

Service Provider Optimism Survey

Winter 2013 - summary of results

This survey (to be referred to as the provider survey) has been developed by CCPS and is based on the CBI business optimism survey. It has been designed to track changes in the way that major voluntary sector social care providers view their organisations' prospects and the environment in which they operate. This is the eighth survey carried out by CCPS and the fourth time that the Housing Support Enabling Unit has expanded the distribution of the survey to include members of SFHA that provide housing support and other providers of housing support services that are not members of CCPS.

Summary of findings

- **80%** of respondents reported that they had **concerns about how Welfare Reform would affect their service**; of these, **60%** had already seen effects on their services from Welfare Reform, up from 43% of respondents in Summer 2013
- **41%** of respondents reported that the **number of people employed by their organisations had increased** in the last 6 months. However, comments indicate that many of these **increases are small and related to an increase in part-time workers and discrete projects**
- Most organisations responding seem to be **confident about meeting the requirements for workforce registration**, with 92% of respondents indicating that they were "more confident" or "about the same" about their organisations ability to meet the registration requirements.
- **65%** of respondents have experienced **local authority funding cuts** in 2013-14 and 13% of respondents indicated that they had received cuts to over 90% of their services.

The HSEU included questions about Welfare Reform in this survey for the first time in summer 2013. In both the summer 2013 survey and this survey, a large majority

of respondents reported that they had concerns about how Welfare Reform would affect their services. **The percentage of providers reporting that their services had already been affected went up from 43% to 60% of respondents.** This is likely to reflect the timing of changes and the pace that changes have taken affect.

Method

Providers were asked to provide 'tick box' answers to an electronic questionnaire focusing on the following areas:

- General optimism levels
- Turnover/volume of business
- Level of preventative support services
- Welfare Reform
- Operating surpluses
- Service deficits
- Numbers employed
- Terms and conditions for staff
- Competitiveness
- Levels of reserves

A box for comments was also available for each question, to enable respondents to provide contextual information as appropriate.

Respondents

The survey was sent to all CCPS members (71), SFHA members that provide housing support (35), as well as approximately 150 other organisations providing housing support.

This report will focus on providers of housing support services (organisations reporting that more than 10% of their business is housing support). 49 responses indicated that the responding organisation provides housing support services. CCPS has prepared a [separate report](#) looking at the results from their members.

Survey results

1) Welfare Reform is beginning to affect the delivery of services

- **80%** of respondents reported that they had **concerns about how Welfare Reform would affect their service**
- **60%** of respondents said that they had **experienced issues in relation to Welfare Reform** that affect the delivery of their services.

This is the second survey in which we have asked respondents specifically about the effect that Welfare Reform measures are having on their services. An overwhelming 80% of respondents reported that they were concerned about changes to the benefits system affecting their services and 60% of those respondents reported that they had experienced issues in relation to Welfare Reform that affect the delivery of their services.

Welfare Reform affecting services

Welfare Reform has clearly had a significant effect on benefit claimants and has been the focus of much media attention. In addition to being concerned about the effect that changes are having on service users, the HSEU has been concerned about how changes to the benefits system have been affecting organisations in terms of their delivery of services and their housing support staff. CCPS and IRISS are conducting a short research project with funding from the ESRC to investigate this further¹.

In the Summer 2013 report, we wrote about the concern that some providers had expressed about the effect that Welfare Reform would have on their service users because of their decreased personal budget. This continues to be a concern.

"[We are concerned about Welfare Reform], particularly in relation to the level of care charge people are expected to contribute from a shrinking budget."

-Care and Support Provider

"reduced purchasing power of individuals - concerns about SDS etc."

-Care and Support Provider

At the same time, there is an increasing trend in Local Authority charges for non-residential social care services. Though the percentage of overall expenditure coming from charging income remains relatively small, COSLA figures show that between 2008 and 2011,

Local Authority charging income from people who use non-residential social work services rose by 15%². Comments from this survey indicate that, in some cases, providers are finding that these two financial pressures are beginning to affect continuity of service delivery.

"We are seeing some services being interrupted as people feel less able to afford their assessed financial contribution."

-Care and Support Provider

Not surprisingly there is some concern about the impact this may have on a person's ability to cope given the preventative focus of much housing support work.

"It is not just welfare reform but also the increase in charging by some local authorities which means that some people would rather survive without services which in turn may be increasing the costs/demand on other public services"

-Care and Support Provider

Some providers indicated that the nature of the support they provide or the level of support they provide is changing because of Welfare Reform. For example, individuals affected by the social sector size criteria (bedroom tax), might need support to find a new tenancy and move, when they expected to be in a home for much longer.

"Welfare Reform is likely to increase demand and/or increase the urgency/level of need of our client group."

-Care and Support Provider

"'Bedroom tax' HB reform in particular has led to service users needing support to move, pressure on housing service and a lot of anxiety. ESA has had direct impact on employment service users in particular."

-Care and Support Provider

Services struggling to keep up with demand

Respondents were also asked whether they expected Welfare changes to affect the demand for their services. 59% of respondents indicated that they expected the demand for their services to increase. Because, in most cases, the increased

demand will not correspond with an increase in funding, some providers have expressed concern over their ability in the future to meet demand.

