

Welfare Reform

Update on the Evidence of the Impact in Kent

January 2014



CONTENTS	Page
1. Introduction	83
2. Key Research Questions	84
3. Key Findings	85
4. In-migration	87
5. Number of people affected by specific reforms	92
6. Impact on Unemployment and Work Incentives	96
7. Homelessness	98
8. Rent arrears and evictions	103
9. Debt and money management issues	104
10. Food Bank usage	105
11. Kent Support and Assistance Service	106
12. Impact on people with disabilities and ill health	107
13. Information, Advice and Guidance – Front Desk Services	109
14. Children’s Services	112
15. Community Safety/Crime	113
16. Concentration of deprivation	113

1. Introduction

In June 2013 KCC's Business Strategy division completed a detailed report into the various welfare reforms and their potential implications. This was presented to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on 20 June 2013. The main report can be found at:

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s40944/Item%20D3%20-%20FINAL%20Welfare%20Report%202.pdf>

The Executive Summary of the June report can be found at:

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s40943/Item%20D3%20-%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

Most of the welfare reforms are relatively recent and the major reform (Universal Credit) has not yet been implemented in Kent and only to a limited degree in the rest of the country. It is therefore too early to make a full assessment of their impact. In addition some of the existing evidence is still in the process of being gathered. Nevertheless this report will present the evidence so far available to KCC on those indicators that may be affected by welfare reform.

It is important to stress that it is not always possible to isolate the specific impact of welfare reform on some of the indicators dealt with in this report. Other factors such as the state of the economy, the cost of living and the housing market may play an equal or sometimes more important role in the impacts observed.

The Committee agreed that KCC's Business Intelligence division should produce reports every six months to help monitor and update on the potential impacts. This is the first of such reports.

The methodology used in these reports is based on three main objectives.

- a) Identify which local populations and places are most affected by welfare reforms through loss of benefits as well as in-migration.
- b) Evidence and understand these impacts, to inform appropriate service response and use in regional and national networks or lobbying.
- c) Inform risk management, and understand the effects on finances and delivering outcomes on existing strategies.

2. Key Research Questions

In what follows the report will attempt to answer the following questions based on the evidence available to date:

(A) Are we seeing significant in-migration?

- If so, how much is from London? How much is 'incentivised' or results from homelessness placements?
- Are certain areas in Kent affected more than others?

(B) What are the impacts on people in Kent?

- Which population groups are most affected?
- Is there increasing homelessness?
- Is there evidence that extreme poverty is rising?
- Can we evidence the kinds of impacts this has on individuals / families in their day-to-day lives, and how they are coping?
- Are people finding employment?

(C) Is there more demand for KCC & District services?

- Children's services?
- Services for disabled people?
- Services for housing-related support?
- Other (higher-tier) services?
- Information/advice services?
- More pressure on our 'front desk' (all channels)?
- Are there 'new burdens'? What are they and what are the cost estimates?
- Are these demands likely to be short, medium, or longer term?

(D) What are the impacts on places?

- Is deprivation becoming more concentrated / are 'poorer communities getting poorer' / is housing in communities becoming less mixed and diverse?
- Are there changes in community safety/crime?

This report draws on a range of evidence sources to offer answers to these questions in an effort to assess and monitor the impact of the Welfare Reform on Kent's people, places and services. As far as possible the evidence presented relates to Kent specifically but on occasion national data is presented either to supplement the Kent data or because more local information is not currently available.

3. Key Findings

- **Overall impact:** it is too early to say with any certainty what the impacts of welfare reform will be, particularly as the main reform (Universal Credit) has yet to be implemented in Kent. It is also difficult at this stage to separate the effects of welfare reform from other factors including the state of the economy, cost of living and housing issues. Clearly unemployment is reducing, and specifically in relation to welfare reform it appears significant numbers (according to national DWP figures) of people subject to the benefit cap have secured employment. However, there is also evidence of increased levels of homelessness, use of food banks, debt and the need for advice from frontline services.
- **Numbers affected by the reforms in Kent:** significant numbers of people of working age have seen their benefits reduced by either one or several of the reforms. Reforms that have had a significant impact so far include the size-related restrictions to Housing Benefit (affecting 7,044 people with an average reduction in benefit of £14 per week), the reforms to Council Tax Benefit (affecting 73,794 people with an average reduction in benefit of £1.50 per week), the reforms to incapacity-based benefits and the new sanctions regime affecting JSA claimants (affecting about 15,000 so far). With regard to the Benefit Cap this has affected fewer people (about 500) than originally predicted (890) but those affected have seen a significant reduction (on average about £67 per week). The lower numbers are probably due to significant numbers of people finding work, or being found to be exempt for other reasons.
- **Migration:** there is no robust evidence yet to show an increase in migration to Kent (note that there has been a trend for some time for people to move to Kent from London – net migration to Kent was 7,900 in 2011 before the main welfare reforms took place). However, of concern (although not necessarily related to welfare reform) is that the number of families with a child subject to a Child Protection plan who moved to Kent in the last six months is already higher (at 83) than the total number for the previous year (70). It is also reported by London Councils that significant numbers of people in London (4,600) are unable to pay their rent due to the Benefit cap and therefore may be potentially looking to move to cheaper areas in the near future.
- **Homelessness and housing:** the numbers presenting themselves as homeless has increased by about 12% (comparing January-October 2012 with January-October 2013). Related to this is the evidence that reforms to Housing Benefit are leading to an increase in the number of people in rent arrears, including in social housing (due to the size-related restrictions). However the numbers accepted as homeless and in priority need has not increased over the same period. This fact needs to be analysed further but appears to be related to the homeless prevention work carried out by the district councils in Kent.

- **Unemployment and work incentives:** the main reform expected to influence work incentives has not yet been introduced in Kent and so it is not possible at this stage to assess the impact on employment. The latest figures available on the numbers claiming JSA do show a continuous reduction since February 2013 but it is not clear what role, if any, welfare reform played in this. A more direct link may be observed in the figures released by the DWP on those people affected by the Benefit cap who have subsequently found work and become exempt from the cap even if still claiming benefits (nationally it appears about 40%).
- **Food Bank usage:** the number of people using food banks in Kent has increased very significantly in Kent. The figures released by the Trussell Trust (showing a doubling in usage comparing the whole of 2012/13 to just the first half of 2013/14) need to be considered alongside the parallel growth in independent food banks. However, it cannot be said with certainty whether the increases are mainly due to welfare reform (as opposed to cost of living increases and the state of the economy) and whether the need previously existed but was not being met.
- **Impact on people with disabilities and ill-health:** it appears that the reforms (including those begun under the previous Government) so far are having a significant impact on some people with disabilities or health problems. Over 60% of those affected by the size-related restrictions have a disability/health problem (according to the DWP's own initial Equality Impact Assessment) and yet many are not being successful in claiming additional help via the Discretionary Housing Payment system. In addition, about 30% of those on one of the old incapacity-based benefits are failing to qualify for the new Employment Support Allowance (when reassessed) and people challenging such decisions are currently experiencing long delays in the processing of appeals.
- **Evidence of increased debt, money management and demand for front line services:** nationally there is some evidence to suggest that benefit reforms are resulting in an increased number of people falling into rent arrears and other kinds of debt but more evidence is needed to be confident about the impact locally. There is some anecdotal evidence from local front line services such as Gateways and Citizen Advice to suggest there has been an increase in demand for advice services, and increasing complexity of presenting problems, but this is not the case across the board. Agencies also report that more proactive work is being carried out on welfare reform with those clients known to be affected, thus reducing the numbers who would otherwise present at Gateways and elsewhere seeking assistance.

(A) ARE WE SEEING SIGNIFICANT IN-MIGRATION?

