postcode areas. Some LAs participated in ‘road shows’ and/or various open days or held benefit surgeries including Gwynedd which held surgeries in housing association offices and village halls.
- Some LAs used their funds to target those hardest to reach such as specific ethnic groups. For example, as part of its formal partnership approach with VCS organisations, Cardiff funded its local Somali Advice Centre to employ two trainee advice officers with Somali language skills to promote benefit take-up.
- Some LAs made changes and/or improvements to their websites. For example, Gwynedd updated its local website to include a benefit calculator to help people to ascertain quickly if they may have a possible entitlement.

- Several LAs developed targeted and innovative approaches. For example, Swansea developed a suite of activities including collaborating with head teachers to do a leaflet drop for school children to take home (and this was provided in different languages as necessary); Swansea also targeted leaflet drops in LA wards with low levels of/no take-up of CTB. Rhondda Cynon Taff provided awareness training to frontline council staff.

In summary, LAs were involved in a range of activities. Half were involved in partnership with other organisations that included six LAs collaborating to improve and speed up the application process for claimants while four collaborated to undertake a targeted telephone campaign. Six collaborated on an advertising campaign and many LAs worked with other agencies and the VCS. All LAs engaged in advertising and marketing campaigns that included, for example general radio advertising and more targeted marketing in specific council wards.

5.3 Overview of Activities of the 2008/2011 Scheme

A review of available action plans and progress reports in relation to the 2008/2009 and the 2009/2010 Scheme suggested that, similar to the 2006/2007 Scheme, LAs undertook a wide range of activities and partnership working continued to be a strong theme.

One notable difference from the 2006/2007 Scheme, evident from LAs' action plans, was that many LAs began to adopt more of and/or increased their targeted approach, although most still continued with general marketing and awareness activities alongside this.

There was also evidence that LAs were giving greater consideration to the range and types of activities and to the planning and implementation of these. It was clear that many LAs were beginning to assess the impact of specific activities and scaling up or down accordingly. This is a positive finding as it demonstrates that LAs were

learning from their experiences and striving to make the maximum impact with their funding.

It was notable for the 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 Scheme that over half of the LAs reported recruiting additional staff while others redeployed existing resources. Newly recruited staff tended to be mainly BTUOs¹⁸ who took a targeted and focused approach to encouraging take-up. BTUOs were involved in a variety of activities such as utilising Pension Service scans to identify potential entitlement to HB and/or CTB, undertaking home visits where they provided one-to-one support with form filling, and general liaison and awareness raising with other relevant stakeholder organisations. Again, this was a positive development demonstrating that many LAs used the funds to increase front line staff and offer a customer focused approach.

A substantial number of LAs indicated that they undertook awareness raising sessions, both internal within their LA as well as with external organisations. For example, Monmouthshire, Torfaen and Swansea held quarterly landlord forums to inform landlords of HB and CTB. Over half of LAs reported undertaking awareness raising with front-line council staff and many reported that this worked well in terms of cross referrals.

In terms of partnership working, there was clear evidence that many LAs had looked to neighbouring LAs to share knowledge, expertise and resources, and looked to take a coordinated approach. Examples included:

- Blaenau-Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil, which were in receipt of £25k and £20k (2.5% and 2% of overall funding) respectively, agreed to work together to make best use of the funding for the benefit of customers and to maximise impact. They recruited and shared, on an equal basis, a BTUO and collaborated on joint marketing activities.

¹⁸ The actual job title varied across LAs.

- Flintshire and Wrexham undertook a joint radio advertising campaign and in 2008/2009 employed a joint BTUO.
- Monmouthshire and Torfaen collaborated on a general advertising campaign.
- The six LAs in North Wales continued to collaborate, focusing on a joint advertising campaign on local busses.
- Several LAs continued to promote CTB take-up through their software supplier although there were mixed views on the success of this approach resulting in some LAs only being involved for one year.

Many LAs continued to work in close partnership with The Pension Service to undertake PC scans in order to identify pensioners who were not in receipt of HB and/or CTB. Others worked in partnership with the VCS. For example, Ceredigion continued with its partnership with Age Concern, considering the outcomes and impact to be greater than the initial investment.

LAs continued to undertake a range of marketing and advertising activities. This included general advertising in, for example, local newspapers, on buses and posters for GP surgeries and similar public places. In addition, several LAs took a more targeted advertising approach and/or targeted their advertising to key events. Examples included mail shots sent out with rent notices and/or CT bills, press articles to coincide with changes to HB and/or CTB such as the change in November 2009 for Child Benefit to be disregarded from HB and CTB payments.

Some LAs, notably Cardiff, worked with their internal communications unit (or similar) to produce marketing and publicity plans. Many LAs sought to use real life stories detailing income and actual awards and/or local ‘personalities/champions’ on advertising material to encourage potential claimants to come forward.

There was evidence of targeting specific groups. For example, Carmarthenshire used text messaging to reach those under 25 years highlighting that assistance is

available to low-income families. Conwy arranged for a BTUO to target companies that were making staff redundant and provide benefit advice.

The majority of LAs organised events and some held ‘benefit surgeries’ at key locations and/or at key events in order to raise awareness of benefits available and offer guidance in the application process at a location which was convenient to the claimant. For example, Rhondda Cynon Taff offered a Mobile Advice Centre that offered easier access to assistance for potential claimants. Anglesey ran joint surgeries with statutory and VCS organisations.

Cardiff and Carmarthenshire introduced free-phone services that were staffed by dedicated BTUOs. BTUO hotline staff determined whether a claimant would be eligible and helped them with the application, by completing it over the phone, arranging an office appointment, arranging a home visit or sending the form to the customer to complete. Information about this service was detailed on all publicity material and promoted widely to all partners.

In summary, many LAs continued to adopt a wide range of activities in order to encourage ENRs to come forward. These activities included a mix of targeted and more general activities and it was clear that LAs were beginning to assess the impact of different activities and amending their approach accordingly.

5.4 Summary and Conclusions

It is clear from a review of action plans and progress reports that the funding provided to date to all 22 LAs has enabled them to undertake a wide range of benefit take-up activities. There is clear evidence that LAs took a more focused and planned approach to take-up activities from 2008 and it is likely that the proposed three-year funding available helped in this regard and in particular in investing in staff resources.

LAs were provided with complete flexibility in terms of their take-up activities enabling them to utilise local knowledge and provide activities tailored to local needs. This approach also enabled LAs to try different approaches and provided some information on what, why and how different approaches worked better than other approaches. LAs were also able to work on a partnership / collaborative basis with other stakeholder organisations, which included sharing knowledge as well as resources.

In conclusion, the Scheme has allowed LAs to undertake a proactive and sustained campaign to increase HB and CTB take-up rates. In addition, the Scheme has provided LAs with the opportunity to trial a series of approaches, methodologies and target groups to determine those that work more effectively.

6 Implementation of the Scheme

6.1 Introduction

This Chapter provides an overview of the implementation of the 2006/2007 and 2008/2011 Scheme and provides a summary of consultation with LA representatives and WAG finance staff.

6.2 Implementation of the 2006/2007 Scheme

The 2006/2007 CTB Scheme was launched in response to recognition that some entitled non-recipients of CTB do not claim for various reasons including stigma, pride and lack of awareness. The Scheme was designed to provide LAs with additional funding to help identify entitled non-recipients and to take them gently through the benefit application process. Although the timeline for the development and implementation of the 2006/2007 CTB Take-up Scheme was short, Benefits Managers within the LAs enthusiastically welcomed the additional funds provided.

Grant funding was offered to all LAs to support them in respect of expenditure to be incurred during the financial year and, as noted, LAs were given complete flexibility on how best to use their grants to support take-up. The grant was payable in two instalments and LAs had to provide statements of expenditure incurred across advertising and promotion, staff and training, third party payments, and other actions (with a description) as well as provide quarterly caseload data on the number of CTB claimants and the average expenditure levels received by claimants for the first three quarters of 2006/2007 as well as the first three quarters of 2005/2006.

The speed of implementation of the 2006/2007 Scheme meant that several LAs faced some challenges to complete the financial spend within the timeframe required. Several LAs (Anglesey, Caerphilly, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Wrexham) requested permission to carry over a proportion

of the grant monies allocated in 2007/2008, as they had been unable to spend it within the timeframe. The reasons for this included delays in deploying staff resources and putting in place partnership arrangements with other organisations. Fortunately, the Local Government Finance Division was successful in negotiating some flexibility with the Finance Department for those LAs to submit claims for their outstanding amounts (circa £160k) beyond the financial year end 2006/2007. This was a sensible and pragmatic approach.

6.3 Implementation of the 2008/2011 Scheme

The implementation of the 2008/2011 Scheme involved additional considerations as the scope was widened to include HB and to focus on people of working age, although the considerations and developments for the 2006/2007 Scheme meant that the development of the 2008/2011 Scheme was not too onerous.

Similar to the 2006/2007 Scheme, LAs were to produce action plans and progress reports on activities and given complete flexibility on how to use the funds. However, the implementation of the 2008 Scheme was supported by two key initiatives:

- An official launch with presentations from Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan on their benefit take-up activities undertaken to date.
- The setting up of a working group to research the barriers to benefit take-up and highlight best practice and offer practical solutions (Barriers to Take-up in Wales, July 2008).

These initiatives were very positive developments as they provided LAs with a wealth of information and contributed to helping LAs to develop their activities beyond those undertaken in 2006/2007. They also helped reinforce important messages on the importance of developing activities which overcome known barriers and of assessing the impact of activities.

6.4 Consultation on the Implementation

In terms of the administration and costs associated with the Scheme, almost all LAs were positive in their comments. One LA highlighted that the lack of restrictions and flexibility associated with the Scheme's implementation helped in developing innovative approaches.

No LA reported any issues with the reporting arrangements required by WAG. Examples of comments from LAs included "fairly simple and straightforward"; "Not a tedious process to obtain (funds) and report (on)"; "worked well"; "process worked efficiently".

Some LAs highlighted that the costs associated with implementing the Scheme were more than the WAG funds. In some cases, any overspend was 'absorbed' by the Benefit Unit within the LA and accounted for as part of their general ongoing statutory benefit take-up efforts while some LAs used the funding costs associated with the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for pensioners¹⁹ to support the HB/CTB scheme costs. Some LAs also highlighted the indirect costs incurred in terms of increased workloads and hence pressure on frontline staff.

Consultation with representatives from the Local Government Finance Division in the WAG was positive in terms of the administrative and implementation of the Scheme. It was highlighted that the implementation and processes involved in the Scheme are relatively straightforward and are similar to those for other grant schemes. It was indicated that the Scheme was specifically designed to provide maximum flexibility to LAs to use their local knowledge, partnerships and relationships and lever off existing activities in order to maximise the impact, rather than for activities to be determined or prescribed by WAG. Reporting arrangements were deliberately designed to be commensurate with the funding while maintaining probity and clear

¹⁹ This was £5k per LA.

accountability. While this reduced the administrative and reporting burden for LAs it meant that LAs reported their outputs in different ways thereby presenting challenges in collating monitoring information.

No substantial suggestions were made in terms of elements of the processes that could be improved. One minor suggestion related to aligning the deadlines for receipt of the grant claim and action plans, as currently LAs receive their first instalment before submitting an action plan.

6.5 Summary and Conclusions

Consultation with key stakeholders confirmed that all were satisfied with the current administration and implementation of the Scheme. It is clear that the processes involved are similar to those for comparable grant schemes and presented no difficulties for either WAG or for the LAs.

The 2008-2011 implementation was supported by research and information initiatives which were positive developments and demonstrated WAG's learning from the 2006/2007 implementation and commitment to supporting LAs.

However, the lack of standard reporting templates presents challenges in monitoring the overall impact of the Scheme on benefit take-up and to measure the impact and success of specific activities against other activities. It is suggested that greater consideration is given to monitoring and recording outcomes in the same manner across all LAs in order to capture the full impact of all activities and the learning from this could contribute to furthering the objective of increasing take-up.

7 Consultation with Stakeholders

7.1 Introduction

This section presents the findings from the consultations that were undertaken with representatives from the LAs and with other stakeholder organisations.

7.2 Consultation with LAs

Consultations were undertaken with representatives from all 22 LAs. In the main, most representatives consulted were Benefits Managers or similar, with responsibility for overseeing the Scheme.

Representatives were asked about the following:

- An overview of their LA's benefit take-up activities.
- The rationale and reasons for adopting specific activities and approaches and whether they had taken account of any relevant research e.g. Wales benefit take-up report, or DWP guidance.
- The quantitative outcomes of current approaches and how these had been measured and if it was possible to discern what has been additional and what may have been as a result of other factors such as, for example, the recession.
- What had worked well and what had worked less effectively; and what could have been done differently and/or better in future schemes.
- The challenges and/or barriers to increasing take-up rates.
- Evidence or views that the scheme and its activities impacted differently on different groups of people, e.g. (lone) parents, older people etc.
- Any additional impacts (if any) i.e. non-monetary impacts/benefits e.g. improved partnership working, enhanced service provision, customer relations, working with specific groups etc.

- The costs involved in implementing the schemes within each LA and views on how well the administration of the scheme worked.
- Details on any claimant feedback captured/document.
- Details on other organisations/similar schemes operating in the area.
- Views on alternatives to the Scheme/its activities i.e. views on what would happen in the absence of the Scheme; and whether there was overlap with other activities.

A range of themes emerged through the consultations with LA representatives and these are discussed below. Comments on the implementation of the Scheme are contained in Chapter 6.

7.3 Rationale

As noted in Chapter 5, there was a wide-ranging variety of activities across LAs and the rationale and reasons for adopting specific activities varied across the LAs.

Many LAs had referred to the Wales Barriers to Benefit Take-up report and to the DWP guidance, and had considered the ideas and suggestions contained in these. Overall, the guidance available was considered helpful although one LA suggested that the DWP guidance was fairly outdated, dating back to 2004.

