

Benefit cap changes and how it affects people in Coventry - Communications Plan

Background

From 7 November 2016, the benefit cap was reduced, cutting the total amount of benefits people can get. The cap limits the amount people can be paid if they claim certain benefits. It applies to people of working age. People of pension age are exempt.

When benefits are calculated, housing benefit or universal credit is reduced so that a person's benefit does not go above the benefit cap limit.

From 16 January Coventry City Council benefits advisors will be communicating with the majority of people affected explaining how much they face losing.

This will affect approximately 800 families which results in around 2711 children pushed further into poverty.

Lead agencies

Partnership for Coventry, Welfare Reform Working Together Group, Coventry City Council, Coventry Independent Advice Service, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Coventry Law Centre, and Whitefriars Housing.

What	Why	Who
News release Issued 3 or 4 January	Benefit cap could force 3,000 Coventry children into poverty. Linked to Scrucu Committee meeting on Wed 11 January	Cllr Rachel Lancaster Alan Markey
Social media messages. Throughout January – Shared and retweeted by agencies	To communicate CCC website link as widely as possible	Darren O'Shaughnessy linking with colleagues
Updated leaflets x two. Including details of regular advice service sessions	Produce an updated benefit cap leaflet specific to Coventry and a separate leaflet outlining welfare funds that people can apply for – including making a DHP claim	Darren to liaise with Karen Gist
Week beginning 16 January letters to people affected. Benefits staff will also be phoning those affected – where possible	To outline what the cap means and what help is available. This will include support information.	CCC benefits service

What	Why	Who
Whitefriars Housing – face-to-face meetings with tenants	Whitefriars will be liaising with a proportion of people who are likely to be affected by the benefit cap to help them mitigate the effects of the Benefit Cap	Whitefriars staff
Week beginning 23 January letter emailed to various Partnership groups	Part of a call to action to stakeholders who can cascade information about the Benefit Cap. Including letter to faith groups/ethnic minorities. Aiming to ensure information is provided as widely as possible	From Alan Markey, chair of the Coventry Welfare Reform Working Together Group
Feature Coventry Telegraph Week beginning 23 January	Seek support of Coventry Telegraph to help spread message	Darren O'Shaughnessy
Advice sessions at children's centres where requested. Week beginning 13 February	Providing help and advice with DHP applications, free school meals etc. Targeting people affected who visit their local children's centre	Officers from relevant advice agencies
Agencies attending schools when requested. Week beginning 13 February	Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) run a project in a number of schools. Between the agencies and CAB we will aim to outline options for parents/carers affected	Officers from relevant advice agencies