4. In-migration

If it occurs, migration to Kent as a result of welfare reform is likely to stem from a combination of factors. For instance, recent reforms to Housing Benefit together with the overall Benefit Cap, could potentially lead to the displacement of households, particularly in areas where rents are high, such as London.¹

A recent report from London Councils, “Tracking Welfare Reform; Meeting the Financial Challenge” (September 2013), warns that 4,600 households in private accommodation in London will be unable to pay their rent due to the Benefit Cap which, on average, is cutting their benefits by £105 per week.²

Business Intelligence will shortly be able to carry out a more thorough analysis of the movement of benefit recipients that will aid our understanding of migration patterns in Kent. The analysis will help establish whether in-migration to the county is increasing, and will help to identify the local authorities (where data exists) from which migration originated. The evidence available so far is outlined below:

4.1 The number of pupils taking up places in schools in the county

It should first be stated that caution needs to be exercised in interpreting data on this issue as some of the school moves are due to pupils changing school without the family moving address. This is particularly the case in West and North West Kent. Bearing this in mind, the figures show that, although there is a slight increase in the number of pupils moving school from London, overall there does not appear to have been a significant change in the total numbers of pupils moving into Kent over the past two years. In the academic year 2011-12, the total number of pupils moving to Kent schools was 548; in 2012-13 it was 523³ (a slight decline overall).

According to this source, then, there is no clear evidence to date that the changes brought about by welfare reforms are currently having a significant impact on families moving to Kent.

¹ Kent County Council (2013) Welfare Reform Research, Maidstone, Kent County Council.

² London Councils (2013) Tracking Welfare Reform; Meeting the Financial Challenge, London, London Councils.

³ Kent County Council (2013) Welfare Reform In Year School Moves, Maidstone, Kent County Council.

Figure 1: Pupils moving to Kent, 2011 to 2013



Districts that experienced an increase in the number of pupils moving from London were Dover, Gravesham, Maidstone and Swale, while decreases were seen in Canterbury, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling (Tables 1 and 2).⁴

Table 1: Pupils Moving to Kent Schools, 2011-12

Moved to:	Moved from London	Moved from outside London	Moved from Medway	Total
Ashford	11	23	0	34
Canterbury	26	26	0	52
Dartford	38	10	0	48
Dover	0	13	0	13
Gravesham	14	7	8	29
Maidstone	10	33	7	50
Sevenoaks	16	19	0	35
Shepway	11	22	0	33
Swale	18	24	6	48
Tonbridge and Malling	21	33	67	121
Thanet	12	23	3	38
Tunbridge Wells	15	31	1	47
Grand Total	192	264	92	548

⁴ Kent County Council (2013) Welfare Reform In Year School Moves, Maidstone, Kent County Council

Table 2: Pupils Moving to Kent Schools, 2012-13

Moved to:	Moved From London	Moved from outside London	Moved from Medway	Total
Ashford	9	24	0	33
Canterbury	11	10	0	21
Dartford	38	6	0	44
Dover	11	24	0	35
Gravesham	25	14	10	49
Maidstone	29	21	17	67
Sevenoaks	22	11	3	36
Shepway	5	25	2	32
Swale	24	34	13	71
Tonbridge and Malling	19	9	43	71
Thanet	13	24	2	39
Tunbridge Wells	7	17	0	24
Not known	0	0	1	1
Grand Total	213	219	91	523

The London boroughs with the greatest number of pupils moving to Kent schools are Bexley and Bromley; the probable explanation is that these boroughs are adjacent to Kent, and that, as mentioned above, some of the moves are due to pupils changing school without the family moving address (see Figures 2 and 3 below).

Figure 2: Moves to Kent from London Boroughs, 2011-12

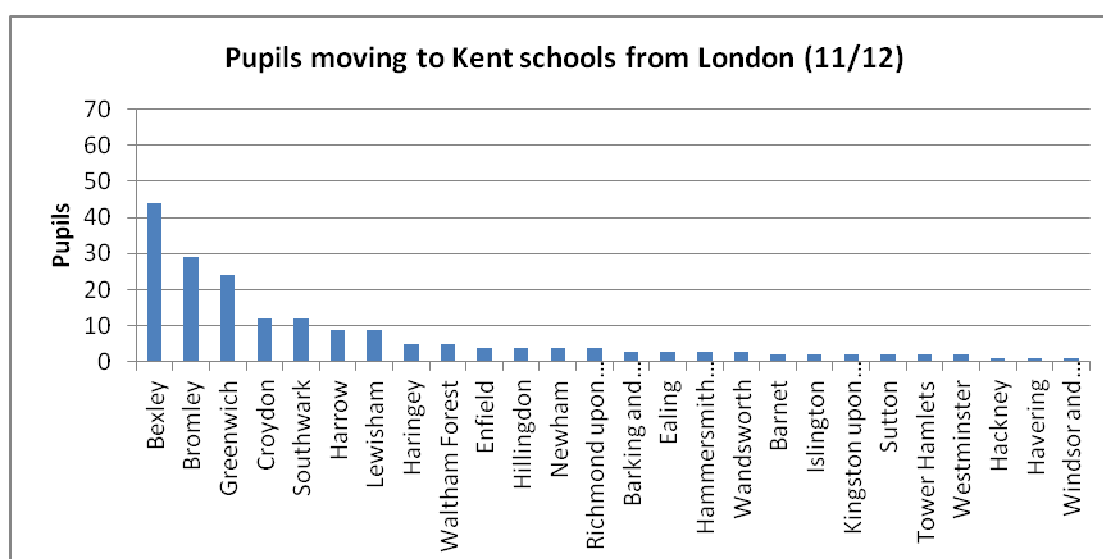
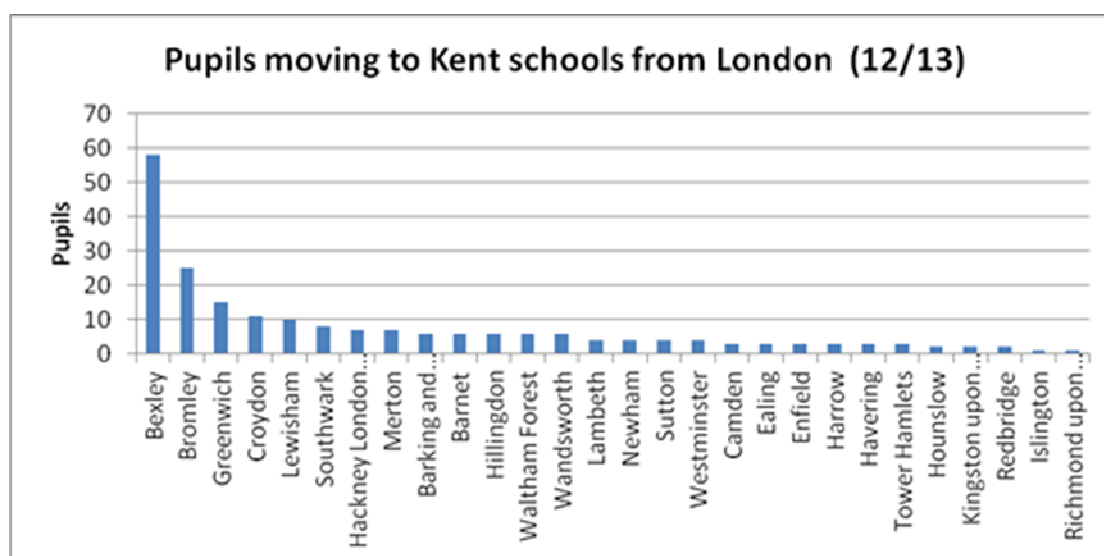


Figure 3: Moves to Kent from London Boroughs, 2012-13



4.2 Child protection Plans transferred to Kent

Evidence about the number of Child Protection plans transferred to KCC from other local authorities was also received, and shows a significant increase. The number of transfers during the period April 2012 to March 2013 was 70, while the number of transfers from only April to November 2013 is already 83.⁵ Thus the number of families with a child subject to a Child Protection plan who moved to Kent in the last seven months is already higher than the total number for the previous year.

4.3 Evidence from new benefit claims in Kent

Business Intelligence is working with the district councils and the DWP to see if it will be possible to make use of existing information about movement in to or out of Kent. It is not possible to present any findings from these sources at present.

4.4 General migration indicators

The latest general migration indicators for Kent are not recent (from 2009-10) but show that, even before the major welfare reforms were implemented, the number of people moving into Kent was greater than the number moving out, and that 40% of all in-migrants came from London (19,300 people out of 48,400). Similarly, of all those leaving Kent, 11,400 (27%) moved to London – the second most popular destination after elsewhere in the South East region. The result is a net gain of 7,900 migrants from London.⁶ This can be used as a baseline from which to monitor future patterns.