Some LAs drew on additional research and guidance. Some LAs (Cardiff, Denbighshire) highlighted guidance contained in other reports such as *Take-up the Challenge, The role of local services in increasing take up of benefits and tax credits to reduce child poverty* from the Child Poverty Group (HM Treasury). For example, Cardiff highlighted that this guidance had provided them with additional ideas such as contact with local registrars for births and deaths.

Some LAs commented on the usefulness of information gained from the official launch of the 2008 Scheme, highlighting how they had used ideas presented by

Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan. For example, based on Swansea's experience, Torfaen provided basic training to its Council Tax advisers about benefits and its Benefits Team always reported to the Council Tax advisers the outcomes of referrals thereby highlighting the benefits of partnership /joint working.

There were clear examples of LAs sharing information and ideas, informally, either through working groups or by cross sharing among LAs. There was a clear sense that LAs communicated with each other, looking at what each was doing and considering if this could/would work in their LA.

This would suggest that the initiatives developed to support the implementation of the 2008/2009 Scheme were positively received by LAs and had an impact on their subsequent benefit take-up activities.

Another theme related to learning, either by drawing on the experience and knowledge of benefit staff, knowledge of benefit work and/or in learning from previous take-up activities/earlier Schemes. Several LAs highlighted the substantial years of benefit experience held by staff. A few LAs suggested that they had been involved in some benefit take-up activity prior to the WAG funding which provided them with invaluable learning points and good practice.

Bridgend is a case in point. Bridgend highlighted that it had learned from its initial take-up activities in 2006/2007 where it had adopted a generic approach and where the returns and results had been disappointing. Notably, Bridgend adopted an entirely different and more focused approach in the 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 Scheme which was more successful as evidenced by the benefits awarded.

Learning and the ongoing assessment of activities was another common theme. Several LAs gave examples of how they continued to evaluate their activities and determine if specific activities were worth continuing. For example:

- Newport highlighted that its approach had evolved over the three years of funding, moving from general mail shots to becoming successively more targeted.
- Cardiff determined that its advertising on buses had not been as successful as desired and did not repeat this in subsequent years.
- Pembrokeshire highlighted that its team identified new and innovative ideas each year rather than repeat previous activity. This included targeting different people in different ways such as cross checking activities with, for example, blue badge holders, and with concessionary travel holders.
- Swansea suggested that its overall strategy had remained consistent but its activities had changed as it wished to “keep its campaign fresh” and where some approaches were not as successful as first envisaged, they were not repeated. For example, cinema advertising incurred expenditure but generated a low response and was discontinued. Torfaen also reported a low response to cinema advertising.

This would suggest that many LAs were proactive in seeking out research and information to underpin their take-up activities and ensure their actions were evidence based and to monitor results and adapt their activities accordingly.

Some LAs highlighted that it was up to LAs to be innovative and to reach customers which no one was reaching (i.e. those who were hardest to reach). In order to do so, many had involved other stakeholders within their LA as well as stakeholders in organisations such as Age Concern and Citizens Advice. Such meetings were used to discuss ideas as well as to promote and raise the profile of the Scheme. In some cases, liaison with external organisations resulted in formal partnership working.

Many LAs had decided to invest in a dedicated BTUO (or Benefit Take-up team in larger LAs) who would be a dedicated or main contact point for benefit recipients (who were, in the main, targeted recipients). This approach was chosen as a means to support those most in need through the application process.

Specifically, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil recognised the benefits to this approach, but acknowledged their actual funding allocation restricted their capacity to do this. They therefore agreed to join forces and combine their funding in order to maximise its impact. This enabled the two LAs to recruit a dedicated BTUO who worked on a part-time basis in each.

Several LAs adopted a combined generic and targeted approach which consisted in the main of advertising particularly on the LA's website as well as targeting, for example, in deprived areas or with key recipient groups. However, many recognised that more generic approaches led to difficulties in attributing results, particularly in the case of general advertising. Some overcame this by asking all subsequent applicants the reason/rationale for their initial application. In other LAs, limited resources prohibited this although most recognised there were clear advantages in measuring take-up and some suggested an intention to focus on this much more so going forward.

Overall, most LAs cited a range of reasons for the approaches they adopted.

7.4 Outcomes

Several LAs acknowledged the difficulties of accurately measuring the quantitative measures of their current and previous approaches, especially in determining the impact or otherwise of the recession.

In many LAs, it was recognised that caseload had increased but it was accepted that an unknown quantum of this was possibly because of the recession i.e. it may have happened anyway. In some cases, LAs considered the impact of the recession was low as they had historically high levels of unemployment and high levels of benefit take-up and so were confident in attributing additional take-up to their take-up activities. Some LAs recognised, perhaps with hindsight, that it would have been advantageous to monitor and record the reason for new benefit recipients making a

claim. This is a useful observation and is a matter that LAs should consider for the remainder of the 2010/2011 Scheme.

More positively, some LAs were confident that their take-up activity had been successful as they had taken a (more) targeted approach and had correspondingly tracked many new recipients who made successful applications. For example, Anglesey employed a dedicated BTUO who was successful in achieving over £235,000 of benefits for local residents. This represents a substantial return on investment and a value for money ratio of 1:10.

7.5 What Worked Well and Less Well

A number of areas and activities were highlighted as working well.

Successful partnership working was a common theme. This included partnership working with internal LA departments which was important for raising awareness and cross referrals and partnership working with other government agencies such as The Pension Service, local jobcentres and other government initiatives such as Communities First as well as partnership working with VCS organisations.

One LA highlighted that partnership working resulted in enhanced co-operation and therefore it was “less competitive and more of a team approach”. Many LAs could attribute tangible outcomes to partnership working. Cardiff highlighted that awareness-raising sessions with other partners had a multiplier effect as such organisations could reach many different types and greater numbers of people.

A few LAs noted that the rollout of the Scheme and its funding over three years enabled LAs to undertake greater planning and make the (longer-term) investment in staff resources. This was particularly important as many commented that, given the barriers involved, and the need to take a more targeted approach and support the hardest to reach, the ‘human touch approach’ was very important. The view was

expressed that having proactive benefit take-up staff was more effective than general awareness raising.

The use of tools such as benefits calculators and ready reckoners was highlighted as a successful approach as it helped screen out those who were ineligible and so meant people did not have to go through a laborious form filling exercise. It also meant staff time was not taken up either in supporting completion of such forms or in checking and validating information for eligibility.

Many LAs commented that generic approaches such as advertising, mail shots and surgeries tended to work less well. Bus advertising was highlighted as being an expensive option and one which did not generate substantial enquiries. Some activities worked more effectively in some LAs than others although the reasons are unknown.

7.6 Challenges

Consultees had substantial comments on the challenges associated with increasing benefit take-up. Many consultees highlighted that the range of barriers associated with benefit take-up presented challenges. These included the following:

- Stigma associated with claiming benefits, particularly for older people. One LA had attempted to overcome this by having staff actively involved in local stakeholder forums. For example, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil's BTUO sits on a forum for older people which helps to reduce any stigma associated with claiming benefits. It also allows the BTUO to promote the personal contact approach adopted by these two LAs. Interestingly, one LA suggested older people were happy to receive pension credits (where entitled) but were less comfortable claiming benefits. The idea of using the word "rebate" rather than "benefit" was not considered to make a significant impact on behaviour. It was suggested that stigma was becoming less of an issue as the cost of council tax

meant “people could not afford not to claim for it”. Also, it was suggested that many younger people did not associate claiming benefits with stigma.

- Some LAs focused on leaflets/mail shots rather than promotional stands at public events to help maintain privacy and help overcome any stigma issues. Similarly, some LAs used a local pensioner “champion” in local advertising to introduce a personal human angle, reduce stigma and to positively promote benefit take-up.
- The length of the forms was considered to be off-putting and the level of evidence required was considered to be intrusive, with the suggestion that some recipients are reluctant to disclose personal information such as their level of savings. Many LAs had attempted to overcome some of the administrative barriers by offering a face-to-face service, often in the recipient’s home. However, some LAs highlighted that a dedicated face-to-face service was resource intensive. Other LAs had considered and made amendments to the application forms but highlighted that the desire to design simpler and more succinct forms had to be balanced against the amount and level of information required to determine eligibility and to calculate the amount due.
- The £16,000 savings threshold was considered to be too low. Interestingly, in Northern Ireland, the devolved administration increased the threshold for rates relief for older people to £50,000. This has increased the number of pensioners who are eligible and increased take-up.
- One LA suggested that the amount of benefit some people might be due would be fairly low and so “most won’t bother”.
- The lack of data sharing, and inability to share data was highlighted as a barrier and data sharing was viewed as being “the easiest barrier to overcome”.
- An additional challenge was whether there are the numbers of potential recipients, as suggested by DWP estimates. There was a view in some LAs that the number of entitled non-recipients may not be that substantial and, if this was the case, this then presented significant challenges in identifying and targeting them and encouraging them to take up benefits.

- One LA highlighted the challenges and difficulties in reaching hard to reach groups. Others highlighted that future challenges were to target new groups and to do so in increasingly innovative ways which had not been done before.
- Several LAs highlighted the challenges of dealing with additional work as a result of the success of their take-up activities.

7.7 Impacted Differently

Comments on the impact of the Scheme on different social groups was mainly based on anecdotal information and tended to reflect the type of activities undertaken.

Several LAs highlighted that the Scheme had impacted more positively on older people reflecting the targeted approach taken, or that they are a more accessible client group. Some LAs highlighted how different activities were more successful with some groups. For example, radio advertising was highlighted by one LA as being a successful approach for younger people. Several LAs noted that technological activities including use of LA websites was less successful with older people. Denbighshire was successful in targeting its non-passported population i.e. those with no benefit link through a mail shot promoting HB and CTB as ‘in work’ benefits and providing a range of examples of different circumstances to demonstrate possible levels of benefit.

7.8 Additional Impacts

A number of additional impacts were noted in relation to the Scheme. These related to partnership working and improved service provision.

The most frequent additional impact was in improved partnership working and relationships with other agencies and organisations and other departments within LAs that “ultimately benefit the client”.

One LA highlighted that it had always had positive working relationships with third party organisations but that “collaborative working has improved relationships especially with registered social landlords, housing associations, and Age Concern”.

Effective partnership working across LAs was also highlighted. For example, Pembrokeshire indicated that it could not have afforded an e-benefits solution or involvement with its software supplier without partnering with other LAs. Torfaen highlighted its partnership working with Monmouthshire.

Other agencies/organisations specifically mentioned included The Pension Service, local Jobcentres and VCS organisations such as Citizens Advice and Age Concern.

Several LAs referenced being members of local Maximising Income Groups (MIGs) or financial inclusion groups, which further facilitated contacts and relationships with other stakeholder organisations, as well as offering a forum to share ideas.

Improved service provision was the next most common additional impact. This took the form of either a more speedy and efficient service for benefit recipients, and/or a joined up approach/holistic service to LA services and advice and/or dedicated BTUOs. For example, the development of a benefits calculator/quick calculation tool enabled benefit staff to provide a quick indication if someone was entitled to HB/CTB without the need to complete a full application form. Six LAs used some of their funds to help develop electronic claims forms. In terms of a joined up approach or holistic offering, someone enquiring about an LA housing query would be informed of any related HB/CTB or referred directly to the HB/CTB Team. Dedicated BTUOs were able to offer a personal and tailored approach to meet the needs of benefit recipients and support in terms of form filling.

One LA highlighted that an additional impact was the “knock-on impact” of benefit recipients having monies to pay for specific goods and services such as housing

rent, which had an impact on the financial stability of organisations such as the private rental sector (and reduced arrears etc).

One additional benefit, although only stated by one LA, was the direct employment of Benefit Take-up staff, providing additional employment opportunities.

Finally, Caerphilly's participation in the Scheme and resulting increase in take-up rates contributed to a series of targeted improvements across eight service areas and this resulted in £1.9 million of Improvement Agreement funding to Caerphilly for 2009/2010. This supplementary funding was a positive outcome and demonstrates additional value for money for Caerphilly's benefit take-up grant.

7.9 Claimants' Feedback

In the main, most LAs had not formally captured or documented specific customer feedback in relation to benefit take-up although many highlighted informal feedback such as customer letters and cards and these were mainly positive. Some LAs highlighted anecdotal feedback on reasons why people did not claim. These included ineligibility (due to capital limits), privacy, stigma and the "hassle" involved for often very low amounts.

A small number of LAs have sought specific feedback from benefit claimants in the form of a customer survey. This included Anglesey, Bridgend and Carmarthenshire.

- Survey results from Anglesey suggested that almost half of respondents contacted directly by the BTUO would not have made an enquiry personally and many highlighted the personal touch in having a dedicated BTUO to assist them. This provided evidence of the positive impact of Anglesey's chosen approach.
- Carmarthenshire's survey focused on obstacles that discouraged people from claiming and revealed stigma, complexity and assumptions on eligibility were substantial obstacles. This has led Carmarthenshire to examine its marketing

and promotion activities and, for example, to use positive language such as “entitlement” rather than “benefit” and refer to “making money management decisions” rather than “making a claim” as well as using ready reckoners to show eligibility and potential amounts.

7.10 Others in this Arena

While it was acknowledged that there were other organisations involved in benefit take-up activities (such as Citizens Advice, Water Assist scheme, Age Concern etc) it was highlighted that in the main their benefit take-up activities were reactive while the WAG funds enabled many LAs to take a more targeted approach. In addition, in some cases, LAs used some of their WAG funding to support benefit take-up activity in VCS organisations. In addition, many LAs ensured their BTUOs could process applications ensuring a quick turnaround for claimants.