"I would expect demand to go up but I don't expect the delivery to go up as I do not see many new revenue streams becoming available to support the increase in demand"

-Care and Support Provider

Some providers are relying on short term funding sources to help them to address an increasing need for support and assistance associated with Welfare Reform. In some cases services are struggling to keep up with demand even with increased funding.

"We have put measures in place to meet the expected demand, i.e. we successfully applied to SLAB... [for an inclusion post]"

-Care and Support Provider

"Our advice service is struggling to keep up with demand in this area, even with new funding / project work brought in."

-Care and Support Provider

2) Many organisations are recruiting staff but confidence to plan recruitment remains low.

- **41%** of respondents reported that **the numbers employed in their organisation had increased in the last 6 months** and **37%** of respondents **expected the numbers employed to go up in the next six months**
- **Only 8%** of respondents indicated that they were **more confident about planning staff recruitment over the next six months**

The SSSC recently published employment statistics for 2012. These showed that housing support and care at home services showed the largest drop in the number of staff employed (from 64,290 to 61,350)³. Because the SSSC is not able to separate housing support from care at home services, it is difficult to determine if the drop in numbers is mainly affecting housing support services or care at home services or both.

Responses to this survey suggest a slightly different trend to that presented by the SSSC, with 41% saying that numbers employed

had increased in the last six months and 37% reporting that they expected numbers employed to go up in the next six months. It is important to note that the two sets of figures are not directly comparable. The SSSC data relates to staff numbers in services registered with the Care Inspectorate as housing support and / or care at home whereas respondents to this survey are from organisations that provide a range of social care services, including but not limited to housing support services.

Comments indicated that many of these increases in staff numbers were slight or were attached to short term project funding so longer term trends in numbers employed may tell a different story. This may explain why so few respondents were confident about planning staff recruitment over the next six months.

"[We expect numbers employed to go up] only slightly due to the increase in Housing with Care developments"

-Care and Support Provider

Several respondents also noted that they are beginning to experience issues with recruitment in particular geographic areas.

"We are beginning to see some recruitment problems in some areas."

-Care and Support Provider

Providers confident about workforce registration

This survey also asked whether providers felt confident about meeting workforce registration requirements. The register for housing support managers has been open for the past few years and the deadline for mandatory registration was the end of January 2014. The register for Housing Support Supervisors opens later this year and the register for housing support workers is expected to open in 2017⁴.

Responses indicated that housing support organisations were well prepared for this, with 92% of respondents reporting that they felt the same or more prepared for the changes to registration requirements than they did 6 months ago. This is an encouraging trend and reflects the preparatory work that housing support providers have been doing for several years to ensure that their workforce is ready for registration.

3) Local Authority funding cuts continue for the majority of providers

- **65%** of respondents have experienced **local authority funding cuts** in 2013-14 and 13% of respondents indicated that they had received cuts to over 90% of their services

For most organisations, these funding cuts are a continuing trend with local authorities. Organisations have received cuts to funding or a funding freeze for several years running and are being asked to continue to deliver the same services. Many organisations indicated that they had already made cuts to staff levels, terms and conditions and service delivery in order to adjust to these cuts and now there is very little left to cut.

"We continue to spend time and resource looking for efficiency savings, which is becoming much more difficult and limited. This takes up a lot of management time. In the longer term reserves will be reduced. This reduces the potential for reinvesting funds in improved, innovative and effective services."

-Care and Support Provider

"challenges efficiencies (when there is little left to cut) and risks quality"

-Care and Support Provider

"we are reviewing terms & conditions for front line workers. Admin posts have been made redundant"

-Care and Support Provider

Conclusions

Changes to the welfare system are proving to be hugely challenging for support providers. Not only are the people that they support being affected by reduced income and uncertainty, but, in some cases, the nature of support is changing. Support workers are being asked to advise on benefits and support individuals through moves, sanctions and appeals more often than before.

Of course, Welfare Reform is only a part of the changing landscape in which providers

operate. Local authority budgets cuts in funding for care and support continue to be a concern; the Procurement Bill and the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Bill are both moving into Stage 2, and the registration of the housing support workforce is well under way.

The HSEU will continue to monitor the effect that this changing environment, including changes to legislation, funding cuts and welfare reform, has on housing support providers.

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- 1) Investigating Welfare Reform in Scotland: <http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/welfarereformscotland/>
 - 2) COSLA National Strategy & Guidance for Charges Applying to Non-residential Social Care Services: http://www.cosla.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/13-01-25_item_xx_charging_guidance_for_non-residential_social_care_-_charging_guidance__section_6_revised.doc_1.doc
 - 3) Social Services Workforce Statistics: <http://www.sssc.uk.com/News/2012-social-services-workforce-statistics-for-scotland-released-today.html>
 - 4) SSSC Qualification Criteria: housing support workers: <http://www.sssc.uk.com/All-about-Registration/qualification-criteria-housing-support-services.html>



About HSEU

The Housing Support Enabling Unit helps providers to demonstrate the impact of housing support and to raise awareness about the role housing support plays in helping people to secure and maintain appropriate housing.

The HSEU works with and assists providers across the independent housing sector.



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