

Scottish Government Guidance for Discretionary Housing Payments

Background

Powers over Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) will transfer to the Scottish Government from April 2017. For 2017/18, Ministers have committed to implementing minimal changes to ensure a smooth and secure transition, and local authorities will continue to administer DHPs. The Scottish Government will have control over all areas of DHPs including funding allocations and guidance. This paper sets out our proposals for DHP guidance for 2017/18 and in the longer term.

Guidance for 2017/18

To ensure consistency and continuity for 2017/18, we propose that the guidance issued by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will remain in place in Scotland for the first year of devolution. The Scottish Government will continue to expect local authorities to have regard to DWP's guidance when making decisions about DHPs, however the Scottish Government will also issue a separate note to highlight areas where the situation in Scotland is different. These include:

- Bedroom tax mitigation – the Scottish Government will continue to fully fund the bedroom tax and Ministers expect that anyone affected who applies for a DHP will be awarded one.
- Monitoring returns – local authorities will no longer need to report their statistics to the DWP and new arrangements will be in place for local authorities to send their data to the Scottish Government.

Long-term review of guidance

A broader piece of work will be required to rewrite the DHP guidance so that it is appropriate for Scotland. We would like to do this in partnership with stakeholders and would welcome input from stakeholders to ensure the new guidance works for local authorities, people interested in claiming DHPs and organisations supporting them. We hope to start this work from Spring 2017 alongside the Social Security Bill.

Next steps

- Do you have any thoughts or comments about this proposal?
- Are there any other Scotland-specific differences the Scottish Government should highlight in the guidance note for 2017/18?
- Do you have any suggestions about how the Scottish Government could publicise the 2017/18 guidance note?
- Please let us know if you would be interested in helping develop the DHP guidance next year.