Some LAs had welfare rights officers²⁰ employed in other departments, such as social services departments or welfare rights units and some were involved in local financial inclusion groups although these forums had a much broader remit than benefit take-up. Most LAs were linked, formally or informally, with other organisations that were working directly or indirectly to increase benefit take-up. Some LAs considered their role was to coordinate and support all take-up activities. For example, Carmarthenshire coordinates an Advice and Support Group to coordinate all activities and help reduce duplication and is seeking to develop a directory of what all relevant organisations offer.

²⁰ Or staff in similar roles/departments.

7.11 Alternatives or Absence of the Scheme

It is worth highlighting that, overall, all representatives viewed the Scheme as a successful one and considered it was a very positive development in terms of a government intervention to help increase benefit take-up.

Many LAs had highlighted the importance of the Scheme in allowing them to take a proactive and sustained approach to benefit take-up that went beyond basic marketing activity.

Most were clear on the value of the Scheme and expressed a desire that it would continue. It was suggested that the three-year funding programme to date had enabled LAs to undertake a more planned approach, to invest in staff resources and to benefit from learning across each year.

While most LAs highlighted that they had always been involved in some element of benefit take-up, many suggested that in the absence of the Scheme, they would cease almost all of their targeted activities and revert to more generic marketing.

Partnership working, which was not dependent on funding to VCS organisations, would also continue but staff posts funded by the grant would cease. This suggests that some activities would continue, albeit those that were small in scale and did not incur substantial financial spend and that LAs would not continue with activities to the same extent in the absence of dedicated funding.

The impact of increased financial hardship on local residents was highlighted, as fewer people would be aware of entitlement while the absence of dedicated support could result in fewer successful applications.

However, some LAs did highlight the difficulties in determining the success of the Scheme overall, acknowledging that while caseloads had increased, it was difficult,

in some cases, to determine what had been due specifically to take-up activities and what was as a result of the recession and thus would have occurred in any event.

7.12 Consultation with Other Stakeholders

Consultations were undertaken with representatives from The Pension Service, Age Concern and Citizens Advice.

All three organisations welcomed the WAG initiative, reflecting that the estimated numbers of ENRs remained ‘stubbornly’ high and acknowledging a range of barriers to increasing take-up.

The Pension Service highlighted positive working relationships with LAs in Wales and the degree of partnerships and networks in place. There was a range of views expressed by Age Concern and CAB reflecting partnerships and liaison at local levels. For example, several local CAB Bureaux noted they were in receipt of LA funds to support with HB and CTB take-up. Rhondda Taf CAB received funding of £25,000 from Rhondda Cynon Taf LA to support its Scheme. Feedback from Rhondda Taf CAB highlighted that this investment resulted in a return of £506,000 of new benefits²¹ representing substantial value for money. In addition, this contribution also helped the LA in winning a Good Scrutiny Awards 2010.

However, not all CAB and Age Concern offices were aware of the Scheme suggesting there was scope for some LAs to improve the promotion of the Scheme among key stakeholder organisations. Furthermore, some welfare advice organisations suggested that they could make more effective use of funds by providing a full benefit assessment i.e. looking at entitlement across a range of benefits, and not just entitlement to HB and CTB.

²¹ This included housing, disability and social security benefits.

In terms of good practice for increasing take-up, it was suggested that practical support in the form of home visits and one-to-one support with forms was most effective, especially in terms of overcoming barriers. While improvements in technology solutions were seen as a positive development, it was highlighted that such developments were likely to have less impact for older people i.e. those over the age of 75 years.

Overall, the three agencies welcomed the Scheme and emphasised that its maximum impact would be achieved through partnership working and cooperation among all those striving to increase take-up rates and reducing duplication of efforts.

7.13 Summary and Conclusions

Consultation with representatives from LAs suggests that almost all had been involved in a range of activities in order to increase benefit take-up.

It was clear from consultation with LAs that the rollout of a three-year benefit take-up initiative encouraged LAs to give greater consideration to the use of their grant and the type of activities in order to maximise benefit take-up.

Learning, sharing and collaboration were key themes underpinning many LAs' activities. It was clear that many had learned lessons from the first year (2006/2007), gleaned information from other LAs and worked in partnership to maximise the use of and impact of their grant. Many LAs could identify tangible outcomes from partnership working including creating a less competitive and more customer focused approach with partners.

Many LAs had used the research information provided in the 'Barriers to Take-Up' report or in the presentations, suggesting these two supporting activities had a positive impact.

While generic advertising remained a part of most LAs' activities, most began to explore targeted approaches, recognising the limitations of generic approaches.

Anecdotal information from LAs suggests that barriers remained and there were challenges in reaching out to hard to reach groups. Many invested in BTUOs to reach out to those hardest to access and to support them through the application process. This approach was successful in overcoming several of the known barriers to take-up, namely stigma, lack of awareness of the benefit and/or eligibility and difficulties or disinclination to complete forms. Some LAs highlighted the challenges of identifying and targeting ENRs.

Most LAs considered that their take-up activities had had a positive impact, although in many cases these views were based on anecdotal evidence or on increases in caseload. However, many recognised the difficulties of accurately measuring this impact, acknowledging that increases in caseload and expenditure could be attributed to a range of factors. The need for greater monitoring of results was a key learning point.

Improved partnership working and improved service provision were identified as additional impacts of the Scheme and it is likely that these will continue long after cessation of the Scheme.

Although there were other agencies involved in benefit take-up, LAs considered that the Scheme enabled them to take a proactive approach to increasing take-up of HB and CTB and all considered that the absence of the Scheme would result in a substantial scaling down of LA take-up activities.

Other agencies involved in benefit take-up were supportive of the Scheme and several had advice posts funded via the Scheme. Some of these other agencies considered they could offer better value for money by providing a full benefit assessment. However, this is less clear-cut as all applications undertaken by these

agencies must go back to their statutory source for processing and award. It is noted that many LAs' BTUOs also processed applications thereby providing a speedy service and in addition had referral routes in place for cross-referral to other statutory agencies for other welfare benefits.

Overall, LAs were positive about the impact of the Scheme and welcomed the additional grant, considering that it had helped to increase take-up.

In conclusion, the very positive experience, knowledge and learning that LAs have gained from the Scheme is likely to have an impact beyond contributing to increasing take-up rates and is likely that LAs can apply this learning to any future take-up activities thereby increasing their effectiveness and impact.

8 Feedback from Benefit Claimants

8.1 Introduction

KPMG conducted a survey with a sample of benefit claimants. It was agreed with WAG to survey a sample of benefit recipients from 11 LAs that represented a range of large and small, urban and rural LAs and encompassed a wide range of benefit take-up activities. These were:

- Anglesey
- Blaenau Gwent
- Carmarthenshire
- Ceredigion
- Denbighshire
- Gwynedd
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Pembrokeshire
- Powys
- The Vale of Glamorgan
- Torfaen

These LAs were asked to distribute a survey to a random sample of approximately 1% of benefit recipients who had come onto HB and/or CTB caseload from April 2008. Approximately 1,470 surveys were distributed. A total of 403 surveys were returned by benefit claimants representing a response rate of 27%.

Claimants were asked a series of profile questions and then asked about the following:

- What had prompted them to apply for HB and/or CTB and specifically if this related to changes in their circumstances.

- How they had become aware of their entitlement to HB and/or CTB.
- The impact of receiving HB and/or CTB.
- Their views and attitudes towards claiming HB and/or CTB.

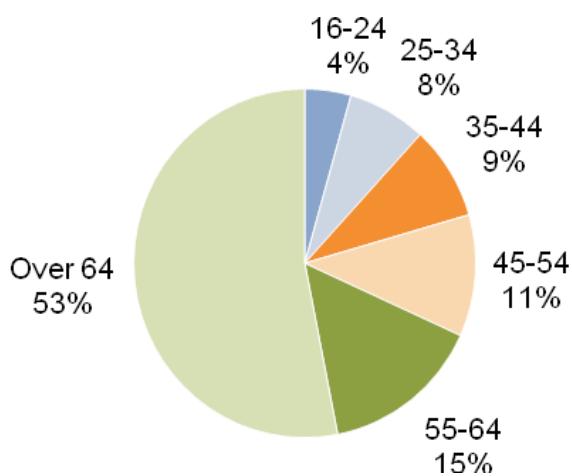
Although LAs selected a random sample of benefit recipients, a substantial proportion of respondents were over 64 years and had engaged with local BTUOs or similar. It is possible that a disproportionate number of those who responded may have been inclined to do so because of a positive and successful one to one experience. This may limit the applicability of these survey findings to all LAs and all benefit recipients.

8.2 Profile of Respondents

8.2.1 Gender and Age

Over half of the respondents were male (54%, n=202) and 46% of respondents were female (n=175). As demonstrated in Chart 11, over half of respondents were aged over 64 years (53%, n=207).

Chart 11: Age Profile of Respondents

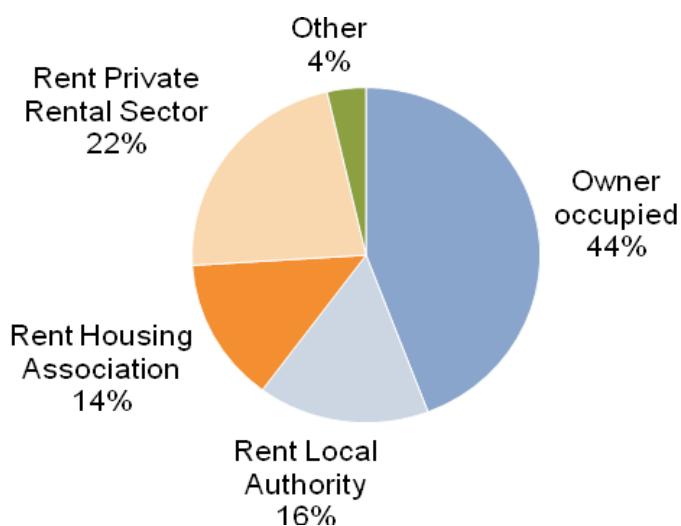


Source: KPMG Survey

8.2.2 Accommodation

Chart 12 shows the accommodation situation of respondents. This demonstrates that 44% (n=172) of respondents lived in owner occupied accommodation, 30% (n=114) rented from the LA or from a Housing Association, and 22% (n=87) rented privately. This could suggest that LAs have been successful in reaching owner occupiers and increasing take-up.

Chart 12: Current Accommodation



Source: KPMG Survey

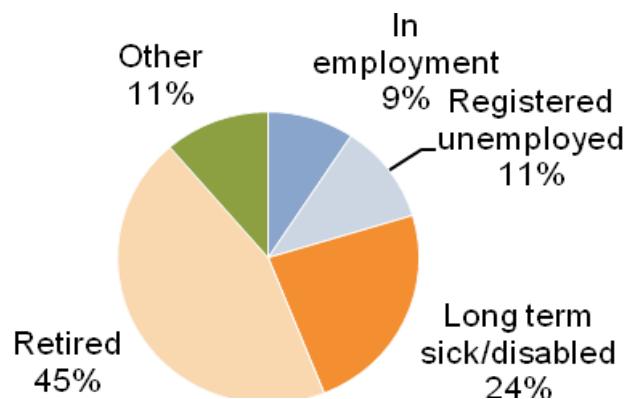
Interestingly, among those aged 64 and over, three-fifths of respondents lived in owner occupied accommodation (60%, n=122), while 37% rented from a LA or Housing Association (n=77).

8.2.3 Current Circumstances

When asked about their current situation, the majority of respondents were either retired (45%, n=174) or had a long-term illness or disability (24%, n=92). Of those

with a long-term illness, the majority (58%, n=53) were aged 55 or over. A total of 11% (n=43) were registered unemployed/looking for work. Only 9% (n=36) were in either full-time or part-time employment or self-employed. Chart 13 sets out their current employment status.

Chart 13: Current Circumstances



Source: KPMG Survey

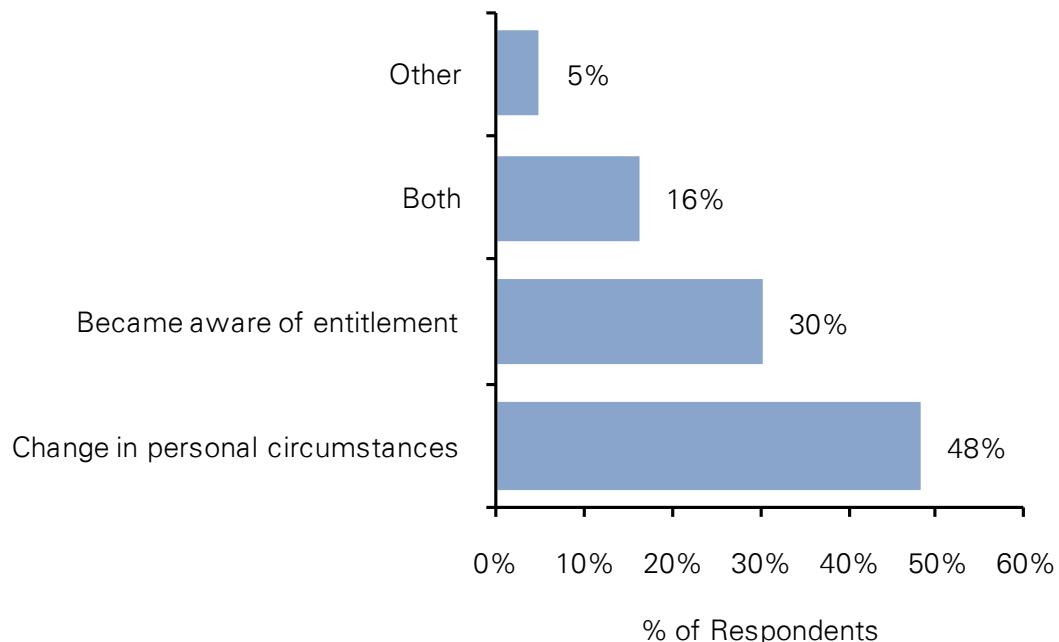
8.3 Reasons for Applying for HB and/or CTB

Claimants were asked if they had applied for HB and/or CTB because of a change in their personal circumstances. Just under half of respondents stated they applied for these benefits because of a change in their personal circumstances (48%, n=183), while 30% (n=115) claimed as they had become aware of their entitlement. A further 16% (n=62) indicated that both a change in circumstances and becoming aware of their entitlement encouraged them to claim.

