

HCC s17 Payments – December 2024 – Action Plan - Final Report 2022 Unrestricted OFFIC

Finding	Agreed Action	Priority	SWAP Reference	Action No	Management Response:	Progress update	Barriers	Responsible Officer	Status	Timescale	Deadline
1	s17 payments should not take the form of regular allowances. Testing of s17 payments made during this Financial Year, showed that a number of claimants were in receipt of regular, monthly payments, which is in direct contradiction of Government guidance whereby s17 payments are not meant as a substitute for benefits payments	1	1#5122	1.1	Review to be undertaken as to who can request a payment; tightening controls to ensure payment requests are within government guidance regarding not a substitute for benefit payments	[1] Linked to review of current documentation (3.1) [2] CSC ContrOCC workstream to implement online Payment Request Form via Liquidlogic, transparency of approver and to enable performance information to be available to SLT to ensure payment requests are within government guidance. For 2nd request of a payment, Welfare Rights Service Benefits Assessment request to be submitted outcome received prior to HoS approving 2nd or subsequent payments Attending SLT 04.09.25 for approval on updated S17 guidance		FB/SR/LCS	Completed	28.02.25	31.08.25
								FB/HoS	Completed		31.08.25
								FB/HoS	Completed		04.09.25
								FB/HoS	Ongoing		15.11.25
				1.2	Introduce parameters in online forms to authorised personnel only.	[1] Communicated with with finance for Local Assistance Form to be an on-line form on Assyst. [2] Current Payment form sent to LCS for uploading to Liquidlogic [3] Waiting to see if parameters can be introduced - CSC ContrOCC payment Task and Finish Group		FB/LCS	Ongoing	28.02.25	30.11.25
				1.3	Request detailed monthly reports as to who have received payments via Local Assistance Team via s17 funding.	Requested a list of of payees, date and amount paid to be included with the quarterly report from Local Assistance Team		FB/CB	Completed	28.02.25	
				1.4	Utilise ContrOCC/Liquidlogic to record payments made to individuals which will enable performance reporting to be available for transparency, checks to be undertaken as to any individuals who receive more than one payment.	Pre-meetings have been held to discuss possible use of ContrOCC/Liquidlogic to record payments, set up delayed due to System C move to the Cloud.		FB/LCS/ Finance	Completed	28.02.25	
						Task & Finish Group created, to scope out potential payments, capabilities, overview, reporting.		FB/LCS/ Finance	Completed		30.09.25
						CSC payments collation to plan for non-payment and potential payments		FoH	Completed		27.06.25
				1.5	Performance Report to identify any regular payments	Performance Report to be generated to enable SMT to view and check for regular payments	Waiting on upgrade	FB/ Performance	Not started		30.09.25
2	No leaflet to inform claimants. There was found to be no literature in production to inform claimants about s17 payments and their legal rights to support in a crisis.	2	1#5116	2.1	Liaise with Comms and Marketing Business Partner to support production of a leaflet about s17, along with advice and guidance for claimants as to their legal rights to support in a crisis.	Meeting 06.08.25 to scope out leaflet and webpage Marketing and Desig briefing form to be completed and submitted to LD Copy of leaflet design from C&M		FB/LD	Completed	28.02.25	31.08.25
							FB	Completed		13.08.25	
							LD/FB	Ongoing		30.11.25	
				2.2	Produce intranet page for CSC, Finance and Early Help as a signpost/guide for lead workers to use as an advice tool for claimants who require support in a crisis.	Meeting 06.08.25 to scope out leaflet and webpage		FB/Website Team	Completed	28.02.25	31.08.25
3	Version controlled procedural document required. There was not an up to date, version controlled, procedural document that informs all stakeholders about s17 payments and how to process them correctly from the start of a claim all the way through to the final payment records. For staff to understand the processes, and how the claim came about to be approved, there needs to be a concise, step-by-step guidance, which is then made known to all stakeholders to be followed going forward	2	1#5117	3.1	Review current documentation in line with government guidance, produce a flowchart, step by step through the various channels to accessing s17 payments	Reviewing Section 17 policy guidance document to include more indept legislation (1.1), online LA form (1.2), Recording of Payments (1.4), version control and reviewing timescales (3.2), Welfare Rights (5.2) Scheme of Delegation (6.2), Management oversight (6.3), Mandatory Fields (7.1, 9.1) NI Number (11.1.2), Standardised Forms (12.1), Receipts (13.3) CSC Payments ContrOCC Recording Action Plan.xlsx		FB	Completed	28.02.25	31.08.25
