

Welfare Rights Service

Stakeholder Bulletin – March 2020

The way the Welfare Rights Service works is changing. This briefing note provides you with information about the criteria, the referral process, contact details and ways in which you can find out more about our new way of working.

The Welfare Rights Service

From 1 April 2020, the Welfare Rights Service will continue to provide high quality, comprehensive and independent advice and assistance to Lancashire residents and stakeholders for the following key areas of work:

- Appeal tribunal representation across the range of key welfare benefits
- Benefit take-up for people of pension age
- Consultancy and training

By focusing on these key areas the Welfare Rights Service will continue to support the most vulnerable residents in Lancashire. This will comprise of specialist advice and representation with benefit appeals across the range of key welfare benefits, providing comprehensive benefit advice service for residents of pension age, and working together with other agencies to tackle the current welfare benefit advice pressures by providing professional training and consultancy to partner agencies.

Access to the Welfare Rights Service

From 1 April 2020, partner organisations will be able to refer customers who meet service criteria by completing an online referral form. If you currently signpost people to the service and would like to become a referring partner, you can contact us by emailing WRStakeholders@lancashire.gov.uk

We will be in contact with those who have expressed an interest in becoming a referrer to work with you to clarify the pathways into the Welfare Rights Service and the referrals we are able to accept.

Unfortunately the Welfare Rights Service telephone helpline will no longer be supported.

Collaboration

We welcome a conversation with us about your current pressures in service provision, concerns regarding certain vulnerable customer groups accessing benefits and any training needs you may have, with a view to providing support where we can. We want to work with you to improve and develop the knowledge and skills in benefits advice work across the whole system, in order to increase advice capacity for our residents. If you work with specific client groups or are seeing people with similar benefit problems, we can consider whether provision of training or targeted information will help address some of the issues and reduce the numbers of people in financial crisis or with escalating issues.

Our updated webpage reflects our service offer and provides further information on benefits, information for carers, residents of pension age and where to get further help with benefit queries.

We are also working with our libraries who already provide digital support to residents, and are currently training staff to use the benefit calculator and to feel confident in supporting residents to access online information to check their benefit entitlement.

Open Welfare Benefit Cases

We are generally supporting approximately 1,200 customers at any one time with ongoing benefit issues. We want to reassure you that we will contact each of these customers before 1 April 2020 about the changes to our service to confirm that we will continue to support them until the conclusion of their case, regardless of the level to which we are supporting them.

More Information

We will keep you updated on the work we are undertaking, and we look forward to working with all interested partners to further develop the welfare benefit advice support available across Lancashire.

If you have any queries please do get in touch.

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