A very small percentage of respondents (5%, n=19) indicated other reasons and in most cases further details were not provided. Where reasons were provided, these respondents generally stated that they had been struggling financially for some time

and so had decided to apply. Others commented that they had been on other welfare benefits and had taken the decision to apply for HB and CTB also.

Chart 14: Reason for Claiming



Source: KPMG Survey

Among those aged 64 and over, just over one third of these respondents had applied due to a change of circumstances (34%, n=68), almost half had applied as they had become aware of their entitlement (46%, n=91) and 15% (n=30) indicated that both a change in circumstances and becoming aware of their entitlement encouraged them to claim.

Table 11 sets out the changes in circumstances of all those who applied for HB and/or CTB due to changes in personal circumstances (which includes those who suggested both a change in circumstances and becoming aware of their entitlement). This indicates that the most common reason was related to disability.

Table 11: Change in Circumstances of Respondents

| Source of Information | % (n=)* |
|--|----------|
| Becoming disabled or deterioration in an existing disability | 25% (60) |
| Becoming unemployed | 23% (57) |
| Significant reduction in income | 20% (49) |
| Reaching pensionable age / eligible for state pension | 15% (36) |
| Other | 21% (50) |

Source: KPMG Survey

*NB respondents could choose more than one answer

A substantial proportion of respondents suggested other reasons although in most cases further details were not provided. Where reasons were given, these included separation and/or divorce, sickness or becoming a full-time carer or new mother.

8.4 Awareness

All respondents were asked how they had become aware of their entitlement to HB and/or CTB. Almost two fifths of respondents indicated that they had been contacted by a Benefits Officer in their LA (38%, n=141) and one third (33%, n=127) learned about their entitlement through word of mouth. A total of 15% (n=56) of respondents said that they were contacted by a government agency (such as The Pension Service).

Table 12: Awareness

| Source of Information | % (n=)* |
|--|----------------|
| Contact from a Benefits Officer in the LA | 37% (141) |
| Word of mouth | 33% (127) |
| Contact from a Government Agency | 15% (56) |
| Rang the Local Benefits Hotline | 11% (43) |
| Contact from an External Organisation | 9% (34) |
| Other (not specified) | 8% (31) |
| Leaflet / mail-shot | 6% (24) |
| Advertisement in a Local News Publication | 5% (20) |
| Informed by Landlord | 4% (17) |
| Information on LA Website | 2% (7) |
| Poster | 2% (7) |
| Other sources reported by fewer than 2% of respondents** | |
| General advertising | |
| General leaflet | |
| Informed by employer | |
| Promo event | |
| Radio advert/bus advert | |

Source: KPMG Survey

*NB respondents could chose more than one answer

** Data are presented alphabetically

These results are interesting as they suggest that few respondents successfully applied for HB and/or CTB as a result of general or specific marketing but were more likely to apply as a result of the ‘personal touch’ i.e. contact and/or encouragement by another person. These results suggest there could be greater merit in investing in Benefits Officers than in investing in advertising and promotional activities per se.

It is noteworthy that word of mouth was cited almost as frequently as contact from a Benefits Officer as a reason for applying. This could suggest that a substantial proportion of respondents may have applied irrespective of LAs’ funded benefit take-up activities. However, there is some caution here as it is not possible to speculate

on whom told respondents and where these people gained their knowledge from, and reliance on word of mouth may mean that some people are not provided with accurate and up to date information on which to make informed decisions on applying for HB and/or CTB.

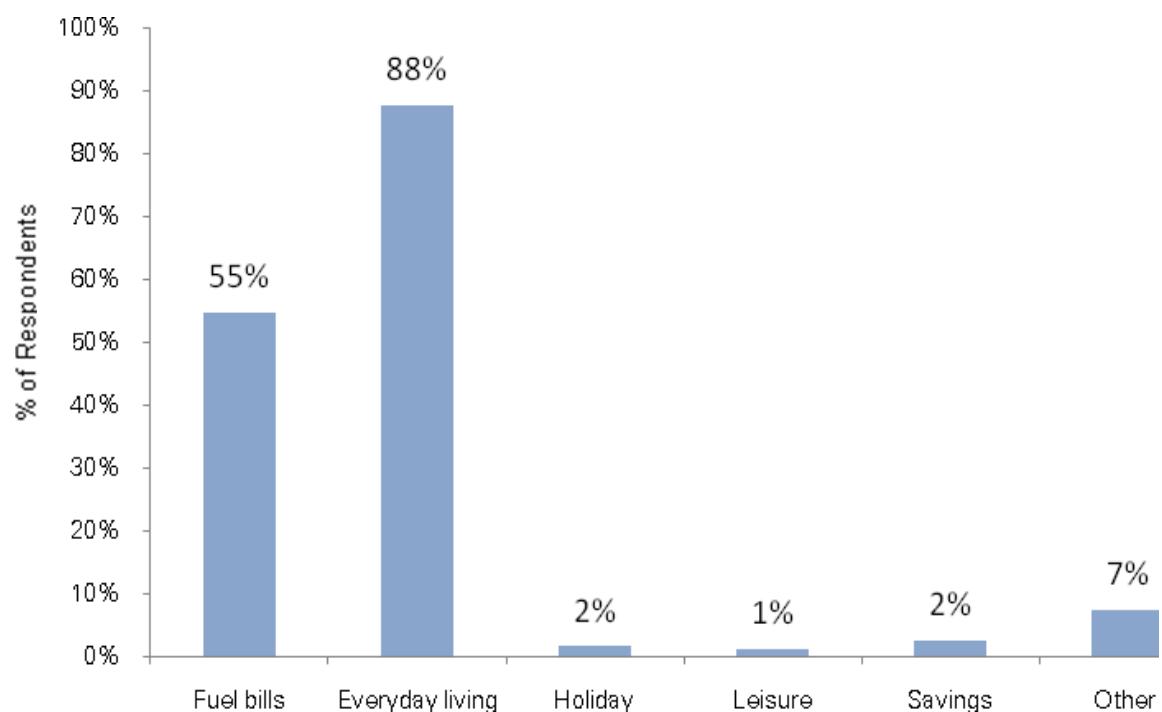
It is interesting to note that, when looking specifically at those aged over 64 years old, a higher proportion of these respondents became aware of their entitlement through contact from a Benefits Officer. Two fifths of respondents aged over 64 were contacted by a Benefits Officer (40%, n=82), while one fifth (20%, n=41) heard about the benefits through word of mouth. Broadly similar numbers of older people had become aware through contact with a government agency or external agency (14%, n=28; 13% n=26 respectively). This suggests that Benefits Officers are an effective means of targeting and increasing take-up among older people.

An analysis of how owner-occupiers became aware of entitlement indicates that the highest proportion (37%) were contacted by a Benefits Officer. This indicates that LAs have been successful in reaching this type of client and increasing take-up. Given that the evidence review in Chapter 2 documented that owner occupiers are substantially over-represented in the number of ENRs, this is a positive achievement and again reinforces the merits of employing Benefit Officers.

8.5 Impact of HB and/or CTB

Over two-thirds of respondents (68%, n= 245) indicated that receipt of HB and/or CTB had provided them with more money and this rose to 75% (n=157) of older people. Chart 15 indicates how respondents use/have used this extra money.

Chart 15: Impact of Receiving HB and/or CTB



Source: KPMG Survey

*NB respondents could give more than one answer

These results suggest that the overwhelming majority of respondents spend their money on everyday living and fuel and it is reasonable to assume that this is money spent locally, thereby contributing to local economies. Interestingly, less than 2% (n=8) of respondents suggested that they saved this extra income which would suggest that these benefits have been received by those in need.

8.6 Views on Benefits

Respondents were asked for their views about claiming HB and/or CTB, and specifically why potential claimants may be reluctant to apply. Table 13 sets out the findings from respondents.

Table 13: Respondents' Views

| My views on Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit | Agree (n=) | Disagree (n=) |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|
| I don't think there is a stigma with claiming benefits. | 66% (231) | 34% (121) |
| I thought that if you own your own home, you could not claim Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit. | 67% (197) | 33% (97) |
| I was concerned that getting one type of benefit could affect your entitlement to another benefit. | 65% (185) | 35% (101) |
| I was reluctant to claim as I did not think I would be entitled. | 67% (216) | 34% (109) |
| The hassle of applying was not worth the extra money received. | 22% (64) | 78% (223) |
| I wasn't aware of all the different types of benefits available. | 85% (271) | 15% (48) |
| I thought that if you have any savings then you could not claim Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit. | 75% (234) | 26% (80) |
| My views on the Application Process | Agree (n=) | Disagree (n=) |
| The application process was generally straightforward. | 80% (285) | 20% (72) |
| The application form(s) were difficult to understand. | 42% (126) | 58% (174) |
| I was concerned about making a fraudulent mistake. | 66% (199) | 34% (102) |
| You needed to provide too much additional information on personal matters. | 46% (134) | 54% (155) |

Source: KPMG Survey

These findings are interesting as they reinforce conclusions from other research, that a lack of knowledge on benefits and/or eligibility and concerns about the application process deter people from claiming. A substantial proportion of owner-occupiers thought that if you own your own home then you could not claim HB and/or CTB. As a substantial proportion of respondents were owner occupiers in receipt of HB and/or CTB, this would suggest LAs have been successful in raising awareness, possibly by targeting people and via a Benefits Take-up Officer.

It is positive to note that over two-thirds of respondents did not consider there to be a stigma associated with claiming benefits. Of note, the percentage of respondents who disagreed that there was not a stigma with claiming benefits was lowest in those aged over 64 years and was highest for those aged between 25-44, although some caution should be applied as the number of respondents in this age range was small.

Nevertheless, this is interesting as it could suggest that older people now see less stigma associated with benefits suggesting that this could be one less barrier to be overcome.

8.7 Additional Comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any other comments regarding their experience when claiming for benefits. Over one third of respondents chose to provide additional comments.

The general theme from these comments was that respondents were very appreciative of the help they received from Benefit Officers during the process. Several respondents named their Benefits Officer and/or highlighted the help and support from specific staff in their LA. Examples of comments included:

“Very kind and helpful staff when I explained my situation. Helped with form filling and explaining terms used.”

“The lady from the council visited me and explained everything and assisted in filling in the forms. I found her to be very helpful and very informative regarding the questions I asked her.”

“I had help and assistance from a lady from the Benefit Office who came out to visit me at my home. She was very friendly and sorted everything out for me”.

Other respondents mentioned the potential barriers to applying for benefits and suggested why they have not applied in the past and why some people may not apply now.

“Our housing benefit doesn't cover even half of our rent so we still struggle tremendously. I have had to go back to full time employment even though I am

a full time carer. There is not enough money/support for people who care for disabled spouses and the forms for help are long-winded, repetitive and much of the form is unnecessary in my opinion.”

“When on a low income and self employed it was very difficult and complicated to claim for help. Once you are in the system i.e. claiming unemployment or income support it was easy. I think that people not in the “system” struggle to make ends meet and do not know what they are entitled to and are too proud!”

“Benefit takes too long to get awarded and that causes stress and worry, also the forms you receive of how your benefit is worked out is very contradictory and very hard to understand, also because of delay in benefits being paid caused financial difficulties.”

Finally, some respondents chose to describe the outcomes of the benefits they have received and how they have used these to help.

“To have housing and council tax benefits has helped me to buy small things for my flat and helps with other bills like electric and water and food.”

“I am 90 years old and am extremely grateful to the extra money as it was a struggle every week to pay everything out of my pension and keep warm. Now I can honestly say I have all that I need and can stay comfortably at a warm home and not worry too much. Thank-you.”

“Getting Housing Benefit has enabled me to pay for more heating, carers and to get better food, which helps me too. Social Services arranged for the lady from Housing Benefits to come to see me – otherwise I would not have known I was entitled. Thank You.”

8.8 Summary and Conclusions

The majority of people indicated they applied for HB and CTB because of a change in circumstances, mainly due to a loss of income caused by becoming disabled or a deterioration of an existing condition, or becoming unemployed. In almost 40% of cases, respondents were aware of their entitlement from contact with a BTUO. This was particularly so among those aged over 64 years and among owner-occupiers. This would suggest that BTUOs are successful in reaching out to key groups.

Of those who have successfully applied for HB and CTB, the majority felt that they have more money, which was generally spent on fuel bills and everyday living. This suggests that the additional income goes to those who need it and it is spent locally thereby contributing to the local economy.

Findings also show that there is a lack of knowledge about the application process and that there are concerns about the application process that deter people from claiming. This suggests that LAs could do more to help increase knowledge about benefits. However, it is positive to note that over two-thirds of respondents, and especially those over 64 years did not consider there to be a stigma associated with claiming benefits.

If the results of this survey are applicable across benefit recipients, it suggests that the deployment of BTUOs is an effective means to increase take-up by offering a personal and assisted approach. The finding that any additional income is spent on everyday living suggests there is an indirect benefit of the Scheme to the local economy, which is very positive given the current economic climate. This suggests evidence of an additional rationale for the Scheme.

9 Impact and Effectiveness

9.1 Introduction

This Chapter draws together findings from the review of action plans and progress report and consultation findings. It highlights the impact of the Scheme, what has worked successfully and what has not worked as well and suggests what this may mean for any future take-up scheme.

9.2 Impact of the Scheme

LAs took a range of approaches and many incorporated combinations of the following key activities:

- Employment of BTUOs
- Use of Pension Service Scans
- Partnership working
- Mail shots and leaflets
- General advertising
- Open day/surgery type events
- Targeting those in arrears.