				3.2	Introduce version control and reviewing timescales to ensure documentation is up to date and accurate reflecting government and internal financial guidance	Linked to 3.1		FB	Completed	28.02.25	18.07.25
				3.3	Promote s17 guidance via CYPFS News, Hull Procedures on-line, Hull CSC Practice Model and Council's Intranet; informing all stakeholders of processes and any changes which may occur.	Attend WLST in August to promote S17 payment review work undertaken - No WLST in August attending 30.09.25 Meeting with C & M 06.08.25 to progress leaflet and webpage		F/LD	Completed	28.02.25	30.09.25
				4	'Section 17 Guidance 2016' is out of date. A 'Section 17 Guidance' document dated 2016 was produced, although this did not appear to be generally known of by staff. If this guidance is to be used going forward, then it requires updating to ensure that it is in line with current legislation, it needs to be version controlled, and it needs to be made known to all internal stakeholders.	2	1#5119	4.1	Review current s17 guidance documentation in line with current legislation.	Linked to 3.1	
4.2	Introduce version control and reviewing timescales to ensure documentation is up to date and accurate reflecting government and internal financial guidance.	Linked to 3.1		FB	Completed			28.02.25	18.07.25		
4.3	Promote s17 guidance via CYPFS News, Hull Procedures on-line, Hull CSC Practice Model and Council's Intranet; informing all stakeholders of processes and any changes which may occur.	Attend WLST in August to promote S17 payment review work undertaken - No WLST in August attending 30.09.25 Meeting with C & M 06.08.25 to progress leaflet and webpage		FB/LD	Completed			28.02.25	30.09.25		
5	Evidence of financial checks to be recorded. For the selected sample of s17 payments reviewed, there was not a consistent record of whether financial checks had been undertaken before claims were approved for payment. Guidance stipulates that 'the first recourse should be to maximise benefit entitlement and that consultation with the Welfare Rights Section, or the Department for Works & Pensions should be undertaken' prior to claims being approved for payment.	2	1#5120	5.1	Review process with Local Assistance Team to ensure individual benefit entitlement has been check with Welfare Rights Section, or the Department for Works and Pensions.	Local Assistance Team will not check with Welfare Rights Section or the Department of Works and Pensions to ensure individual benefits entitlement has been claimed. Included within reviewed Section 17 policy and guidance for Welfare Rights Section to be contacted by Social Worker prior to funds applied for. Tick box confirming Welfare Rights consulted and CAB promoted included on the Payment Request Form. Meeting with CAB to explore support for families meeting planned for 01.08.25 1:1 session (05.08.25) with Kate Winstanley to review Power Bi contact information No regular payments to take place unless Welfare Rights Benefit Assessment has been completed		FB/LS	Completed	28.02.25	31.08.25
							FB	Completed		28.07.25	
							FB	Completed		01.08.25	
							FB/KW	Completed		05.08.25	
							FB	Completed		30.09.25	
				5.2	Review request for cash payment via petty cash with view not to be used as crisis payment ensuring all requests are via Local Assistance Team	Communicated to FoH who issue cash payments via petty cash, escalate to GM should request for cash payments be received. BS Meeting 21.08.25 promote to FoH Circulate Presentation and new guidance to FoH once approval granted Tick box confirming Crisis payment to be made by Local Assistance Team Included with Section 17 policy and guidance (3.1).		FB/GMs	Completed	28.02.25	30.09.25
							FB	Completed		21.08.25	
							FB	Completed		30.09.25	
							FB	Completed		28.07.25	
							FB	Completed		18.07.25	
5.3	Record of checks undertaken by Local Assistance team to be recorded on CSC request form; in turn Liquidlogic to be updated with checks taken place	Linked to 3.1		FB/CB	Completed	28.02.25					
