

Policy updates: employment, food support, housing, and general welfare,

Here we have summarised the policy announcements made during the week up to 16 September. Where relevant, publications made in prior weeks have been included.

Policy, Regulation, Legislation, and reports

Employment

1. In the lead up to the Autumn budget, usually held sometime in October or November, a number of research groups have released their latest findings on the state of the UK's employment market. We have summarised the main headlines below. It goes without saying the outlook is gloomy - CAH can expect a significant increase in clients seeking employment, housing, debt and benefit advice:
 - a. The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) has released its September briefing note. The full brief can be found [here](#). By looking at Redundancy Notifications (required to be given by companies planning on laying off 20 or more staff in one go) the Institute estimates around 450,000 in the third quarter of 2020. Bleakly, the IES concluded that redundancies "will almost certainly exceed anything we have experienced in at least a generation".
 - b. The ONS has published its [September labour market statistics](#). These draw from a wider range of labour market indicators but support the findings published by IES. The number of employees on payroll is down 650,000 compared to March this year. Whilst there is some good news, the overall employment rate is up, this is not consistent across age groups and demographics. For example, 18-24 year olds in employment are down by 146,000 over the quarter.
 - c. Other related media:
 - i. [UK's autumn Covid-19 redundancies could exceed 700,000 | Business](#)
 - ii. [Young people hit as unemployment rate rises](#)

Food Support

1. The Trussel Trust has released a new report on how coronavirus has affected food bank use, The full write up can be found [here](#). The report carried out by Heriot Watt University presents some incredibly stark figures - a forecasted 61% increase in food parcel demand between October to December 2020, and an additional 670,000 people destitute by the end of the year.
 - a. The key takeaways are:
 - i. Destitution and the number of people accessing food banks was increasing year on year before COVID hit. This is an important trend we need to keep in mind when viewing the numerous analyses on the impact of the COVID crisis. Inequalities across

the board were increasing, COVID-19 has accelerated them. Summarised nicely by the trust in this sentence “This crisis has landed after years of stagnant wages and frozen, capped working age benefits - leaving those on the lowest incomes vulnerable to income shocks.”

- ii. Despite current Government intervention, there will likely be a significant rise in destitution, and a corresponding rise in emergency food parcels needed. The report states that during April, there was an 89% increase in the number of food parcels given out compared to the same time last year - if we drill down into age this represents a 107% in the number of parcels given to children. The Trust predicts that an additional 300,000 parcels are likely to be distributed by the year end - up 61% from last year. Furthermore, modelling suggests that if we are hit by another COVID-19 wave in the current economic situation, then that number could be significantly higher - almost 1 million parcels, or an 153% increase..
 - iii. Removal of current Government support will cause a surge in these already worrying figures. The trust estimates that removing the temporary increase to the UC standard allowance rate could lead to a 10% increase for demand in the Trust’s food bank network.
- b. What comes next? The report was held up as evidence by Liam Byrne MP (lab) during his question to the Prime Minister during today's PMQs (16/09/2020). The PM was asked if he would commit, based on the Trust’s data, to two urgent measures. A £250m investment in LWA schemes to align England with the rest of the UK, and to meet to discuss bringing the “right to food” into UK law. You can find the full question [here](#).

Housing

1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have released a consultation paper, which forms part of the government’s wider National Strategy for Disabled People. The consultation considers how to raise accessibility standards to create suitable homes for older and disabled people. The aim is to give consultees an opportunity to influence the policy regarding accessibility in new homes. You can read the full paper [here](#).
 - a. The key takeaways are:
 - i. There is an increased need for accessible housing. Robert Jenrick highlights demand for accessible housing now and in the future due to our aging population. It is projected that by mid-2043, there will be 3.0 million people aged 85 and over. As our population ages, there will also be a significant increase in numbers of disabled people.
 - ii. The consultation paper focuses largely on the use of three building regulations, which set technical requirements covering a wide range of health, safety access, security and sustainability issues. Specifically, it looks at M4(1), M4(2) and M4(3) requirements. M4(1) is a mandatory standard and is already applicable to all newly erected housing. Whereas, homes built to the M4(2) standard have 16 accessible or adaptable features to make homes more easily adaptable for lifetime use, and M4(3) homes are those that are supposed to be fully wheelchair-accessible. Both M4(2) and M4(3) standards are currently optional.
 - iii. The paper proposes a choice of options on whether the government should mandate the higher regulation M4(2) as the compulsory standard; reconsider the way the existing optional standards are used; remove M4(1) altogether; or to wait

to see the full impact of recent planning policy changes on the use of the optional technical standards.

- iv. This paper is a welcomed consultation as [described by Sheron Carter](#), CEO of housing provider Habinteg: “this consultation is a critical opportunity to kick start a new age for accessible homes which will be widely welcomed by disabled and older people”. However, it has been criticised for providing options, rather than confirming concrete changes. One of the options provided, as described in the consultation paper itself, is a simple “do nothing” option and wait to see the impact of recent policy changes, which is not conducive to real policy change. You can read further on this point [here](#).
 - b. The consultation closes on the 1st of December. Those wishing to respond to the consultation can fill out the online survey [here](#).
2. Underpaid care workers commissioned by Haringey Council won a legal victory in a £100k settlement as Haringey Council were found to have breached wage rules after some carers were paid less than £4 per hour. The court found that when the home carers should have been paid for travel time spent moving between patient visits during their working day. 10 homecare workers will receive an average settlement of £10,000 each from an employment tribunal ruling following a 4 year legal battle. The ruling could have wider implications for all care service providers. General secretary Dave Prentis said: “This ruling sends a message to other care bosses that it’s completely unacceptable to pay staff illegal poverty wages”. The article can be found [here](#)
 3. [A press release from MHCLG](#) sets out further support for renters affected by coronavirus throughout the autumn and winter. Enforcement of evictions will not be permitted in England and Wales in the run up to and over Christmas except in the most serious circumstances. The government has increased notice periods to 6 months meaning renters now served notice can stay in their homes over winter, with time to find alternative support or accommodation. Bailiffs will not be able to enforce possession orders in the weeks of Christmas. For tenants experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the pandemic, the government states that all possible options should be exhausted, for example flexible payment plans which take into account a tenant’s individual circumstances.

Ad hoc items

1. The government has published the [results](#) of an independent review into the effectiveness of local authority financial reporting and audit regimes in England. The review, led by Sir Tony Redmond, recommends improvements in the way that councils communicate with taxpayers, to empower local people and improve transparency and accountability. This includes a simplified statement of costs, to allow taxpayers to measure performance against the council’s achievements.