LAs were required to report on their outputs and the impact of their activities although there was no set format for reporting. This resulted in LAs reporting on their results of the Scheme very differently, with some reporting solely on financial gains, while others provided percentage increases in claims and caseloads. In addition, all LAs were involved in a wide range of activities, although the diversity and nature of these activities means that it is difficult to measure with accuracy the impact of the Scheme in terms of additional numbers of claimants and additional benefits awarded. Another matter to be considered in measuring the impact of the Scheme

was the potential impact of other take-up activities, such as DWP's advertising campaign or work by VCS organisations that champion benefit take-up.

A number of LAs did monitor and record their outcomes in detail as demonstrated by the following case studies.

Cardiff

Cardiff received over £98,000 in funding and used this to recruit a dedicated Take-up Team, employing additional staff (non-funded) in 2009/2010 to support their activities and in response to the economic climate.

The Take-up Team embarked on a wide range of activities including operating a Benefits Hotline where staff were able to do quick calculations and assistance with completion of applications where applicable.

All callers to the Hotline were monitored and from this information Cardiff identified that its programme of posters, flyers and leaflets was successful, as was its partnership with the Council's call centre where staff were trained to make referrals to the Take-up Team. Other successful partnerships included working with The Pension Service that resulted in 63 successful claims from owner-occupiers for £80,000 in CTB.

Cardiff has calculated that its 2009/2010 Scheme will realise £2.7m in additional benefits (projected on an 18-month basis).

Swansea

Swansea received £75,000 in Take-up Scheme funding and used this to recruit a dedicated Take-up Team. Swansea used the WAG Barriers research and advice from DWP as well as examined its population profile to identify appropriate target groups. The Take-up Team embarked on a wide range of activities in recognition of the fact that different methods work for different groups of people.

Between April 2008 and March 2009, Swansea's Take-up Team dealt with 2,461 successful claims for HB and/or CTB. Claims processed over a 10-month period indicated an estimated £483,156 in CTB alone.

Swansea undertook a review of its main referral routes and concluded that the most effective initiatives that prompted calls to its Take-up Team were campaign information leaflets, mail shots distributed with council tax bills and articles in the local press. However, it considered that cinema advertising and advertising on bus tickets was less successful.

In terms of estimating the impact the Scheme has had in generating additional benefit take-up to date, there are significant challenges in terms of measuring this in a consistent and robust manner as monitoring information is incomplete and/or not comparable. This is an important finding and it is recommended that greater consideration be given to monitoring and recording outcomes consistently across all 22 LAs in order to capture the full impact of all activities and attribute them to the Scheme. However, it is possible to identify those activities that worked successfully and to highlight those that were not as effective. The following sub-section provides an overview of the success of the main activities as reported by the LAs.

9.3 Review of Activities

The evidence suggests a number of activities and interventions with proven positive results. These are:

- Employment of dedicated BTUOs
- Use of Pension Service Scans
- Partnership working
- Targeted / focused publicity campaigns i.e. mail shots and leaflets.

The evidence is less conclusive on general advertising and open day/surgery type events and targeting those in arrears, although some LAs had greater successes here than others which may reflect the marketing materials and messages used.

9.3.1 BTUOs

The employment of dedicated BTUOs was a successful intervention providing dedicated staff resource for frontline service delivery. Obviously, the higher level of funds in some LAs helped facilitate the employment of dedicated staff, but others, notably Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil adopted a joint approach to funding a dedicated BTUO, while other LAs employed part-time BTUOs as part of a menu of activities.

In most cases, BTUOs undertook follow-up action following a (targeted) telephone call or letter to a potential benefit recipient. Often, follow-up action included a home visit and usually included assistance with completion of forms.

This approach had a number of advantages in that it targeted people and offered them assistance thereby overcoming several known barriers including lack of knowledge, eligibility, reluctance or difficulties in completing official forms and stigma associated with means tested benefits.

While some LAs suggested this was a resource intensive and costly approach, they believed it was required especially in order to overcome people's reluctance to claim and so ultimately represented value for money in terms of successful applications. In many cases, BTUOs also processed applications forms thereby managing to minimise waiting times for benefits, and providing a seamless service for recipients.

The employment of BTUOs was seen to have a positive and substantial impact on increasing take-up rates as evidenced from the reported results from a number of LAs.

The following case studies highlight the positive impact of employing BTUOs.

Anglesey

Anglesey reported that general advertising and/or speculative mail shots were not particularly effective unless linked to a policy of active intervention. It recruited a dedicated BTUO who liaised with VCS organisations, issued press releases and general advertising, and trawled scans from The Pension Service. This targeted and personal contact approach resulted in reported additional benefits of £160,000 in HB and CTB with significant added value achieved by identifying entitlement to other welfare benefits which realised an additional £215,000.

Positive endorsement for this BTUO approach was suggested from survey results of benefit recipients undertaken by Anglesey.

Bridgend

In the 2006/2007 Scheme, Bridgend reported "disappointing results", noting a high proportion of applications were unsuccessful. Notably, learning from the 2006/2007 Scheme, Bridgend adopted an entirely different and more focused approach in the 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 Scheme.

This entailed employing two dedicated BTUOs who were also capable of processing applications received. These BTUOs undertook a targeted leaflet drop in areas where take-up appeared to be low, liaised with over 100 local organisations and established referral routes, utilised scans from The Pension Service as well as interrogated existing databases to identify entitlement to PC for cross-referral to The Pension Service.

In effect, the BTUOs offered a tailored approach, sourcing potential claimants, assisting them with the application process including undertaking home visits, and processing the claims form within two days. This targeted and personal contact approach resulted in 384 successful claims and realised £694,500 in HB and CTB in a two-year period.

In addition, in the first year, BTUOs helped secure an additional £20,300 in PC through cross referrals to The Pension Service, thereby adding value to the initial grant received.

Gwynedd

Gwynedd employed two BTUOs who undertook a wide range of networking and publicity activities, arranged for Benefit Visiting Officers to make home visits and assist with completion of forms and liaised with representatives from other agencies to ensure people received a full benefit assessment.

Gwynedd reported its Take-up team's activities resulted in 554 new claims generating benefits of £665,065 in 2008/2009 and 417 cases in 2009/2010 and benefits of £706,262.

Wrexham

As part of its take-up activities, Wrexham allocated some of its funding for a part-time BTUO to undertake home visits. An initial investment of £12,000 realised HB and CTB of £77,000, which was a positive return on investment.

9.3.2 *The Pension Service Scans*

Many LAs utilised scans from The Pension Service to identify and target older people who may have been eligible for HB and/or CTB. This targeted approach, combined with personal contact from BTUOs, was successful in increasing take-up among older people, as again, personal contact helped overcome several known barriers.

The following case studies highlight the impact of utilising scans from The Pension Service.

Ceredigion

Ceredigion's partnership work with The Pension Service resulted in £147,000 of HB and CTB and an additional £67,000 in backdated payments.

Denbighshire

Denbighshire identified 151 potential pension claimants from The Pension Service that resulted in 64 successful claims.

Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire utilised data from The Pension Service for its BTUO to make personal contact with potential claimants that resulted in over 50 successful applications.

9.3.3 Partnership Working with External Agencies

Partnership working with other advice agencies, notably CAB and Age Concern, was successful in generating HB and CTB awards and provided added value by offering a full benefit assessment that could generate substantial added impact.

Ceredigion

Partnership work with Age Concern generated almost £19,000 in HB and CTB and over £4,000 in backdated payments (in a six-month period).

Pembrokeshire

Pembrokeshire partnered with a number of VCS organisations including MIND and CAB, with MIND supporting 44 claimants and realising benefits of £31,000 while CAB was successful in realising £78,000 across a range of benefits including HB and CTB.

Powys

Powys' BTUO worked in partnership with its Welfare Rights Unit whose staff realised an additional £40,000 in a 10-month period.

Rhondda

Rhondda provided funding of approximately £25,000 to the local CAB. Rhondda Taf CAB reported that this investment resulted in a return of £506,000 across a range of benefits. In addition, this contribution also helped the LA in winning a Good Scrutiny Awards 2010.

9.3.4 Mail shots and Leaflets

Information from LAs would suggest that leaflets or mail shots had mixed results although there is some evidence that the more targeted the campaign then the greater its chance of having a positive impact on take-up.

Several LAs suggested that mail shots included with bills had limited impact in many cases and additional methods such as freepost response did not increase levels of interest. For example, Cardiff indicated that people expressing an interest initially did not necessarily go on to make a claim. This would further suggest the need for and benefit of personal contact to explain eligibility and encourage an application. Pembrokeshire considered that mail shots included as part of council tax bills had a low take-up response but some LAs considered that mail shots can be an inexpensive way to reach potential participants. For example, Rhondda Cynon Taff undertook a mail shot to all households that generated over 100 enquiries. This resulted in over £21,000 in benefits for 19 claimants (of those processed at the time of reporting). Carmarthenshire included a leaflet in its local council publication pre-billing, and this coincided with an article in the local press. Carmarthenshire reported over 300 additional enquiries because of this publicity.

There is some evidence that targeted mail shots can work more effectively in some circumstances as demonstrated in the following case studies.

Denbighshire

Denbighshire focused on its non-passported population with no benefit links. This resulted in a 25% increase in second adult claimants for CTB. Denbighshire focused on all Council Tax payers not in receipt of any benefits and who had not previously claimed through a targeted mail shot campaign under the tag line “Wake up! and Take up!” For those of working age, Denbighshire reported a 37% increase in

standard in-work claims for CTB and a 32% increase in HB claims between 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 which compares to increases of 3% and 15% respectively between 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 in the LA. While Denbighshire acknowledged that the recession has had some impact on increasing HB and CTB applications, it considers that the scale of the increase in its in-work claimants is attributable to its targeted promotion activities.

Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire's Take-up Team reported over 400 requests for applications because of its targeted publicity that included distribution of ready reckoner leaflets to specific Council Tax Bands. This resulted in 130 successful claims and £84,000 in benefits in 2009-2010.

Interestingly, many LAs developed punchy slogans such as Torfaen's "Don't miss out, find out!" and Denbighshire's "Wake-up and Take-up" which may have helped gain people's attention and so helped in increasing take-up. In addition, Denbighshire held a competition to develop its slogan that in itself raised awareness and resulted in positive publicity.

Torfaen

Torfaen undertook a targeted campaign for older people over 75 years that generated benefits of £41,000, including one claimant whose entitlement amounted to over £4,000 per annum. Torfaen also targeted those households that were not in receipt of any benefits when sending council tax bills.

Overall, Torfaen has monitored the impact of its take-up activities for the period April 2008-January 2010, reporting that its activities generated almost 600 provisional assessments or claims and additional benefits of £435,000 (at January 2010). To put this into context, Torfaen's benefit caseload increased by over 900 claimants

between April 2008 and April 2009 suggesting its take-up activities contributed in part to this increase.

Conwy reported an increase in enquiries to its Benefit Unit following the distribution of leaflets to schoolchildren. However, Cardiff undertook a similar activity that generated few calls and so concluded it was an unsuccessful approach.

9.3.5 General Advertising

In cases where LAs had undertaken general advertising, the evidence of success and impact was less conclusive. Some LAs tracked all benefit recipients back to source/reason for claim, and in these cases, these LAs reported very mixed response rates, depending on the advertising medium. In particular, evidence suggests that advertising on public transport generated only a small number of referrals and subsequent successful claims while radio advertising and cinema advertising were expensive and not very successful.

Similarly, the evidence suggests that local press advertising did not seem to be a successful approach. However, there is some evidence that newspaper articles had some impact when they were focused on a specific event.

Anglesey

Anglesey reported an increase in enquiries following a newspaper article on Child Benefit and capital increases for older people.

Conwy and Denbighshire

Conwy and Denbighshire undertook a joint advertising campaign including an advert in the local press for two weeks highlighting changes in relation to disregarding Child Benefit. Subsequently, Denbighshire reported an increase of over 50% for non-passported¹ HB and CTB claims from families with children – a reported 267 families at an average claim of £31.

Carmarthenshire

Carmarthenshire reported a marked increase in enquiries following a local council newsletter that coincided with an article in the local press pre bills.

This suggests that focused articles can have some impact if focused on real examples/cases and coincide with changes/billing that have an impact on people's circumstances.

9.3.6 Surgeries and Open Days

A number of LAs including Anglesey and Gwynedd suggested that events such as take-up surgeries and open days had limited impact. Caerphilly and Carmarthenshire considered that such events had only a small direct impact but were useful for raising awareness and publicity and were generally inexpensive events.

9.3.7 Arrears Customers

A number of LAs directed some activities towards targeting residents in arrears or those regularly subject to recovery action but considered that this had limited impact.

9.4 Summary and Conclusions

A review of action plans and progress reports, supplemented by consultation with representatives from LAs and key stakeholder groups suggests that employment of BTUOs, who undertake personal contact to encourage take-up and assistance in completing applications, can produce very positive results. In addition, outcomes can be further enhanced by taking a targeted approach, often via partnership working as evidenced by results from LAs using The Pension Service scans. The success of other activities such as mail shots and leaflets can be improved through a targeted

approach such as key groups, at specific times like billing or to coincide with changes in eligibility criteria.

This would suggest that in any future scheme LAs should consider investing in dedicated staff resources who can work with key partners such as The Pension Service to identify potential recipients and to overcome some of the known barriers by offering a personal service and assistance with all paperwork. In addition, publicity and advertising is likely to be more effective if targeted at specific audiences. While general advertising can help raise overall awareness, LAs may wish to refrain from campaigns that involve substantial expense such as radio, cinema and bus advertisements.

10 Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 Introduction

This Chapter concludes on the key findings that have emerged from the research overall, drawing from the consultations that were undertaken and survey results, as well as findings from the evidence review and the analysis of HB and CTB take-up to identify what works more effectively in terms of benefit take-up activities and where any future activities are best targeted.