⁵ Kent County Council (2013) Evidence submitted on 30 September 2013 and on 22 October 2013.

⁶ Kent County Council (2011) Migration Indicators for Kent, Maidstone, Kent County Council.

4.5 With regard to establishing whether and how much of this in-migration is “incentivised” through London boroughs’ programmes to avoid *statutory* homelessness, the answer is still unknown. In lieu of other more formal arrangements, guidelines or protocol with London Councils, Freedom of Information requests may be made to some London boroughs.

(B) WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS ON PEOPLE IN KENT?

5. Number of people affected by specific reforms

5.1 The overall Benefit Cap

District	Numbers affected by Benefit Cap as at October 2013	Average weekly reduction*
Ashford	41	£77.77
Canterbury	48 (50 as at December 2013)*	£53.85
Dartford	22 (20 as at January 2014)*	£61.38
Dover	34 (35 as at December 2013)*	£44.21
Gravesham	43	£71.40
Maidstone	43	£65.42
Sevenoaks	18 (20 as at January 2014)*	£63.22
Shepway	63	£110.49
Swale	62 (57 as at January 2014)*	£63.89
Thanet	68 (60 as at December 2013)*	£66.46
Tonbridge and Malling	19	£64.94
Tunbridge Wells	27	£62.11
TOTAL	488 (as at October 2013)	

Source for numbers: Department of Work and Pensions Dec 2013

* = later figures if different and average weekly reductions provided by the district councils

According to data provided by the DWP, in Great Britain as a whole 28,482 households have had their benefits capped. 47% of these live in London. Of the top 20 Local Authorities with the highest number of households affected by the benefit cap, only 2 were not in London. These were Birmingham and Manchester.

Of data extracted in October 2013, of those affected by the Cap nationally:

59% of households had between 1 and 4 children

37% had 5 or more children

61% of households constituted a single parent with child dependants

75% of households were capped by £100 or less

It is clear from the table and information above that, whilst the numbers affected in Kent are relatively small, the average weekly reduction will have a significant impact, particularly as nearly all the families affected contain children. This fact may also impact on the parents' ability to secure employment which is one way of becoming exempt from the Cap even whilst remaining on benefits.

5.2 Size-related restrictions to Housing Benefit in Social Housing

District	Nos affected by the size criteria as at December 2013	Average weekly reduction in benefit
Ashford	683	£14.95
Canterbury	530	£15.96
Dartford	355	*
Dover	586	£13.92
Gravesham	625	£15.69
Maidstone	650	£15.78
Sevenoaks	434	*
Shepway	526	*
Swale	967	£14.00
Thanet	619	£14.66
Tonbridge and Malling	562	£18.88
Tunbridge Wells	507	£14.79
TOTAL	7,044	

Source: district councils in Kent * = figure not available in time for publication

The DWP has recently released a report⁷ into the use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs), funding made available to councils administering Housing Benefit to top-up any shortfall in specific cases. This shows that approximately two thirds of DHPs have been made in relation to the size related restrictions in social housing. See also Section 12 below for further information on DHPs and disabled people.

5.3 Reforms to the Council Tax Benefit system

<i>District</i>	Numbers affected by the reforms to Council Tax Benefit	Average weekly reduction in benefit
Ashford	4,867	£1.47
Canterbury	5,794	£0.74
Dartford	6,688	£1.33
Dover	6,222	£0.92
Gravesham	5,260	£1.51
Maidstone	6,024	£1.93
Sevenoaks	6,607	£1.52
Shepway	5,965	*
Swale	7,681	£1.51
Thanet	10,910	£0.79
Tonbridge and Malling	4,018	£1.44
Tunbridge Wells	3,758	£1.84
TOTAL	73,794	

Source: district councils in Kent * = figure not available in time for publication

⁷ "Use of Discretionary Housing Payments", DWP, 20 December 2013

5.4 Introduction of the Personal Independence Payment to replace Disability Living Allowance

Personal Independence Payment was only introduced for new claims in Kent in July 2013. In addition most existing claimants of DLA have not yet begun the process of reassessment to determine if they qualify for PIP. It is too early to say, therefore, what the impact of this reform has been in Kent.

5.5 Reassessment of people claiming the old incapacity benefits to determine eligibility for Employment Support Allowance

Employment Support Allowance (ESA) was introduced in October 2008 and from October 2010 an ongoing wholesale reassessment of those on the old legacy incapacity benefits has been undertaken. The results of this process as at July 2013 are presented in the table below.

District	% found fit for work (so not eligible for ESA)	% eligible for ESA WRA Group	% eligible for ESA Support Group
Ashford	26	44	30
Canterbury	29	41	31
Dartford	32	37	31
Dover	31	38	31
Gravesham	34	42	24
Maidstone	29	40	31
Sevenoaks	29	37	34
Shepway	29	40	31
Swale	30	46	24
Thanet	30	41	29
Tonbridge & Malling	26	39	35
Tunbridge Wells	20	40	39

WRA = Work Related Activity Group – people in this group are accepted as unable to work but they must engage in activities to prepare for an eventual return to work.

Support Group = this group are not expected to ever be capable of work and are not expected to engage in any work related activities.

The figures shown in the above table include the results following appeals over the reassessment process. Information on appeals shows that in the South East 47% of initial decisions declaring a person “Fit for Work” were overturned. The figures shown in the above table are those applying after the appeals process has been exhausted. We do not have information at present on the percentages applying to the initial DWP decision only.

5.6 People subject to DWP sanctions

DWP statistics released on 6 November 2013⁸ provide the following information on the numbers affected by the enhanced sanctions regime for Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA):

Jobseeker’s Allowance

Between 22 October 2012 (when the new regime was introduced) and 30 June 2013 14,430 people were subject to a JSA sanction in Kent and Medway. An additional 5,270 were initially sanctioned but this was subsequently cancelled.

Under the new regime 36% of adverse decisions were made because of a failure to actively seek employment, 30% because of a failure to participate in the Work Programme (and other training schemes) and 20% because of a failure to attend an advisory interview.

Employment Support Allowance

Between 3 December 2012 (when the new regime was introduced) and 30 June 2013 100 people were subject to an ESA sanction in Kent and Medway. An additional 510 were initially sanctioned but this was subsequently cancelled.

Under the new regime 71% of adverse decisions were made because of a failure to participate in work related activity (this includes failure to participate in the Work Programme), with the remaining due to a failure to attend a mandatory interview.

6. Unemployment and work incentives

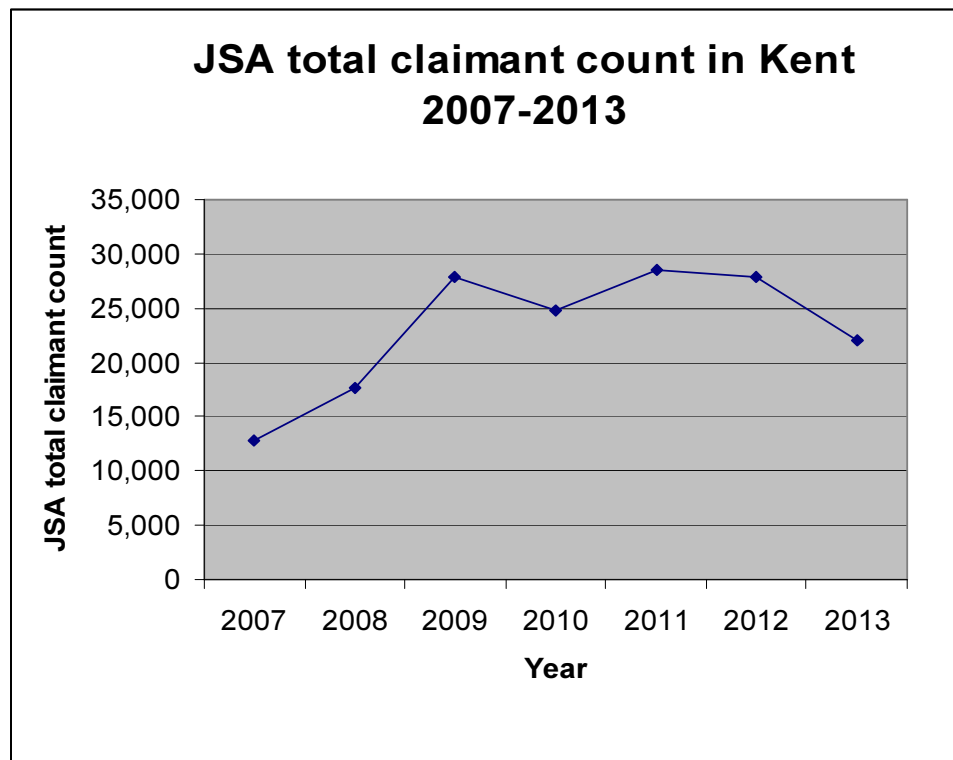
6.1 The trends in unemployment (based on JSA count) for Kent are shown in figures 4 and 5 below. These provide a useful baseline from which we can begin to assess the impact of welfare reform. However, as previously stated, it will be difficult to determine how much of the changing pattern of employment is due to the wider economy and how much is a consequence of welfare reform. For details of unemployment trends down to district level please follow the link below:

