

## Appendix 3F: Other Audits and Grant Claims

### Troubled Families Programme, Payments by Results Scheme Grant

#### Objective

To assess compliance with the terms and conditions of the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Financial Framework for making Payment by Result (PBR) claims under the Expanded Troubled Families Programme (Phase 2).

#### Background

The Financial Framework requires that Internal Audit verifies a 10% representative sample of PBR claims before they are made to ensure there is supporting evidence to confirm families:

- met the required criteria to be considered for entry to the expanded Troubled Families Programme
- have achieved either continuous employment or significant and sustained progress as defined by the Council's agreed Outcomes Plan.

Larger sample sizes may be required for smaller claims in order to ensure the audit is meaningful.

#### Opinion: September 2016, claim signed off

This was the third PBR claim made under the DCLG's new expanded programme. Of the 52 claims due to be made, eight had been independently reviewed by the Group Manager which was in line with previous protocols agreed under Phase 1 of the programme.

The 52 claims were presented to Internal Audit in three batches in June, August and September; with 30 in the last batch presented in September.

Twelve were randomly selected for audit, which included two of the eight claims signed off by the Group Manager. Sufficient evidence was available to confirm:

- families met the eligibility criteria for entry to the expanded programme for **all** the random sample of files selected
- the validity of PBR claims for continuous employment or significant and sustained progress, presented in the June and August 2016 batches.

An initial examination of the required 10% of cases (i.e.: three) in September 2016, identified:

- an inaccurate claim of continuous employment

The PBR requires twenty six weeks of continuous employment to be demonstrated for a claimant previously in receipt of Job Support Allowance. The evidence presented was based on the thirteen week outcome required for claimants previously in receipt of Employment Support Allowance. Enquiries established this had occurred as a result of a misinterpretation of benefits paid when claimants have a period of sickness whilst claiming Job Support Allowance.

- a Child in Need (CIN) PBR claim which had not been closed for six months as required by the Council's Outcome Plan.

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The Social Care team confirmed that a further CIN meeting was required to establish whether the case could be closed.

These two cases were withdrawn from the DCLG's PBR claim and will be considered for potential resubmission at a later date. Evidence was also not initially available to confirm other PBR outcomes claimed on the three files examined. Enquiries and checks with associated systems did resolve some, but not all the inconsistencies identified; in particular evidence to confirm domestic violence (DV) outcomes.

As a result of the issues identified above, the decision was made to extend the sample audited in order to gain the required assurance over the validity of the DCLG claim due to be submitted. This additional sample included a targeted review of all twelve domestic violence (DV) PBR outcomes.

This additional work identified that:

- there were no issues with the claims made under the continuous employment criteria
- system data on DV incidents was not up to date when evidence for PBR outcomes was first examined. Subsequent input of data, by colleagues outside the Early Help Family Support team (the team), impacted one of the twelve PBR outcomes for DV and led to the withdrawal of the case from the DCLG's PBR claim.

As such, the issues affecting the three cases withdrawn from the DCLG PBR claim are considered to be isolated instances and unlikely to affect the accuracy of the final DCLG submission.

Going forward:

- recent changes to the staffing structures in the team have significantly increased the numbers of staff responsible for delivering the troubled families programme. Staff training sessions aim to clarify the evidence required on files to demonstrate PBR outcomes
- management's expectation is that independent management checks of case files will become embedded into the team's day to day working practices, with the aim of ensuring PBR outcomes are evidenced in line with the Council's Outcome Plan.

In addition, Internal Audit will continue to work with the team manager and Performance Analyst Officer to improve arrangements for evidencing outcomes. So, for example, recent discussions have resulted in a change to council documents used by Department for Work and Pensions colleagues<sup>1</sup> which will improve evidence to support PBR claims for continuous employment.

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Work and Pensions colleagues have been seconded to work alongside council staff to support delivery of the Troubled Families Programme.

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### **Objective**

To carry out appropriate investigations and checks in order to certify, in all significant respects, that the money was used to fund capital expenditure in the areas covered by the terms and conditions attached to each of these grant claims.

### **Highways Maintenance Challenge Fund**

#### **Purpose of funding**

To assist with the Southend LED street lighting upgrade.

**Opinion: Unqualified.**

### **Local Transport Capital Block Fund**

#### **Purpose of funding**

To assist with transport improvements work such as road resurfacing, new traffic lights and road signage.

**Opinion: Unqualified.**

### **Disabled Facilities Grant**

#### **Purpose of funding**

To provide facilities including fixtures and fitting to properties, to assist disabled people to live at home.

**Opinion: Unqualified.**

### **A127 Corridor Growth Scheme**

#### **Purpose of funding**

For 2015/16, this grant was used on the improvements at Kent Elms corner and the implementation of the pedestrian crossing.

**Opinion: Unqualified.**