A number of activities have been identified that seem to work well although it is important to highlight that the range and breadth of activities and local circumstances within LAs may mean that some activities work in some areas more effectively than others. As such, the following conclusions relate to the good practice that was identified from this evaluation and make a series of recommendations for any future scheme.

10.2 Conclusions

10.2.1 What Activities to Focus On

A review of literature on benefit take-up has highlighted a broad range of proven ways to increase take-up. In addition, the Scheme has allowed LAs to trial a series of approaches, methodologies and target groups to determine those that work more effectively.

Activities with proven positive results are:

- Employment of dedicated BTUOs which helps overcome some of the known barriers associated with benefit take-up.

- Partnership working with other agencies which helps in accessing potential claimants and in maximising benefit take-up across other benefits.
- Targeted/focused publicity campaigns i.e. mail shots and leaflets which are concentrated on key groups or at key times and where the messages are tailored to the particular audience.
- Home visits especially for older people and often via trusted intermediaries.
- Those which focus on key groups such as older people over 75 years, at life changing moments such as reaching pensionable age or on receipt of Council Tax bills.

The evidence is less conclusive on general activities such as advertising and general publicity.

10.2.2 Who to Target

A review of literature reveals that some types of people are less likely to claim including older people (often those over the age of 75), older people from ethnic minorities, people living in more affluent areas, older people in rural areas and owner-occupiers. This suggests that targeting certain groups of people may be more effective in increasing take-up levels. This was proven in many LAs where targeted activities focused on older people were successful in increasing take-up. In addition, some LAs chose to focus on their non-passported population such as owner-occupiers and were successful in increasing CTB take-up.

10.2.3 Why Target

Work by Oxford Economics suggests that there remains a substantial number of ENRs and this, plus the potential value of entitlements involved, and the fact that

survey results indicate most respondents spent their money locally, suggests it would be worthwhile to undertake focused activities to increase take-up rates of HB and CTB, particularly given the current economic climate.

However, it is necessary to highlight that the average entitlement per case for CTB is £700 per annum which means that some ENRs may consider that the amount involved is not worth the effort required to apply. This means that LAs need to adopt those methods that are known to identify potential recipients and to have an impact on encouraging people to apply.

10.2.4 How to Manage It

All stakeholders were positive on the implementation of the Scheme. Equally, all recognised the importance of collecting robust evidence of what works, for whom and in what circumstances. There is a need to monitor and record benefit take-up outcomes consistently in all LAs which would help to capture the effectiveness of all activities and help demonstrate the total impact of the Scheme.

10.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- Recommendation 1 - WAG considers the merit of continuing to fund a Benefit Take-up Scheme.

In the event that WAG continues with a Scheme, the following Scheme recommendations are made:

- Recommendation 2 - LAs invest in frontline BTUOs, partnership working and targeted activities on key groups rather than on generic publicity.

- Recommendation 3 - LAs focus on older people over 75 years, older people in rural areas, older people from ethnic minorities and owner occupiers, and do so through a targeted approach with a focus on personal contact at life changing moments such as reaching pensionable age or suffering a bereavement.
- Recommendation 4 - LAs and WAG agree a monitoring and reporting system which records information on why claimants claim and how they become aware of the availability of and/or their eligibility to HB and/or CTB.

Appendix 1 - Summary of Evidence Review

| Document | Summary |
|---|---|
| Department of Social Security: Overcoming Barriers: Older People and Income Support (1999) | <p>This report set out the results of a research study carried out by the then Department of Social Security relating to the most important barriers to the take-up of Income Support amongst people aged 60 and over. It also sought to identify ways in which take-up amongst entitled non-recipients could be increased.</p> <p>Two main components to barriers to claiming Income Support were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attitudinal component, also described as the 'stigma' dimension; and• 'Process dimension' which consists of objections to, or negative perceptions of various aspects of the claim process. <p>This report set out a list of barriers to claiming income support which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The wish to remain independent and self-sufficient and in doing so maintaining a sense of pride.• The fear of negative stigma and associations for claiming income support.• Lack of awareness and a misunderstanding of the claim process.• Having to undergo complicated bureaucratic procedures and a loss of privacy.• Access problems to the benefit office, for example lack and cost of transport, and waits involved while at the benefits office.• The design and language used on application forms and explanatory notes.• Evidence requirements. |

| Document | Summary |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The perception that the benefit administrators are policing not helping, and thought to be a cold, bureaucratic authority. • The outcome of claims – there is a fear of refusal, and feeling that the hassle of the application process is not worth it for the amount received. <p>Also highlighted in this document were triggers to claiming income support and these were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One third of those who participated in this research said they made the decision to claim for income support after being encouraged to do so by a professional contact. • 28% were encouraged by a relative or friend. • 22% decided to claim after being told that they may be eligible. • 7% mentioned publicity as a factor encouraging them to claim for income support. • 18% were finding it difficult to manage on their current income and therefore decided to claim for income support. • For others it was a change in personal circumstances that triggered the incentive to claim for Income Support. • For a small minority, someone applied on his or her behalf, or a large household bill triggered them to apply for Income Support. <p>Recipients provided examples of improvements that they felt would encourage people to claim Income Support. These included:</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A letter from the DSS saying they might be eligible for Income Support. • A home visit by the Benefit Office. • Income Support as an add-on to Retirement Pension. • A letter from Housing Benefit Office stating that they might be eligible for Income Support. • Help from the Benefit Office in filling in the application form. • Encouragement by a professional person. • Separate section for pensioners at the Benefit Office. <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This report highlights a range of barriers affecting benefit take-up which would suggest that a multi-faceted approach is required to overcome them or to minimise their impact. It is also clear that the barriers to benefit take-up have been documented for over a decade indicating they are long standing and so suggesting they are difficult to overcome. It suggests a more proactive approach is likely to be more successful than general publicity with an expectation from older people that government should make an initial approach, although changes in personal circumstances would encourage people to explore their entitlement.</i></p> <p><i>This suggests that LAs in Wales would be more successful in encouraging benefit take-up by adopting a proactive and multi-faceted approach that specifically targets people through a trusted intermediary and offers them dedicated support, or targets them at specific life events such as, for example, becoming bereaved or moving from work to pension age etc or by including information on potential entitlement with housing and council tax bills.</i></p> |

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| National Audit Office: Tackling Pensioner Poverty: Encouraging take-up of entitlements (2002) | <p>This report examined the action taken by the DWP, both on its own and with a range of other organisations, to tackle barriers to take-up of entitlements by pensioners.</p> <p>The report commented that the creation then of The Pension Service offered opportunities for a proactive approach to service provision for pensioners but that The Pension Service could not tackle pensioner poverty on its own. Indeed, the report commented on the wealth of experience existing elsewhere, and suggested it would not be cost or effective or appropriate for The Pension Service to try to do so. It suggested that it was crucial for The Pension Service to develop strategies to work in partnership with other agencies.</p> <p>The report also commented that many take-up activities were inexpensive and appeared to have significant effects but recognised that limited evidence was available on their overall effectiveness, and better data was needed to allow The Pension Service and other agencies to decide where to concentrate their efforts to encourage take-up.</p> <p>The report highlighted that there are more than 20 significant barriers to take-up amongst pensioners that are known to deter or delay claims, and these relate to the benefits system, the way it is administered and the attitudes of customers. These barriers are as follows:</p> <table> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="489 1208 1118 1251">System</th> <th data-bbox="1320 1208 1590 1251">Customer-level</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="489 1267 1163 1294">1 Poor co-operation between administrations</td> <td data-bbox="1320 1267 1904 1294">10 Difficulty with completing claim forms</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="489 1319 871 1346">2 The verification process</td> <td data-bbox="1320 1319 2106 1346">11 Failure to reapply when rules change or</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | System | Customer-level | 1 Poor co-operation between administrations | 10 Difficulty with completing claim forms | 2 The verification process | 11 Failure to reapply when rules change or |
| System | Customer-level | | | | | | |
| 1 Poor co-operation between administrations | 10 Difficulty with completing claim forms | | | | | | |
| 2 The verification process | 11 Failure to reapply when rules change or | | | | | | |

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| | <p>3 Complexity of the system overall</p> <p>4 Dislike of means-tested benefits</p> <p>Administration</p> <p>5 Too many forms to fill in about eligibility</p> <p>6 Long and complex claim forms</p> <p>7 Lack of information and confusion</p> <p>8 Problem of physical access to Benefits Agency office</p> <p>9 Expect to be informed of entitlement (i.e. leaving the initiative to the pensioner)</p> <p>circumstances change</p> <p>12 Difficulty understanding information</p> <p>13 Lack of basic knowledge about benefits and rules</p> <p>14 Reluctance to disclose personal information (financial and health related)</p> <p>15 Aversion to visiting Benefits Agency offices</p> <p>16 Do not want to receive charity because do not view benefits as being an entitlement / Stigma associated with receipt of benefit</p> <p>17 Fear of refusal</p> <p>18 Fear of debt (e.g. If benefit overpayments have to be repaid)</p> <p>19 Fear that mistakes would be seen as dishonest or fraudulent</p> <p>20 Fear of losing independence</p> <p>21 Do not like to deal with bureaucracy/ anxiety about dealing with officials</p> <p>22 Too much bother / not worth the effort for the amount of benefit.</p> |

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| | <p>The report focused on the 10 main barriers and made the following recommendations in order to increase take-up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pension Service should set realistic and stretching national targets for take-up of Pension Credit. • To set realistic targets, assess the effectiveness of take-up initiatives and measure trends over time the Department must have better data on estimated non-take-up, which is currently reported in very broad bands; • The Department should do more to simplify the process of claiming benefits. • The Department should continue their research to understand the barriers to take-up amongst particular sub-groups, including ethnic minorities, pensioners living in rural areas, and those with sensory impairment. • The Pension Service should make optimum use of pensioners' existing contacts with trusted agencies such as health professionals. • Decisions about where to concentrate resources on take-up should be evidence based which in turn requires further research into what works, for whom does it work, and in what circumstances. • The Pension Service cannot overcome barriers to take-up on its own and so needs to work with many other organisations, the voluntary sector and LAs that have both the experience and contacts to help encourage pensioners to take-up their entitlement. <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This would suggest that LAs in Wales should set targets for take-up and measure progress over time. This would require investing some time and resource in assessing the impact of their activities but this would help them to adopt increasingly evidence-based approaches and so help maximise the impact of subsequent schemes. It would also suggest that LAs should adopt a partnership approach with relevant local agencies and organisations</i></p> |

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| | <i>as well as through trusted intermediaries.</i> |
| House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts Tackling Pensioner Poverty – Encouraging Take-Up of Entitlements (2003) | <p>Following the 2002 NAO report, the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts examined action undertaken by DWP and The Pension Service on its own and in partnership with others to tackle the barriers to take-up by pensioners.</p> <p>The Committee drew a number of conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a new focus and approach being adopted to take-up but its success was dependent on having stretching targets and improving the quality of information on take-up levels. • Confusion and complexity remained major barriers to take-up. • A partnership approach offered an opportunity to consolidate the efforts of other agencies and organisations and while there were examples of good practice, there was limited published data on what worked. • There was scope to simplify processes, use information more effectively and reduce duplication. <p>The Committee made a series of recommendations including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Setting targets, which became progressively more stretching. – Simplifying processes and reducing duplication. – Communicating effectively with pensioners through literature and a range of media. Suggestions were made regarding being creative in getting messages across to the public such as a story line in a popular television series. – Working with others in cost-effective ways such as contact with GP surgeries, registered social landlords and |

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| | <p>post offices – trusted intermediaries.</p> <p>Of note, the Committee highlighted that current information on non-take-up was inadequate and this made it difficult for DWP to assess where to focus its resources. Suggestions were made about developing the Family Resource Survey approach.</p> <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This would suggest that LAs need to set challenging targets and measure their progress although the lack of reliable information on non take-up presents challenges in determining where to focus resources. It also suggests there is scope to reduce complexity and duplication which could include regularly reviewing and revising claim forms. It also suggests that LAs should adopt creative means in their publicity in order to get their benefit take-up message across and they could achieve greater cost effectiveness by working with trusted intermediaries.</i></p> |
| Northern Ireland Audit Office: Encouraging Take-up of Benefits by Pensioners (2003) | <p>This report examined what the Department for Social Development had done to tackle the problem of pensioner poverty by increasing the take-up of benefits. Some key findings showed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a lack of sufficient and reliable information on the take-up of benefits. The report recommended that data should be collected on estimated non-take-up in order to allow analysis of the problem and to set realistic targets and assess the effectiveness of take-up initiatives. • There was an ongoing need to address form design issues and to devise cost-effective simplification options in relation to application forms. • The Department should monitor the ongoing effectiveness of using the telephone as the main means of |

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| | <p>providing information and advice about benefits rather than by face-to-face contact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department should focus on a range of benefits in its take-up initiatives. In order to persuade reluctant pensioners to claim what is rightfully theirs, there needed to be greater coordination between the Department and those voluntary organisations that have built up contacts with pensioners on a local basis. There was scope for the Department to work more intensively with the voluntary sector in order to engage more directly with pensioners in their own communities by seeking opportunities to provide benefits advice in GP surgeries and health centres. <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This report recognises the challenges associated with the lack of sufficient and reliable information on the take-up of benefits but would suggest that there remains scope for LAs to address some of the administrative barriers associated with take-up and to work in partnership with the voluntary sector and through trusted intermediaries.</i></p> |
| DWP Housing Support Division: Council Tax Benefit Take-up: A Best Practice Guide | <p>This guide, produced by DWP's Housing Support Division, provides reasons why some people are not claiming the CTB they are entitled to and gives examples of recent initiatives undertaken by authorities to help maximise CTB take-up.</p> <p>Some barriers to claiming CTB referenced in the publication included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of knowledge about CTB. Uncoordinated activity by authorities. |