<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/facts-and-figures/Unemployment/district-unemployment-bulletin.pdf>

6.2 It is clear that the number claiming JSA has been on the decrease since early 2013. However, it must be stressed that the headline figures do not reveal the nature of the employment gained or its sustainability. Information on the nature of employment generally in Kent can be obtained from the KCC Labour Force Bulletins published quarterly by Business Intelligence. The latest is dated November 2013 and can be found at the following link:

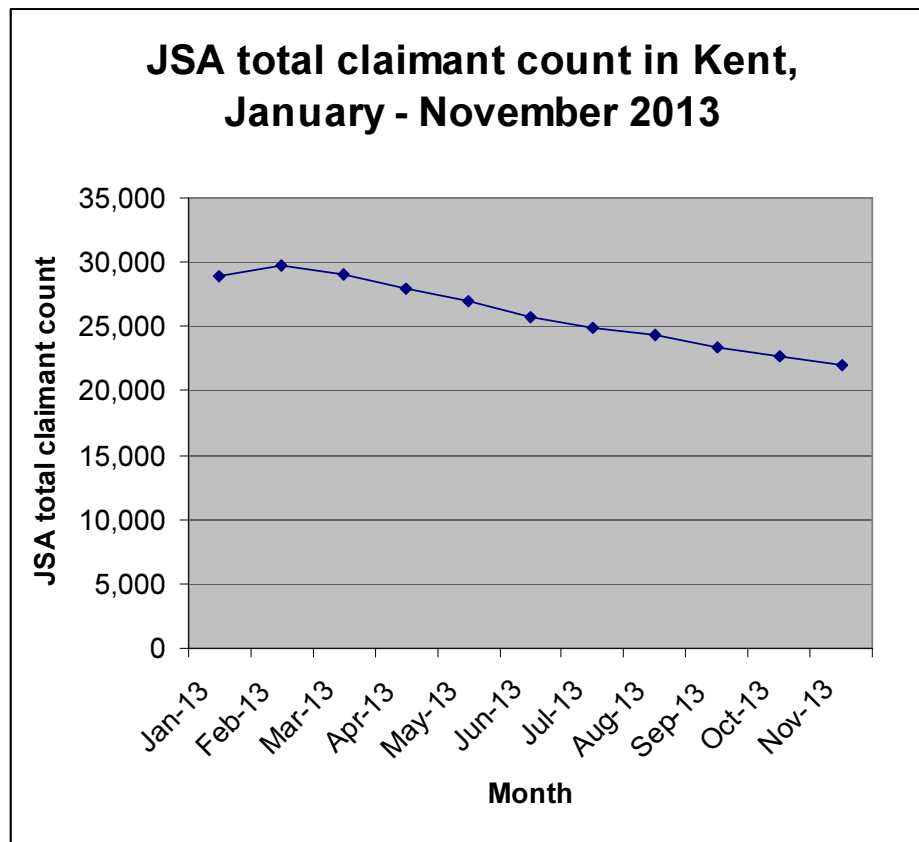
<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/facts-and-figures/Economy/labour-force-profile-november-2013.pdf>

Figure 4: JSA total claimant count in Kent 2007-2013



Note: the latest available figures are from November 2013; these have been compared with the corresponding November figures of previous years.

Figure 5: JSA total claimant count in Kent, January-November 2013



6.3 Impact of specific reforms on work incentives

Whilst it is difficult at this stage to establish the impact of welfare reform on employment (particularly as Universal Credit has not yet been fully implemented and not at all in Kent), information is available on the impact so far of the Benefit Cap introduced in Kent in July 2013.

According to the latest DWP figures Jobcentre Plus nationally has helped around 19,000 claimants identified as living in potentially capped households into work, therefore exempting them from the Cap. As at October 2013 there were 28,482 in Great Britain subject to the Benefit Cap (it is believed that this is net of the 19,000 helped into work).

From February 2014 DWP will be publishing more detailed Official Statistics showing benefit cap off flows by reason (i.e. people who become exempt from the Cap). It is hoped that this information will also be available at Kent level.

7. Homelessness

7.1 Trends in homelessness may be a possible indicator of the impact of welfare reform but the generally weak economy, increasing cost of housing and shortage of social housing are other factors which need to be taken into account. Caution needs therefore to be exercised in interpreting the figures.

7.2 The most recent information on homelessness in Kent shows that it is generally increasing. Between January and the end of September 2013 local authorities in the KCC area made 2,255 decisions on applications (by eligible households*) for housing assistance under the homelessness legislation of the Housing Act 1996 (Table 3). This is an increase of about 12% on the corresponding period in 2012 when 2,019 decisions were made. It is also clear from the figures that since 2009 there has been a general upward trend in the number of decisions in both Kent and nationally (Table 3 and Figure 8).⁹

**The vast majority of households are 'eligible'. The only exclusions are identified in the Housing Act 1996 as follows: A person subject to immigration control within the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 prior to application, or a person determined unsuitable by housing authority due to previous seriously unacceptable behaviour*

7.3 The increased number of decisions on homelessness is evidence that more people are presenting themselves to the district councils as "homeless". However, as Table 4 shows, the number of households accepted as homeless and in priority need has remained broadly the same if the same two periods are compared (I.E. Jan-Oct 2012 and Jan-Oct 2013). A household is defined as in "priority need" when it contains dependent children, pregnant women, is vulnerable because of old age, mental illness, physical disability, leaving armed forces or prison or other reason, young persons and victims of domestic violence, and those homeless as a result of an emergency such as flood or fire. At the end of September 2013 Kent (KCC area) had a homelessness rate of 0.41 households in priority need per 1,000. This is lower than the national average of 0.59 (Table 4 below).¹²

7.4 Table 4 seems to suggest that (although the numbers presenting themselves as homeless has increased overall since 2007), the numbers accepted as homeless and in priority need is actually lower than in 2007. However this interpretation would be misleading. The numbers do not take into account the fact that Housing Departments in councils have increasingly taken a much more proactive approach to tackling homelessness through early prevention (for example via Rent Deposits, Discretionary Housing Payments etc), thus helping to keep the number of households having to make a homeless application down. The total figures also mask wide variation between districts with acceptances increasing in some districts and decreasing in others.

⁹ Kent County Council (2013) Kent Homelessness Information, Maidstone.

¹² Ibid.

