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Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our reference: MB/JC/2973/14

Christine Chapman AC/AM
Chair
Communities, Equality & Local Government Committee

11 July 2014

Dear Christine

**IN-YEAR SCRUTINY SESSION – REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
FOLLOWING THE MEETING ON 19 JUNE 2014**

Thank you for your letter dated 26 June following the in-year scrutiny session held on 19 June 2014.

During my evidence at the scrutiny session, I agreed to provide the Committee with further information in relation to Communities First and Credit Unions, which I set out below:

**Details of the guidance provided to local authorities as part of their scrutiny of
Communities First grant recipients**

Guidance has been provided to all recipients of Communities First funding and is published on the Welsh Government web site, a link is provided below.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/people-and-communities/regeneration/communitiesfirst/guidance/?lang=en>

**Details of any increase in Credit Union membership figures following the Welsh
Government's marketing campaign**

The marketing campaign ran for 3 months from the start of April until the end of June this year. The latest membership figures for Credit Unions for the quarter April to June will be submitted to the Welsh Government later this month by Credit Unions. This will be the first opportunity to learn of the increase in membership resulting from this marketing campaign.

The Committee has also requested further information relating to Communities First, Discretionary Assistance Fund, Universal Credit and Credit Union membership targets, which I set out below:

Details of the performance indicators for Communities First

The Communities First programme's performance is measured using the Outcomes Framework. This was published as Annex 5 to the guidance above. A copy of the current framework for 2014/15 is attached.

The Outcomes Framework is being further refined and there is currently work underway to align performance measures across Communities First, Families First and Flying Start for areas where all programmes have work in common.

Details of arrangements for monitoring of the recorded underspend for the Discretionary Assistance Fund

The expenditure levels for the Discretionary Assistance Fund are constantly under review. Management Information is submitted each month to the Welsh Government by Northgate Public Services, who are managing the Discretionary Assistance Fund under contract to the Welsh Government. These reports are discussed at monthly Operational Board meetings held between Northgate Public Services and my officials. These discussions include consideration of expenditure levels which allows us to plan and act accordingly.

A progress report on developments in relation to Universal Credit

The Department for Work and Pensions announced on 30 June that Jobcentres in Hammersmith, Bath, Rugby, Harrogate and Inverness will be taking new claims for Universal Credit from couples as well as those from single jobseekers.

Universal Credit also went live in five more Jobcentres in the North West of England from 30 June 2014.

DWP announced on 20 June their timetable for the expansion of Universal Credit into the North West of England. The roll-out will take place on a weekly basis between the 23 June and 28 July, where individuals in earmarked postcode areas will become eligible. All other eligibility criteria will remain the same as current live Jobcentres i.e. single jobseekers with no dependents.

Universal Credit was rolled out to single jobseekers with no dependents in Shotton, Flintshire on 7 April 2014. The volumes of UC claims are still very low.

The North West England expansion will take place on 28 July with roll-out to a number of postcodes in the Chester area. This is a potential impact on the volumes being experienced at the Shotton Jobcentre with the crossover of postcodes with Chester, where claimants will have to make claims through Shotton Jobcentre.

Monthly statistics are published by DWP on the roll-out of Universal Credit which include an analysis of 'starters' by Jobcentre. The next publication is due on 11 July and will include the first information for Shotton (April 2014).

Local Support Services Framework Robust Trials

On 10 July, Lord Freud, the Minister for Welfare, announced 11 successful joint DWP District and Local Authority bids for LSSF Robust Trials. These include two successful bids for Wales in Blaenau Gwent and Carmarthenshire. The robust trials are due to run for one year commencing on 1 September 2014.

Information about Credit Union membership targets

As at the end of March 2014, adult membership for all Credit Unions in Wales was estimated at 65,000 with total membership, including junior savers, estimated at more than 78,000. Through the Credit Union Project, 17 Credit Unions have helped more than 33,000 adults who meet the definition of being financially excluded to have access to financial products that are simple, transparent and affordable. Since April this year, an additional £1.9 million has been made available to Credit Unions participating in the Project, extending it until March 2017. This funding has targets attached to it, which will be monitored closely by the Welsh Government, and include the number of financially excluded individuals helped as well as information on total membership. Individual targets have been provided to every Credit Union and it is expected that the funding now in place will allow an additional 8,328 members who are financially excluded to be able to access financial services at a Credit Union.

I trust this information will be of use to the Committee.

Yours sincerely



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