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| (2004) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigma associated with claiming benefits. • Bad experiences in the past when dealing with benefits claims. • Unsuitability of telephone based claiming for certain vulnerable groups. • Complicated claims process. • Lack of personal contact during claims procedure. <p>Suggestions were also provided on how to overcome these barriers. Examples of local authority best practice included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits road shows in the area. • Provision of pocket sized “ready reckoners” so customers can see the income limits for CTB. • Online benefits calculator. • A benefit bus to reach existing and potential claimants with online PCs so staff can process claims. • Joint working with voluntary groups to target areas with low benefit take-up. <p>Finally, the report provided a Local Authority checklist of seven actions which represented essential areas of take-up activity. These ranged from the display of promotional material to staff awareness to utilisation of all LA contacts and to working with self-help groups.</p> <p>DWP’s website contains information and leaflets to support with a CTB Take-up campaign.</p> |

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| | <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This guide provides a range of practical suggestions and offers a checklist against which LAs could assess or audit their take-up activities.</i></p> |
| National Audit Office: Progress in Tackling Pensioner Poverty: Encouraging take-up of entitlements (2006) | <p>In 2006, NAO published a report assessing the progress the DWP had made in helping pensioners secure their entitlements. The report found that The Pension Service had made real and substantial progress. However there were still some improvements to be made, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets set for The Pension Service by the Department should reflect the need to promote work to tackle pensioner poverty more widely than simply encouraging take-up of Pension Credit. • The Department should improve further the data on who is not claiming especially on Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. • Targeting of local work should be improved by bringing together data sources and encouraging local autonomy; • The Department should develop its monitoring of cost-effectiveness to inform future strategy and the targeting of local resources. • A clear policy is needed on The Pension Service's wider role as a gateway to other services. <p>The report noted that there had been a fall in take-up of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit and suggested that Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit take-up was as important for reducing pensioner poverty as take-up of Pension Credit.</p> |

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| | <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This report provides a clear rationale for LAs to focus on HB and CTB and suggests there is scope for and merit in working with DWP to determine estimated non-take-up.</i></p> |
| Department for Work and Pensions: Understanding the relationship between the barriers and triggers to claiming Pension Credit (2006) | <p>This report documented the findings from a large-scale qualitative research project designed to provide insight into the barriers that exist to claiming Pension Credit and the ways in which they can be overcome. The most common barrier identified was a perceived ineligibility regarding Pension Credit. Other secondary barriers surrounded the nature of the claims process including an unwillingness to disclose financial information, fear of submitting documents and fear of making mistakes in an application.</p> <p>The most common trigger to take-up was a personal visit from the DWP/Pension Service. In some cases, a letter from The Pension Service was a trigger to a claim being made, while others received advice or encouragement from third parties or relatives.</p> <p>The report concluded that a confidential helpline to establish eligibility would help to encourage take-up. It emphasised the importance of marketing this to families, letting them know that they can use it to establish a relative's eligibility without having to identify them.</p> <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This report would suggest there is a need to raise awareness of eligibility among council residents and that a proactive approach is more successful in encouraging people to apply. It also highlights that helping people to establish eligibility in a confidential manner is a successful approach. While a telephone hotline may be too cost</i></p> |

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| | <p><i>prohibitive for many small LAs, alternative suggestions could be a ready reckoner or web based benefits tool. The DWP currently provides a Benefits Enquiry Line for information about social security benefits. There is also an online benefits advice service on the Directgov website which allows potential claimants to find out information on benefits and tax credits that they may be entitled to, which would possibly negate the need for helplines for individual authorities.</i></p> |
| Department for Work and Pensions: Helping older people engage with benefits and services: an evaluation of the Partnership Fund (2007) | <p>This report evaluated The Pension Service Partnership Fund, examining the implementation, delivery and outcomes of the Fund and contributing to a better understanding of good practice in providing services for older people. The Partnership Fund aimed to develop cohesive networks of services for older people by encouraging joint working between partners and financed a diverse range of local and national organisations to undertake individual projects to improve the take-up of benefits, particularly among those who are harder to reach.</p> <p>The report highlighted that the barriers found were similar to those found in previous research, namely a lack of understanding of the benefits system, a lack of clarity around eligibility, the perceived complexity of making benefit applications and the stigma of benefit receipt.</p> <p>The study found that projects used six broad methods of targeting older people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using existing databases to make contact with older people. • Distributing printed materials e.g. leaflets or posters. • Engaging the local and specialist media. • Transmitting details of the service through word of mouth. • Undertaking community outreach. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the telephone to introduce the project and explain what it could offer. <p>An evaluation of the Partnership Fund was undertaken in 2007. It found that the overall benefit awarded through the Pension Fund can be estimated at £61m per year. However, it was reported that there were a number of important challenges to assessing the impact of the Partnership Fund on customers of projects, as it was difficult to disentangle outcomes that were attributable to Partnership Fund activity solely and outcomes that might result from usual contact older people had with The Pension Service. Also of note, the report commented that partnership working was evident across more than three-quarters of the projects surveyed and projects that reported partnership working mentioned a wide variety of partner organisations. However, initiatives which did not exist prior to the Partnership Fund and did not have partners tended to experience bedding in periods.</p> <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This evaluation report would suggest there is a need for LAs to adopt a range of measures to engage with potential benefit recipients and established partnerships may work better than establishing new partnerships. It would also suggest that consideration needs to be given to how to measure the impact of activities and determine the influence of these activities over and above the influence of the recession.</i></p> |
| House of Commons Committee of Public | <p>The Committee's predecessor had made recommendations to the Department for Work and Pensions to tackle pensioner poverty by encouraging pensioners to take up the benefits to which they were entitled. That Committee had recommended setting targets; communicating effectively with pensioners; working in partnership; and simplifying and reducing duplication of processes. The Government had set a target to pay Pension Credit to 3</p> |

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| Accounts Department for Work and Pensions: Progress in tackling pensioner poverty – encouraging take-up of entitlements (2007) | <p>million households by 2006 and 3.2 million by 2008. However, DWP did not meet the 2006 target and was not expected to meet the 2008 target.</p> <p>This report drew the following conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP had increased the number of people claiming Pension Credit although noted DWP's PSA target did not address its wider aim of providing pensioners with a holistic approach to benefit take-up to which they were entitled. • The Pension Service did not coordinate its approach sufficiently with primary health and housing organisations, despite a common objective to increase older people's well-being. • Data matching and data sharing had improved but DWP did not have sufficient information on pensioners' individual circumstances to identify all their benefit entitlements, and only had information on people within the benefits system. • Take-up of HB and CTB had declined in recent years despite The Pension Service providing pensioners with a full benefit entitlement check. The report suggested that the performance of LAs in managing the benefits and in providing advice was a likely cause of local variability in take-up. • Another issue was the difficulties of measuring take-up rates due to the complexity of the eligibility assessment for disability benefits. The DWP have commissioned research into the feasibility of measuring Attendance Allowance take-up and exploring the reasons for non-take up. It was suggested that the findings from this are used to set up a target take-up level, as the DWP has no targets for take-up. • Despite the fact that it has become simpler to claim pensioner benefits, there are still a number of stages which |

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| | <p>requires the customers to understand complex links between disability and income-related benefits. It was suggested that The DWP should allow customers to claim linked benefits through one, single transaction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report highlighted that older pensioners, pensioners from ethnic minorities and from areas that are more affluent are less likely to claim Pension Credit, as are pensioners in rural areas. Although there are a number of different approaches to encouraging take-up, there is limited awareness of what works best. Through the sharing of best practice and encouraging innovative practices, take-up can be increased, especially in areas with lower take-up. <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This committee report would suggest there is a need for LAs to adopt a holistic and partnership based approach and there remains scope for LAs to improve on some of the administrative barriers. It also suggests there may be merit in LAs targeting specific categories of people such as older pensioners, pensioners from ethnic minorities and from areas that are more affluent and pensioners in rural areas who are less likely to claim additional benefits. Finally, it is important that LAs in Wales share best practice and encourage innovative practice in order to maximise take-up.</i></p> |
| Local Government Association: A benefit to eight million | <p>This document suggested some changes to CTB in order to make it fairer and to increase the rate of take-up. The report offered a series of nine principles for reform of CTB. Most of these relate to reforming the design of CTB which is not within the powers of LAs. However, three relate to promoting take-up by LAs. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LAs need to find ways of helping people to recognise themselves as potential beneficiaries of CTB. LAs need to recognise, and respond to, the fact that three quarters of entitled non-recipients of CTB are owner- |

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| houses: what CTB does and how to improve it, 2007 | <p>occupiers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LAs might offer a benefits check to all households when a household member first reaches the age of 60, as well as at other turning points in later life. <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This report would suggest there is a need to LAs to promote eligibility for benefits, to target owner occupiers and to target people at specific life events such as, for example, becoming bereaved or moving from work to pension age, being made redundant etc.</i></p> |
| Social and Market Research: Research on Access to Benefits (2007) | <p>This report, commissioned by Access to Benefits (A2B) aimed to provide a better understanding of the spectrum of older peoples' attitudes to claiming benefits and to identify alternative ways of reaching older people. Focus groups were held with older people across a range of geographical locations in Northern Ireland as well as consultation with representatives from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Rates Collection Agency and local hospital trusts and a local council. The barriers identified from this research included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of awareness of benefits. Assumed ineligibility. Perceived complex/intrusive nature of the application process. Fear of losing benefits. Poor communication of benefits entitlement. Stigma associated with claiming benefits. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride. • Fear that applying for a benefit may cease their other benefit entitlements. • Poor computer literacy. <p>Suggestions to increase benefit take-up included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal visits from advisers. • Letters which gave a strong indication that they may be eligible. • Assistance or encouragement from third party organisations. • A confidential helpline to establish eligibility. • Pre-populated application forms. <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This report would suggest there is a need for LAs to adopt a proactive approach, improve the administrative process and work through trusted intermediaries.</i></p> |
| Welsh Assembly Government: Council Tax Benefit and | <p>In addition to providing funding for benefit take-up, the Welsh Assembly Government set up a working group to research the barriers to CTB take-up in Wales and to highlight and promote best practice, based on the experience of the LAs that have successfully increased CTB take-up.</p> <p>The findings from this independent research highlighted a number of barriers and recommendations, including:</p> |

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| Housing Benefit – Barriers to Take-up in Wales (2008) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application form and required documentation – there was a large variation between the style, structure and length of application form, with application forms of up to 40 pages long. Other forms used a smaller font size than that recommended by the DWP. • The volume and variety of information required caused a problem, especially as there was sometimes little guidance as to why the information was needed and where to obtain it. The report recommended that all authorities in Wales review their claim forms regularly to ensure that they are fit for purpose and are not designed in such a way that they might put off potential claimants. • Timescale for dispatch of application form – the research found that over half of authorities took longer than ten days to issue a claim form after receiving a request. The report recommended that all LAs review their application systems as a matter of urgency so that all requests could be recorded on the day of receipt and that application forms were issued immediately. • Literacy, language and communication barriers – there were issues with navigation on LAs' websites and large variation in website content. In addition, although a number of LAs made application forms available to download on their website, the availability of guidance notes was poor. The report recommended that all authorities should review their websites to make sure that they are easily navigable, user-friendly and up-to-date. • Overall customer experience – the research noted a lack of personal contact with customers. In addition, a lack of 'ownership' of the application assessment and the idea that a number of assessors would have access to very private and personal information which could be very off-putting to some applicants. The report recommended that LAs ensure that trained staff are always available throughout the claim process. |

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| | <p>The research also identified a range of barriers to benefit take-up and made a series of suggestions to help overcome these, but recognised that not all would be appropriate for all LAs. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Savings threshold – requires strategic response. - Stigma associated with claiming benefits. Suggestions included promotion of “entitlement” rather than “benefit”. - Language, literacy and communication barriers. Suggestions included promotion of face-to-face services, marketing, use of ready reckoners etc. - Fear of losing current benefits and previous negative experience. Suggestions included using press releases, highlighting case studies of successful claimants. - Unfamiliarity with the language of decision makers. Suggestions included LAs to review and clarify confusing terms. - Inability to share information with other government departments - requires strategic response - Access e.g. for housebound people, those working full-time etc. Suggestions included home visits and out of hours services. - Fear of links being made with other agencies e.g. sharing information with social services. Suggestions included partnership with trusted intermediaries e.g. Age Concern. - Possible cost of supplying supporting information e.g. copies of bank statements. <p>The working group also identified several key factors that were felt to be essential to the successful implementation of LAs' benefit take-up action plans. These were:</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of support and buy-in from local authority Cabinet Members and Senior Management Teams. • Staff attitude and commitment. • Joining forces with others, both internally and externally, to achieve goals, e.g. with Communities First partnerships within the LA, neighbouring authorities or working with partner organisations like The Pension Service. • Working in partnership with the voluntary sector. <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This report would suggest there is a need for LAs to improve their administrative processes and communication/marketing materials, adopt a proactive personal approach, work in partnership with others and through trusted intermediaries as well as ensuring senior management support and staff commitment through, for example, training and awareness raising.</i></p> |
| Access to Benefits for Older People: Summary of findings of workshops (2008) | <p>Access to Benefits (A2B) ran a series of themed workshops with older people and community development workers in Northern Ireland with the purpose of making contact with older people and the people who work with them and to learn more about how barriers to benefit entitlement can be addressed. The findings included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All groups of respondents were able to identify Pension Credit and Smartpass as benefits available to people over 60. The majority identified Disability Living Allowance, Housing Benefit, Winter Fuel Payment and the free TV Licence. • With respect to barriers to using computers, issues identified included the cost of computer equipment, |