Table 3: Homelessness total decisions, 2007-2013

Homelessness total decisions

Decisions made on applications from eligible households (Including accepted and in priority need)

Source: DCLG P1E returns

Number of Households

	Ashford	Canterbury**	Dartford	Dover	Gravesham	Maidstone	Sevenoaks	Shepway	Swale	Thanet	T & Malling	Tunbridge Wells	KCC	Medway	SE Region	England
2007 q1	52	43	67	29	79	26	35	31	17	49	61	45	534	77	2,860	37,300
q2	57	56	89	26	56	30	38	47	8	48	72	38	565	82	2,820	34,040
q3	45	83	84	32	62	16	27	41	14	44	59	45	552	na	3,000	35,200
q4	37	50	67	46	82	9	32	37	32	37	40	46	515	116	2,560	31,150
2008 q1	41	54	83	48	45	35	34	49	20	37	53	33	532	83	2,570	30,450
q2	48	64	64	28	55	30	33	43	22	42	22	32	483	121	2,770	30,440
q3	30	64	47	19	49	27	34	39	22	36	14	35	416	162	2,720	30,040
q4	45	42	52	26	43	20	27	37	18	47	13	27	397	123	2,480	26,530
2009 q1	51	37	52	23	40	49	28	54	31	47	18	36	466	79	2,480	25,890
q2	77	30	43	30	30	10	27	42	15	34	19	17	374	56	2,160	23,560
q3	62	54	29	24	35	10	20	40	30	30	28	25	387	58	2,070	22,950
q4	57	61	39	34	37	29	16	39	22	27	19	22	402	98	2,090	21,200
2010 q1	51	83	37	33	38	8	10	46	26	41	30	20	423	54	2,070	21,410
q2	40	96	28	24	33	24	15	22	42	28	46	13	411	69	2,120	22,850
q3	92	229	31	36	26	13	17	41	20	27	33	18	583	89	2,490	26,890
q4	59	179	37	27	39	20	11	32	33	35	23	13	508	85	2,390	26,060
2011 q1	82	234	46	30	22	22	6	40	34	33	11	10	570	62	2,350	26,400
q2	68	238	46	27	22	38	11	41	31	39	14	13	588	59	2,510	25,980
q3	78	203	33	47	18	68	22	53	13	66	21	17	639	124	2,900	27,390
q4	66	216	19	38	31	89	33	45	10	76	14	8	645	114	2,960	27,470
2012 q1	62	216	34	37	21	76	12	36	27	103	12	14	650	107	2,920	27,880
q2	79	156	25	39	32	75	18	39	49	67	6	21	606	133	2,770	26,800
q3	80	242	50	67	28	83	5	57	23	86	21	21	763	132	na	29,130
q4	64	252	42	50	32	58	11	46	34	89	16	26	720	144	na	29,060
2013 q1	69	308	44	47	25	71	8	48	56	87	19	28	810	131	na	28,270
q2	50	254	31	32	22	89	5	48	51	84	13	29	708	159	na	28,240
q3	84	252	26	43	23	72	5	39	59	96	13	25	737	194	na	28,380

** Methodology review during 2010

Figure 8: Total homelessness decisions made during each quarter, KCC area, 2007-2013

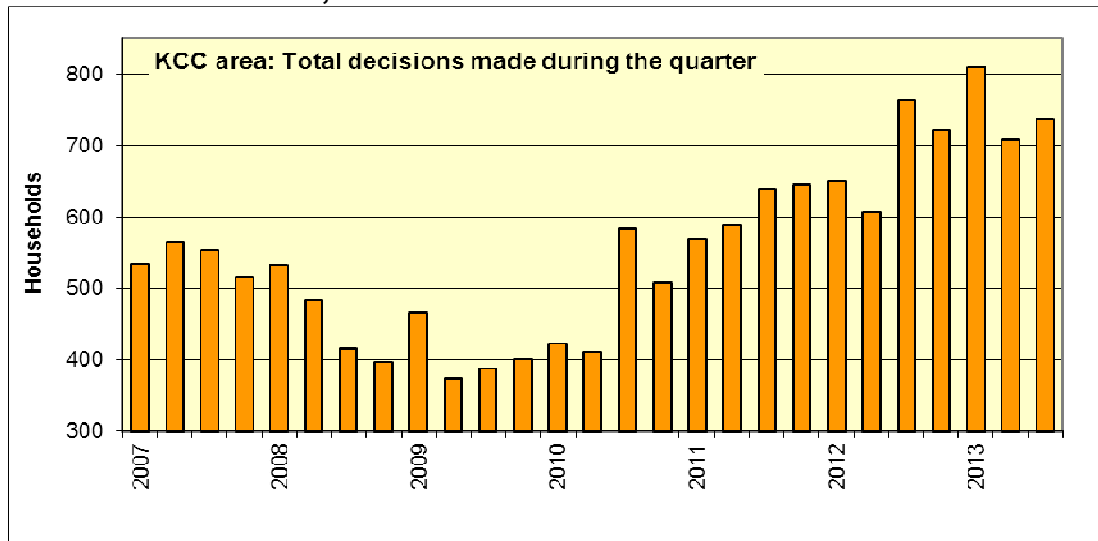


Table 4: Households accepted as homeless and in priority need

Households accepted as homeless and in priority need*

Decisions made during the quarter on applications from eligible households

Source: DCLG P1E returns

														Number of Households		
	Ashford	Canterbury**	Dartford	Dover	Gravesham	Maidstone	Sevenoaks	Shepway	Swale	Thanet	T & Malling	Tunbridge Wells	KCC	Medway	SE Region	England
2007 q1	31	11	35	22	60	12	33	14	14	30	44	22	328	48	1,480	17,230
q2	27	14	57	19	32	10	32	22	3	29	57	16	318	41	1,470	15,960
q3	34	18	59	15	40	9	21	19	6	31	49	27	328	na	1,370	16,540
q4	24	9	41	26	57	4	24	14	23	26	25	22	295	70	1,310	15,240
2008 q1	32	16	51	23	28	18	25	26	12	26	42	20	319	28	1,360	15,430
q2	35	12	40	18	34	10	27	22	13	31	12	15	269	41	1,420	15,680
q3	24	14	37	12	30	11	28	13	15	19	8	25	236	62	1,220	14,340
q4	30	11	40	16	22	6	24	19	11	25	7	17	228	43	1,050	12,070
2009 q1	36	5	36	15	19	10	21	34	22	21	5	16	240	40	1,030	11,350
q2	53	12	28	22	17	3	21	20	10	13	7	7	213	22	990	10,650
q3	46	13	21	13	18	2	13	22	19	17	6	19	209	26	940	10,360
q4	42	12	26	14	17	1	12	17	14	15	6	10	186	53	980	9,430
2010 q1	37	10	25	13	21	1	4	21	16	18	13	8	187	28	960	9,590
q2	30	24	19	11	21	1	13	12	26	15	20	10	202	37	1,040	10,100
q3	72	128	15	10	12	3	15	12	13	16	16	10	322	45	1,220	11,840
q4	38	66	26	11	28	8	7	12	24	14	10	11	255	38	1,130	10,870
2011 q1	54	41	26	17	16	15	5	6	19	17	6	5	227	26	1,130	11,350
q2	46	40	27	10	8	28	4	15	14	25	10	2	229	28	1,220	11,820
q3	47	12	26	21	13	56	11	17	9	40	18	10	280	57	1,400	12,510
q4	36	11	9	17	17	56	24	16	4	41	10	3	244	40	1,400	12,830
2012 q1	32	16	15	17	15	49	3	7	10	39	3	6	212	43	1,300	13,130
q2	47	17	18	17	15	41	13	12	34	39	2	8	263	69	1,380	12,860
q3	60	17	27	27	17	58	5	17	8	36	10	10	292	71	na	13,890
q4	41	20	21	17	18	44	10	12	16	31	8	10	248	64	na	13,570
2013 q1	51	28	25	17	13	55	5	16	15	24	13	11	273	53	na	13,230
q2	39	18	20	12	12	62	5	18	18	16	4	20	244	70	na	13,460
q3	49	15	20	14	17	30	4	17	21	36	5	10	238	80	na	13,330
per 1000 h/h ***																
2011 q1	1.20	0.70	0.70	0.40	0.40	0.20	0.10	0.10	0.40	0.30	0.10	0.10	0.39	0.20	0.30	0.52
q2	1.00	0.66	0.69	0.22	0.20	0.46	0.09	0.34	0.26	0.43	0.21	0.04	0.39	0.27	0.35	0.54
q3	1.02	0.20	0.67	0.46	0.33	0.92	0.24	0.39	0.17	0.69	0.38	0.22	0.48	0.55	0.40	0.58
q4	0.78	0.18	0.23	0.37	0.43	0.92	0.52	0.36	0.08	0.71	0.21	0.07	0.42	0.38	0.40	0.59
2012 q1	0.70	0.26	0.38	0.37	0.38	0.80	0.07	0.16	0.19	0.67	0.06	0.13	0.36	0.41	0.37	0.60
q2	0.96	0.27	0.44	0.35	0.36	0.64	0.27	0.26	0.61	0.65	0.04	0.17	0.45	0.64	0.38	0.59
q3	1.22	0.27	0.66	0.56	0.40	0.91	0.10	0.37	0.14	0.60	0.20	0.21	0.50	0.66		0.64
q4	0.84	0.31	0.51	0.35	0.43	0.69	0.21	0.26	0.29	0.52	0.16	0.21	0.42	0.60		0.60
2013 q1	1.04	0.44	0.61	0.35	0.31	0.86	0.10	0.35	0.27	0.40	0.27	0.23	0.47	0.50		0.58
q2	0.78	0.29	0.49	0.24	0.29	0.94	0.10	0.38	0.31	0.26	0.08	0.42	0.42	0.64		0.60
q3	0.98	0.24	0.49	0.29	0.41	0.45	0.08	0.35	0.36	0.59	0.10	0.21	0.41	0.73		0.59
2008 h/h	46	61	39	46	40	61	46	44	53	58	47	45	586	104	690	21,731

* Priority need : with dependent children, pregnant, old age, physical disability, mental illness, young persons & domestic violence.