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| | <p>broadband and courses, access to computers, health and technological barriers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many groups believed that the process made it too complicated to claim benefits. Others did not wish to complete forms which they considered to be intrusive or undignified, while some groups mentioned that they did not have anyone to help with the forms. Using voluntary and community groups seemed to be the most popular way of getting information to older people, including larger organisations as well as local community groups. <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This report would suggest there is merit in increasing awareness of availability or and eligibility to HB and CTB, improving the administrative process and having dedicated support available, as well as working through the voluntary sector.</i></p> |
| Access to Benefits: Take-Up Study: Rate Relief and Disabled Person's Allowance (2008) | <p>This paper examined the issues which impacted on low take-up of Housing Benefit, Rate Relief and Disabled Person's Allowance and made recommendations as to how take-up can be increased.</p> <p>Issues relating to low take-up included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length and complexity of application forms. Accessibility issues. Misconceptions about ineligibility. Reluctance to give out personal information. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous bad experiences when applying for benefits. <p>Recommendations as to how take-up could be increased included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaflets should be revised and made clearer. • Set up a free and anonymous helpline. • Publicise and provide more home visits. • Use locally based enablers. • Simplify forms. • Automated delivery of benefits. • Pre-populated forms. • Provide information packs to retirees. <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This report would suggest there is merit in improving the administrative process and having dedicated support available, as well as working through the voluntary sector and targeting people at specific life events.</i></p> |
| House of Commons Work and Pensions | <p>The Committee looked at the work being undertaken by DWP and The Pension Service to reduce the level of pensioner poverty. It found that the DWP had put a lot of effort into encouraging pensioners to claim Pension Credit and then directing them towards other benefits but highlighted that it may be more effective to encourage people to claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit before initiating claims for Pension Credit.</p> |

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| Committee: Tackling Pensioner Poverty (2009) | <p>The Committee noted that a significant amount of work had gone into encouraging people to claim Pension Credit but that this was now experiencing diminishing returns for its efforts and further progress in improving take-up has been limited.</p> <p>It highlighted that while home-owning pensioners are less likely to live in poverty than non-homeowners, many of those who are entitled do not take-up means-tested benefits.</p> <p>The Committee suggested the Department needed to identify the scale of this problem and understand the reasons for it before they can tackle it effectively.</p> <p>The Committee agreed with the NAO that a focus on improving the take-up of Housing and Council Tax Benefit could have a significant impact on the number of pensioners living in poverty and suggested that LAs needed to do more to increase take-up of Housing and Council Tax Benefit, and could work more closely with the Department's Agencies.</p> <p>Further suggestions made included incentivising LAs to improve Housing and Council Tax Benefit take-up, with the Department setting targets for either the take-up of these benefits, or the number of new applications generated. It also recommended that there should be a single phone line for Pension Credit, Housing and Council Tax Benefit.</p> |

| Document | Summary |
|---|--|
| | <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This report would suggest there is merit in LAs targeting owner-occupiers, setting take-up targets and in working in partnership with DWP and its agencies.</i></p> |
| Audit Commission Benefit Take-up | <p>The Audit Commission undertook a series of pilot benefit inspections across a number of LAs in England. The Commission identified four areas of notable practice. These were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying and targeting potential claimants, highlighting that intelligent use of data sources allowed LAs to identify potential customers more effectively. It noted that Newham was exploring ways to share data between departments. • Marketing and promoting benefit services, suggesting that tailored promotional work designed to suit the profile of the local community can help to increase the success of take-up campaigns. It highlighted the need to measure and understand the impact that take-up campaigns have on the local area to help to improve upon success and minimise costs associated with less effective promotions. • Reviewing literature design to ensure ease of use, providing clear advice with examples of guidance and highlighting different contact methods. • Working with partners to improve take-up rates. It suggested that partnership working could help in understanding local needs and to tailor services appropriately. <p>The Commission provided vignettes of benefit take-up activity in a number of LAs, highlighting innovative activities which included working with, for example, Sure Start, with local schools and attending redundancy workshops with affected business. However, the Commission also highlighted examples where plans were underdeveloped, not</p> |

| Document | Summary |
|----------|---|
| | <p>fully detailed and lacked adequate arrangements to evaluate the impact of actions on improving take-up and where take-up was not highlighted as a priority in local business plans.</p> <p><i>Relevance to Wales</i></p> <p><i>This report would suggest there is merit in LAs taking a targeted approach, exploring data sharing options, making publicity tailored to local needs, improving the administrative process and adopting a partnership approach with other relevant organisations. It also suggests LAs need detailed action plans and include measures to assess the impact of their activities and take-up plans need to be supported at a strategic level within council.</i></p> |

Appendix 2 - Additional Detail on Take-up

Table 14: Correlation between HB Recipients per 15+ population and Socio-Economic Factors

| | GB regions | | Welsh LAs | |
|---|------------|--------|-----------|--------|
| | Aug-07 | Apr-10 | Aug-07 | Apr-10 |
| R-squared | | | | |
| Claimant unemployment rate | 65% | 55% | 74% | 77% |
| Workplace GVA (£000 2005 prices) per capita | 30% | 32% | 0% | 0% |
| Resident wages | 43% | 46% | 2% | 1% |
| House prices | 68% | 65% | 71% | 65% |
| Percentage of LSOAs in the most deprived 10% (2008) | - | - | 72% | 67% |
| Percentage of LSOAs in the most deprived 50% (2008) | - | - | 78% | 77% |
| Retired population % total ²² | 0% | 15% | 23% | 27% |
| Manufacturing % total employment (1991) | 3% | 2% | 40% | 40% |
| Correlation coefficient | | | | |
| Claimant unemployment rate | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 0.9 |
| Workplace GVA (£000 2005 prices) per capita | -0.5 | -0.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Resident wages | -0.7 | -0.7 | -0.1 | -0.1 |
| House prices | -0.8 | -0.8 | -0.8 | -0.8 |
| Percentage of LSOAs in the most deprived 10% (2008) | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| Percentage of LSOAs in the most deprived 50% (2008) | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.9 | 0.9 |
| Retired population % total | -0.1 | -0.4 | -0.5 | -0.5 |
| Manufacturing % total employment (1991) | -0.2 | -0.1 | 0.6 | 0.6 |

Source: ONS, ASHE, DCLG, Stats Wales, Oxford Economics

Note: There is no regional data for LSOAs in the most deprived 10% as deprivation data is produced separately for devolved administrations and, to the best of our knowledge, is not comparable

Note 1 – R-squared: R-squared is a statistical measure of the proportion of variation in one variable (in this case housing benefits per 15+ population) associated with one or more other variables. R-squared values closer to 1 or 100% indicate a stronger association. Note however R-squared results are not an indication of causation, e.g. changes in variable X drive / ‘cause’ a change in variable Y.

²² It is not entirely clear why the R-squared value for the retired population is 0% in August 2007.

Note 2 – Correlation: Correlation coefficient results are related to R-squared results, except for differing in terms of distinguishing for the direction of association. Correlation values ranges between -1 and +1. Perfect positive correlation (a correlation co-efficient of +1) implies that relative changes in one variable are matched by an identical change in the other variable and in the same direction, e.g. a 1% increase in unemployment is associated with a 1% increase in benefit recipient rates. If the correlation coefficient is 0, the variables are said to have no correlation or association (similar to an R-squared value of 0%).

Note 3 – T-stat: The t-stat is a statistical test result to estimate the strength of the relationship between variables, i.e. is the relationship statistically significant.

Note 4 – P-value: In statistical significance testing, the lower the p-value, the more "significant" the relationship is, in the sense of statistical significance. One often accepts the alternative hypothesis, (i.e. rejects a null hypothesis of no significant relationship) if the p-value is less than 0.05 or 0.01.

Table 15: Cross-sectional Model of HB Recipients per 15+ population across Welsh LAs (April 2010)

| | Coefficient | t-stat | p-value |
|---|-------------|--------|---------|
| Constant | 60 | 3.1 | 0.007 |
| Claimant unemployment rate (April 2010) | 624 | 2.6 | 0.019 |
| Percentage of LSOAs in the most deprived 50% (2008) | 53 | 3.0 | 0.007 |
| Retired population % total (2010) | -82 | -1.2 | 0.233 |
| Adjusted R-squared | 84% | - | - |

Source: Oxford Economics

Table 16: Correlation between CTB Recipients per 18+ Population and Socio-Economic Factors

| | GB regions | | Welsh LAs | |
|---|------------|--------|-----------|--------|
| | Aug-07 | Apr-10 | Aug-07 | Apr-10 |
| R-squared | | | | |
| Claimant unemployment rate | 78% | 81% | 74% | 71% |
| Workplace GVA (£000 2005 prices) per capita | 50% | 54% | 4% | 5% |
| Resident wages | 58% | 63% | 6% | 3% |
| House prices | 79% | 79% | 87% | 79% |
| Percentage of LSOAs in the most deprived 10% (2008) | - | - | 75% | 70% |
| Percentage of LSOAs in the most deprived 50% (2008) | - | - | 92% | 91% |
| Retired population % total | 0% | 12% | 13% | 15% |
| Manufacturing % total employment (1991) | 0% | 9% | 43% | 44% |
| Correlation coefficient | | | | |
| Claimant unemployment rate | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| Workplace GVA (£000 2005 prices) per capita | -0.7 | -0.7 | -0.2 | -0.2 |
| Resident wages | -0.8 | -0.8 | -0.3 | -0.2 |
| House prices | -0.9 | -0.9 | -0.9 | -0.9 |
| Percentage of LSOAs in the most deprived 10% (2008) | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| Percentage of LSOAs in the most deprived 50% (2008) | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Retired population % total | -0.1 | -0.3 | -0.4 | -0.4 |
| Manufacturing % total employment (1991) | 0.0 | 0.3 | 0.7 | 0.7 |

Source: ONS, ASHE, DCLG, Stats Wales, Oxford Economics

Table 17: Cross-Sectional Model of CTB recipients per 18+ Population across Welsh LAs (April 2010)

| | Coefficient | t-stat | p-value |
|---|-------------|--------|---------|
| Constant | 81 | 3.5 | 0.004 |
| Claimant unemployment rate (April 2010) | 340 | 1.5 | 0.131 |
| House prices (Q1 2010) | 0.0 | -1.2 | 0.289 |
| Percentage of LSOAs in the most deprived 50% (2008) | 98 | 3.8 | 0.001 |
| Adjusted R-squared | 91% | - | - |

Source: Oxford Economics

Appendix 3 - Funding Distribution

| LA | 2006/2007 | | 2008/2009 | | 2009/2010 | | 2010/2011 | |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| | % Allocation | £ | % Allocation | £ | % Allocation | £ | % Allocation | £ |
| Anglesey | 2.44% | 36,592.00 | 2.40% | 24,000.00 | 2.37% | 23,700.00 | 2.36% | 23,600.00 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 2.50% | 37,498.00 | 2.52% | 25,200.00 | 2.44% | 24,400.00 | 2.49% | 24,900.00 |
| Bridgend | 4.30% | 64,525.00 | 4.37% | 43,700.00 | 4.43% | 44,300.00 | 4.44% | 44,400.00 |
| Caerphilly | 6.03% | 90,440.00 | 6.02% | 60,200.00 | 6.05% | 60,500.00 | 6.07% | 60,700.00 |
| Cardiff | 9.88% | 148,215.00 | 9.98% | 9,800.00 | 10.10% | 101,000.00 | 10.16% | 101,600.00 |
| Carmarthenshire | 6.10% | 91,452.00 | 6.12% | 61,200.00 | 6.19% | 61,900.00 | 6.16% | 61,600.00 |
| Ceredigion | 2.53% | 38,000.00 | 2.54% | 25,400.00 | 2.51% | 25,100.00 | 2.50% | 25,000.00 |
| Conwy | 3.84% | 57,608.00 | 3.78% | 37,800.00 | 3.77% | 37,700.00 | 3.74% | 37,400.00 |
| Denbighshire | 3.35% | 50,216.00 | 3.37% | 33,700.00 | 3.38% | 33,800.00 | 3.37% | 33,800.00 |
| Flintshire | 4.76% | 71,457.00 | 4.75% | 47,500.00 | 4.77% | 47,700.00 | 4.75% | 47,500.00 |
| Gwynedd | 4.32% | 64,738.00 | 4.27% | 42,700.00 | 4.24% | 42,400.00 | 4.19% | 41,900.00 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 2.01% | 30,119.00 | 2.01% | 20,100.00 | 1.99% | 19,900.00 | 2.02% | 20,200.00 |
| Monmouthshire | 2.72% | 40,745.00 | 2.71% | 27,100.00 | 2.73% | 27,300.00 | 2.70% | 27,000.00 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 4.77% | 71,542.00 | 4.75% | 47,500.00 | 4.73% | 47,300.00 | 4.74% | 47,400.00 |
| Newport | 4.80% | 71,956.00 | 4.80% | 48,000.00 | 4.79% | 47,900.00 | 4.82% | 48,200.00 |
| Pembrokeshire | 4.15% | 62,191.00 | 4.13% | 41,300.00 | 4.14% | 41,400.00 | 4.10% | 41,000.00 |
| Powys | 4.68% | 70,176.00 | 4.64% | 46,400.00 | 4.56% | 45,600.00 | 4.54% | 45,400.00 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taff | 8.21% | 123,175.00 | 8.17% | 81,700.00 | 8.08% | 80,800.00 | 8.14% | 81,400.00 |
| Swansea | 7.47% | 112,073.00 | 7.50% | 75,000.00 | 7.48% | 74,800.00 | 7.45% | 74,500.00 |
| The Vale of Glamorgan | 3.92% | 58,789.00 | 3.95% | 39,500.00 | 4.02% | 40,200.00 | 4.01% | 40,100.00 |
| Torfaen | 3.18% | 47,664.00 | 3.17% | 31,700.00 | 3.14% | 31,400.00 | 3.12% | 31,200.00 |
| Wrexham | 4.06% | 60,829.00 | 4.05% | 40,500.00 | 4.09% | 40,900.00 | 4.12% | 41,200.00 |
| Wales | 100.00% | 1,500,000 | 100.00% | 1,000,000.00 | 100.00% | 1,000,000.00 | 99.99% | 1,000,000.00 |

Source: WAG