** Methodology review during 2010

*** Number of households (2008 base - projections for 2012) (000s)

7.5 At the end of the 3rd quarter 2013 there were 550 households in Kent (KCC area) living in all types of temporary accommodation. This is three households more (0.5%) than the same period one year ago when there were 547. In the same period the number of households in temporary accommodation nationally increased by 4,390 (+8.28%).¹⁰

7.6 Temporary accommodation includes a wide range of property. Of the Kent households in all types of temporary accommodation at the end of September, approximately 37% were accommodated in Local Authority or Registered Social Landlord (RSL) dwellings, 18% were accommodated in leased private sector dwellings, 29% in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, 9% in hostels with a further 8% of households in other types of accommodation such as private landlords.¹¹

7.7 Whilst it appears that the number of people placed in temporary accommodation has remained relatively static for the last 2-3 years, the number of people placed in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation has increased in both absolute terms and as a percentage of the total. The Government believes that bed and breakfast hotels represent the least suitable form of accommodation for most households - particularly those with children - and should be used only as a last resort, preferably for only six weeks while applications are processed.

7.8 In Kent (KCC area) 158 households were in bed and breakfast accommodation at the end of September, a rise of 26% compared to one year ago. The increase in Bed and Breakfast usage is most likely to be due to the decreasing availability of other forms of temporary accommodation (lack of "move on" accommodation).

7.9 The Department for Communities and Local Government has recently started to publish the numbers of families with children that are in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than 6 weeks (excluding those pending a review by the local authority. In Kent at the end of September there were 22 families in this category, the same as the previous quarter but up from the end of March when there were 5.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

Table 5: Households in temporary bed & breakfast accommodation on last day of the quarter, Kent districts, 2008-2013.

Source: DCLG P1E survey

		Ashford	Canterbury	Dartford	Dover	Gravesham	Maidstone	Sevenoaks	Shepway	Swale	Thanet	Tonbridge & Malling	Tunbridge Wells	Kent (KCC area)	Medway UA	Kent & Medway	South East	England
Bed & Breakfast (Inc shared annex)																		
2008	q1	9	0	9	20	0	12	2	2	3	4	4	0	65	10	75	400	3,840
	q2	15	2	5	20	0	2	1	10	4	15	2	3	79	12	91	390	3,440
	q3	17	0	17	19	0	2	0	5	5	7	0	6	78	12	90	400	3,230
	q4	16	1	16	17	0	4	2	11	7	5	2	10	91	10	101	350	2,560
2009	q1	26	1	16	21	0	3	0	9	1	9	2	8	96	12	108	320	2,450
	q2	19	1	11	19	0	6	0	6	3	4	3	5	77	7	84	270	2,150
	q3	26	1	4	24	0	6	0	4	2	8	4	1	80	11	91	290	2,050
	q4	23	0	5	19	0	6	1	2	3	4	2	1	66	15	81	260	1,880
2010	q1	17	2	6	14	0	6	0	3	3	3	4	0	58	18	76	270	2,050
	q2	19	7	5	22	0	8	1	2	5	3	1	3	76	3	79	320	2,410
	q3	20	6	4	14	0	6	3	2	2	4	5	2	68	10	78	350	2,660
	q4	21	3	5	18	0	10	1	10	1	5	0	5	79	5	84	360	2,310
2011	q1	17	4	2	22	0	9	1	1	12	9	0	0	77	4	81	400	2,750
	q2	26	4	1	18	0	8	3	13	6	7	3	1	90	13	103	500	3,120
	q3	22	5	4	22	0	20	7	14	5	17	2	1	119	24	143	620	3,370
	q4	19	4	5	15	0	15	7	6	5	23	4	3	106	9	115	520	3,170
2012	q1	20	1	6	17	0	23	5	13	13	31	0	5	134	19	153	690	3,960
	q2	20	5	7	24	0	15	7	22	30	19	0	2	151	26	177	740	4,270
	q3	28	3	6	21	0	7	1	27	16	13	0	3	125	20	145	na	4,350
	q4	24	8	8	19	0	17	0	10	22	16	5	9	138	17	155	na	4,000
2013	q1	26	10	3	21	0	24	0	19	27	16	12	5	163	43	206	na	4,500
	q2	28	4	5	28	0	21	0	25	24	6	0	8	149	49	198	na	4,320
	q3	34	5	4	16	2	23	1	26	25	13	7	2	158	78	236		4,600

8. Rent arrears and evictions

8.1 In addition to the issue of homelessness, literature suggests that housing benefit cuts are leading to an increase in the number of households in rent arrears. A report from the TUC claims that nearly one in three council housing tenants who were affected by the removal of the Spare Room Subsidy have fallen behind on their rent since its introduction earlier this year. Information provided by 114 local authorities across Britain shows that over 50,000 council housing tenants (31% of all tenants affected by the tax in these areas) have fallen into arrears.¹³

¹³ TUC (2013) "Bedroom Tax has pushed one in three council tenants into arrears", website, <http://www.tuc.org.uk/social-issues/bedroom-tax-has-pushed-one-three-council-tenants-arrears>.

8.2 The National Housing Federation carried out a survey to quantify the number of tenants in arrears. It found that a quarter of households affected have fallen behind in their rent for the first time ever. Data provided by 38 housing associations in England showed 11,000 of 44,000 households were in arrears.¹⁴ One of the explanations for the arrears is that there are not enough one or two bedroom homes. The National Housing Federation estimated that although 180,000 households were under-occupying two bedroom social homes, only 85,000 one-bed social homes were available in 2011-12.¹⁵

8.3 Some local evidence seems to reflect the findings of the TUC and the National Housing Federation. Evidence from a Gateway and partner organisations indicates that around a third of tenants are in rent arrears and are not able, or in a few cases willing, to reduce those arrears.¹⁶

8.4 This evidence also reports the lack of suitable accommodation, particularly one-bedroom properties (and warns that private tenants falling into rent arrears are more at risk, as private landlords tend to move towards eviction more quickly than social landlords).¹⁷

8.5 Evidence from the Citizens Advice nationally indicates a 13% increase in social housing rent arrears since the reforms in this area in April 2013.¹⁸

9. Debt and money management issues

9.1 According to some evidence, it appears that benefit reforms are resulting - both nationally and locally - in an increasing number of people falling into **rent arrears** and other kinds of **debt**.^{19 20 21}

9.2 National data from Citizens Advice on debt is difficult to interpret due to the fact that they are in the process of introducing a new system of recording and their capacity has been reduced, mainly by the ending of legal aid contracts. The latest advice trends for the period July – September 2013 can be found at the following link:

https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/aboutus/publications/advice_trends.htm

¹⁴ BBC News (2013) "One in three behind on rent since housing benefit changes", 19 September 2013.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Evidence received on 24 September 2013.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Citizens Advice: Advice Trends July - September 2013

¹⁹ London Councils (2013) Tracking Welfare Reform; Meeting the Financial Challenge, London, London Councils.

²⁰ TUC (2013) "Bedroom Tax has pushed one in three council tenants into arrears", website, <http://www.tuc.org.uk/social-issues/bedroom-tax-has-pushed-one-three-council-tenants-arrears>.

²¹ Evidence from Gravesham, Tunbridge, Thanet, Dover and Ashford Gateways, as well as local Housing Benefits departments, Job Centre Plus and CAB, September 2013

Nationally debt accounts for 28% of all issues dealt with by the CAB service. The number of debt issues dealt with has actually decreased compared to the same quarter in 2012 but the service believes this gives a false impression of need for the reasons outlined above. Future reports based on the new recording system will identify ongoing trends.

9.3 Anecdotal evidence from local CABs, Kent Gateways, Housing Benefit departments and Jobcentre Plus branches suggests that debt and debt management are emerging as more prominent and concerning issues.²²

9.4 The significant increase in the use of high cost, short term credit (including “pay day loans”) is related to the above, although will also be influenced by the state of the economy and cost of living increases. A recent report on this issue to the Policy and Resources Committee can be found at the link below:

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s43922/Item%20D4%20-high%20cost%20short%20term%20credit%20providers.pdf>

10. Food Bank usage

10.1 A recent report – Walking the Breadline (May 2013) - revealed that in the last two years there has been a large increase in the number of people using food banks in the UK. The Trussell Trust (the largest provider of food banks in the UK) has reported that more than 350,000 people used their food banks in 2012–13; this is almost three times the number who received food aid in the previous year, and 100,000 more than anticipated. As a result, the Trussell Trust launched almost 150 new food banks last year – including a number in Kent – and is currently approving nationally three new food banks a week.²³

10.2 Evidence suggests that the number of people using food banks has also increased sharply in Kent. Partial figures from this year already show a substantial increase from the last financial year in the number of people accessing food banks managed by the Trussell Trust in the Kent administrative area. The number of adults using these food banks in 2012-2013 was 980 (with 705 children) , while the number from April 2013 to only September 2013 was already 1,838 (with 1,357 children) . The total number of beneficiaries from April to September 2013 (3,195) was already nearly twice as many as in 2012-13 (1,685).

²² Evidence from Gravesham, Tunbridge, Thanet, Dover and Ashford Gateways, as well as local Housing Benefits departments, Job Centre Plus and CAB, September 2013

²³ Cooper, N. and Dumbleton, S. (2013) Walking the Breadline: The Scandal of Food Poverty in 21st Century Britain, Manchester, Church Action on Poverty and Oxfam.

10.3 The figures from the Trussell Trust are only an indication of a much wider problem, as they do not include the parallel growth in independent food banks and other informal emergency food aid interventions provided by hundreds of churches, charities, housing associations and community groups. Taking these into account, it is estimated that the actual number of people currently reliant on food aid is in excess of half a million nationally, and this number may grow as further changes to the benefits system take effect.²⁴

10.4 It cannot be said with certainty at this stage whether the increases in Food Bank usage is mainly due to welfare reform as opposed to cost of living increases and the state of the economy. Also whilst it is clear that there is an increase in the use of food banks, it is not known if these needs previously existed but were not met. Some organisations believe there is a clear link between food banks and welfare reform. For example, the report by the Trussell Trust explains that, while some of the increase in the number of people using food banks is caused by factors such as unemployment, increasing levels of under-employment, low and falling incomes, and rising food and fuel prices, up to half of users do so as a direct result of having benefit payments delayed, reduced, or withdrawn altogether. They believe that changes to the benefit system are the most common reasons for people using food banks; these include changes to crisis loan eligibility rules, delays in payments, Jobseeker's Allowance sanctions and sickness benefit re-assessments.²⁵

11. Kent Support and Assistance Service

11.1 The Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS) became operational in April 2013 in response to the ending of the DWP's Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans and the transfer of part of the funding to local authorities.²⁶ The role of KSAS is to support people in exceptionally difficult circumstances, by providing:

- goods and services for those in emergencies
- support to help people leaving care/institutional settings to set up their own accommodation in the community or to continue to live independently in the community
- signposting to other sources of help.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Kent County Council (2013) Welfare Reform Research, Executive Summary, Maidstone, Kent County Council.

²⁷ Ibid.

11.2 Whilst evidence from KSAS can be useful in analysing the extent of poverty, caution needs to be exercised in the interpretation of their data. The scheme only started in April 2013 and whilst there has been an increase in help given via the scheme (since the scheme started in April 2013) it is too early to say whether that is due to increasing knowledge of the scheme (amongst the public and professionals) or to increasing need. Of particular interest will be the demand once Universal Credit is implemented in Kent (date not yet known) and people have to manage monthly payments.

11.3 With the above caveats, data on KSAS applications and awards for the first nine months (April to December) shows the following:

	Applications	Unique Awards	Total Awards
April	673	243	368
May	705	329	520
June	654	303	494
July	818	491	828
August	704	514	869
September	766	525	939
October	783	548	1025
November	861	530	1015
December	738	545	1054

Applications: An actual request for assistance made online or by phone

Unique Awards: The number of individual applicants that receive an award

Total Awards: The total number of awards which may include more than one award per person

Analysing the number and type of enquiries to KSAS can help in monitoring the levels of poverty in Kent, although this may not be possible on a long-term basis because its funding is uncertain after 2014-15.²⁸

12. Impact on people with disabilities and ill health

12.1 Sections 5.4 and 5.5 above on disability and incapacity-based benefits provide some information on the impact. Further analysis will be carried out in time for the next report.

12.2 With regard to the impact of the Housing Benefit under-occupancy reforms in social housing, robust evidence still needs to be collated at the Kent level. However, nationally some evidence exists that this is having a significant impact on some people with disabilities and long-term health

²⁸ Kent County Council (2013) Welfare Reform Research, Executive Summary, Maidstone, Kent County Council.

conditions. The DWP's own Equality Impact Assessment²⁹ of this measure stated that 63% of those affected had a disability. Research carried out by the National Housing Federation (NHF),³⁰ Carers UK³¹ and the Papworth Trust³² has shown that many disabled people affected by the reform are not being successful in claiming additional help via the Discretionary Housing Payment system (administered by the district councils in two tier areas). The NHF and the Papworth Trust's figures show that about one third of disabled people applying have been turned down for a Discretionary Housing Payment. Data on DHPs released by the DWP shows that most help is only given on a short-term basis and only 5% of awards were for on-going rent for a disabled person in adapted accommodation. Further work will be carried out to understand the situation in Kent.

12.3 The June Welfare Reform Research report predicted that the reforms to incapacity and disability benefits were likely to impact on people who do not currently meet KCC's eligibility criteria and who manage without support from KCC. Loss of benefits may cause some to seek assistance from KCC services because they, and their carers, are left with insufficient income and because the re-assessment process has contributed to deterioration in their condition. While this could affect people with any condition, there are particular concerns over people with mental health and fluctuating conditions. It is too early to say if this is indeed happening. The number of referrals for disabled adults to KCC's Families and Social Care has increased slightly 5,541 (in 2011-12) to 5,643 (in 2012-13). The figure projected for 2013-14 is 5,800. Given that referrals had been increasing before the introduction of welfare reforms, the rises cannot easily be attributed directly to them.³³

12.4 KCC's Benefits Team assists FSC service users with challenges to the transfer of their Incapacity Benefits to Employment and Support Allowance. They have reported that people are currently experiencing long delays in the processing of appeals and that this is leading to delays in the payment of basic rate ESA that claimants can receive whilst challenging a decision.³⁴

²⁹ Housing Benefit: Size criteria for people renting in the social rented sector, DWP, June 2012

³⁰

³¹ Carers and Housing Benefit size criteria changes, Carers UK, 2013

³² Making Discretionary Housing Payments work for disabled people, Papworth Trust, July 2013

³³ Kent County Council (2013) Evidence received on 9 October 2013.

³⁴ Kent County Council (2013) Evidence from the Benefits Team, Maidstone, Kent County Council.

(C) IS THERE MORE DEMAND FOR KCC & DISTRICT SERVICES?

13. Information, advice and guidance – Front desk services

13.1 As part of the exercise to help determine whether Welfare Reform is having an impact on Kent residents and local services, an online survey was developed and was distributed to a number of individuals within KCC services. 80 completed questionnaires were received from individuals. About 90% of the responses were from local information and “front desk” services, the majority of which came from Libraries and the remainder from Gateways and Children’s Centres.

The key findings from this survey are as follows:

- more than half (61%) of respondents indicated that demand for their service had increased since April 2013
- the areas with the greatest increase in demand were: requests for information (with 70% of respondent stating that they had increased); help in applying for benefits (56%) and help with job applications (56%)
- when asked which client groups they felt had experienced the greatest impact since April 2013, the most common response (21%) was customers already on benefits, although the next most common response (17%) was “everyone”.
- Most respondents said that the impact was due to both the economy and welfare reforms (64%). 18% of respondents said that it was exclusively due to welfare reforms.
- The majority of respondents indicated an increase in signposting to CAB (56% stated that it had increased, with 31% stating it had stayed the same, 10% stating that it was too early to say and 3% not relevant), food banks (49% increased, 24% the same, 23% too early and 14% not relevant) and district councils (41% increased, 32% the same, 19% too early, 8% not relevant).³⁵

13.2 The evidence from Gateways is mixed. If the period April 2012 – November 2012 is compared with the same period in 2013 the number of frontline enquiries has not increased significantly in some Gateways, whereas in others it has. However, even in those not showing a particular increase, it is reported that each enquiry is taking much longer due to multiple questions on housing and debt related issues. Also more proactive work is being

³⁵ Kent County Council (2013) Impact of Welfare Reform Survey, October 2013, Maidstone, Kent County Council.

carried out on welfare reform with those clients known to be affected, thus reducing the numbers who would otherwise present at gateways seeking assistance.³⁶ Some Gateways have reported that the Council Tax changes have particularly affected those customers who are now required to pay some Council Tax for the first time; some ignored the first bills they were sent in March 2013 and are now having to deal with bailiff and debt recovery.³⁷ Anecdotal evidence from local Gateways and CABs seems to corroborate the survey's findings of increased signposting and increased service demand.

13.3 Citizens Advice evidence

The Citizens Advice service is in the process of introducing a new system of recording and this has caused some discontinuity in the recording and analysis of statistics. In addition CAB capacity has been reduced, mainly by the ending of legal aid contracts.³⁸ All CAB in Kent have now moved over to the new system so work will now take place to establish a baseline in relevant categories of advice so trends can be measured going forward.

The latest information on CAB advice trends nationally (for the period July to September) can be found at the following link:

https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/aboutus/publications/advice_trends.htm.

Looking at the above report and taking into account some local CAB evidence, the following can be highlighted:

- Benefits continues to be the biggest single category of advice. In Kent for the period between July and September 2013 out of a total of 11,847 clients seeking advice, just under a third (3,823) needed advice about the benefits system.
- Nationally there has been a 45% increase in advice concerning JSA sanctions compared to the 12 months before the enhanced regime was introduced in October 2012.
- Until quarter 2 of 2013 (July-September) which saw a drop in help with ESA appeals, there had been a 15% increase in requests for help over the previous 12 months. The CAB believe the recent drop is due to their reduced capacity to handle appeal work following the ending of legal aid contracts.
- Nationally there has been a 13% increase in requests for advice about rent arrears in the social housing sector. It is believed this is due to the introduction of size restrictions in April. There has also been an

³⁶ Evidence from Gateway Managers, December 2013

³⁷ Kent County Council (2013) Impact of Welfare Reform Survey, October 2013, Maidstone, Kent County Council.

³⁸ Quarterly client statistics of the Citizens Advice service (July – September 2013)

increase in requests for advice on actual or threatened homelessness in the social housing sector.

- A gradual increase in enquiries about the new Personal Independence Payment (PIP). This has been rolled out since the summer for new claimants but the reassessment of people on DLA has not yet begun for the majority of people. As at September 2013 there had been 240 such enquiries in Kent (6.4% of all benefit enquiries). 58% of people with PIP enquiries needed advice regarding form filling/checking and the claiming process.
- More than a doubling of the numbers requesting advice about Discretionary Housing payments (DHPs), which are the only recourse in the benefit system for people who have lost benefit due to the various reforms. 60% of those advised were disabled or had long-term health problems.
- It is reported that CABs in Kent are currently experiencing a rise in queries concerning debt and debt management as a result of the introduction of Council Tax changes, housing “size” criteria and the Benefit Cap.³⁹

13.4 There is some evidence to show that many people receiving benefits or applying for them have difficulty with a digital and “self-service” approach. The evidence is as follows.

- Service user insight suggests that these population groups are less likely to self-serve or use digital channels and are likely to have low levels of literacy.⁴⁰
- The national Universal Credit pilot revealed significant issues with IT. The report “Local Authority Led Pilots: A Summary of Early Learning from the Pilots” (2013) found that not all customer groups had access to the Internet. The report also indicated that there were large groups of people who had limited access to the Internet at home and who were not IT literate.⁴¹
- Qualitative evidence in the formative evaluation of the Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS) indicates that a proportion of applicants to the scheme are unable to complete an application unassisted. While some local services (such as Gateways and libraries) can provide access to computers, there is still an additional

³⁹ Evidence from Gravesham, Tunbridge, Thanet, Dover and Ashford Gateways, as well as local Housing Benefits departments, Job Centre Plus and CAB, September 2013

⁴⁰ Kent County Council (2013) Welfare Reform: Analysis of Households in Kent Affected by the Benefit Cap, Draft, Maidstone, Kent County Council.

⁴¹ DWP (2013) Local Authority Led Pilots: A Summary of Early Learning from the Pilots, London, DWP and Government Social Research.

demand on staff or volunteer time to support individuals with their applications – whether for KSAS or other applications. Customers who seek support from these services, because they are unable to fill in an on-line KSAS application form by themselves, are increasingly directed towards making an application via telephone.⁴²

14. Children's services

14.1 The pressures resulting from welfare changes could potentially push more families into crisis and lead to additional demands on local services that deal with children. The initial, limited evidence, which was gathered from a variety of children's services, shows a general increase in demand.

14.2 A survey was developed to help assess and monitor the impacts of welfare reforms on services in Kent. Amongst all the survey's responses, a small number (15) was provided by colleagues working in Children's Centres, and KCC's Children's Social Services and Early Intervention Delivery teams. When asked whether demand for their services had increased since April 2013, 13 replied that it had increased, 1 replied that it was "too early to say" and 1 that it "stayed the same".⁴³

14.3 Evidence about the number of Child Protection plans transferred to KCC from other local authorities was also received, and shows a significant increase. The number of transfers during the period April 2012 to March 2013 was 70, while the number of transfers from only April to November 2013 is already 83.⁴⁴ Thus the number of families with a child subject to a Child Protection plan who moved to Kent in the last six months is already higher than the total number for the previous year.

14.4 An analysis of the percentage of children with special educational need (SEN) statements shows a slight rise. In the autumn of 2012 the rate of SEN statements in Kent was 2.6%, while in both the spring and summer of 2013 it was 2.7%. There was also a slight increase in the percentage of children learning English as an additional language (EAL). In autumn 2012 the rate was 8.1%, while in the spring of 2013 it was 8.3% and in the summer of 2013 it was 8.4%.⁴⁵ These increases suggest little change and no meaningful impact.

⁴² Kent County Council (2013) Evidence submitted on 20 September 2013.

⁴³ Kent County Council (2013) Impact of Welfare Reform Survey, October 2013, Maidstone, Kent County Council.

⁴⁴ Kent County Council (2013) Evidence submitted on 30 September 2013 and on 22 October 2013.

⁴⁵ Kent County Council (2013) Evidence submitted on 30 September 2013.

(D) WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS ON PLACES?

15. Community safety/crime

15.1 At present there is little, if any, robust evidence available on this issue. For future reports, Business Intelligence will consider whether it is possible to create a methodology for analysing whether there is any correlation between specific types of crime and welfare reform both generally and in specific localities.

16. Concentration of deprivation

16.1 Any significant housing and deprivation impacts on local communities will take some time to assess (if they occur as a consequence of welfare reforms). Future analysis of population migration into localised 'hot spots', together with local qualitative intelligence, will aid understanding.

16.2 The national "Indices of Deprivation" will also be utilised. This is published by the Government to help local authorities identify their most disadvantaged areas and to ensure that resources and funding are allocated appropriately. Although the latest index does not provide sufficiently recent intelligence, as it was published in March 2011, it is possible that an updated version will be published in 2014, as it is normally revised every three years.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Kent County Council (2013) website,
www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/kent_facts_and_figures/deprivation.