6	Cumulative s17 payments exceeding approval limits. It was observed during sample testing that cumulative payments made to claimants over a short period of time were exceeding the approved limits as laid out in the Council's Scheme of Delegation	2	1#5121	6.1	Utilise ContrOCC/Liquidlogic to record payments made to individuals which will enable performance reporting to be available for transparency, checks to be undertaken as to any individuals who receive more than one payment.	Linked to 4.1 CSC Payments ContrOCC Recording Action Plan.xlsx	Waiting on upgrade	FB/LCS/ Finance	Ongoing	28.02.25	31.10.25
							Waiting on upgrade	FB/LCS/ Finance	Completed	28.02.25	30.09.25
				6.2	Review request form for s17 payment ensuring information of the Scheme of Delegation is included.	Linked to 3.1		FB/Finance	Completed	28.02.25	18.07.25

					6.3	Introduce management oversight of all request forms for s17 payments received second review by Group Managers providing them with a monthly oversight of payment requests to equip them to challenge multiple requests in a short period of time	Linked to 3.1		FB	Completed	28.02.25	12.08.25
							Section 17 Payments monitoring, reviewing payments received included within Section 17 guidance		FB	Completed		28.07.25
							CSC Payments ContrOCC Recording Action Plan.xlsx		FB	Completed	28.02.25	30.09.25
7	Request forms for s17 payments are not routinely utilised. Staff are meant to use a request form when raising a s17 claim for payment. This form details the originator and the approval along with other information. However, these forms are not being routinely utilised as it was found that often, staff are keying in the details directly into Civica and are circumnavigating the process. This results in a poor management trail and inadequate information being recorded.	Forms for s17 payment requests should be routinely used and all sections completed.	2	1#5125	7.1	Review current forms for s17, making fields mandatory without request for a payment cannot be processed.	Linked to 3.1		FB	Completed	28.02.25	18.07.25
							Payment Request form updated with request from Audit		FB	Completed		28.07.25
							CSC Payments ContrOCC Recording Action Plan.xlsx		FB	Completed	28.02.25	30.09.25
8	Children for s17 claims need to be recorded. A spreadsheet was provided showing all s17 payments made for this Financial Year. Out of 282 transactions, 136 did not indicate any children present in the household. For the samples reviewed during this audit, this appeared to be down to poor record keeping by officers. S17 payments are meant to be emergency payments to support the welfare of vulnerable children, therefore accurate recording of the children in the household is imperative to supporting the claim for assistance.	As s17 payments are intended to support children/young people, all records pertaining to the payment should accurately reflect that there are children in the household, this also needs to be reflected on OpenPortal, CIVICA and the forms supporting the request.	2	1#5126	8.1	Utilise ContrOCC/Liquidlogic to record payments made to individuals, payments to family members who has received the payment on behalf of the child(ren) will be included within a child(ren) record.	Linked to 4.1	Waiting on upgrade	FB/LCS/ Finance	Ongoing	28.02.25	31.10.25
							CSC Payments ContrOCC Recording Action Plan.xlsx	Waiting on upgrade	FB/LCS/ Finance	Completed	28.02.25	31.08.25
9	s17 request forms are not correctly populated. Where s17 request forms were utilised, it was found that populating the relevant fields was patchy. It was observed that the forms are never fully completed with all the pertinent information required. In particular the following details were not completed: - The child(ren)'s details, - Date the last payment was received, - Amount of last payment received, - Type of last payment received, - Preferred payment method, and - Reason for needing additional funds.	That OpenPortal forms and the CIVICA records are appropriately and routinely populated to indicate: - The child(ren)'s details - Date the last payment was received - Amount of last payment received - Type of last payment received - Preferred payment method - Reason for needing additional funds.	2	1#5127	9.1	Review current forms for s17, making fields mandatory without request for a payment cannot be processed.	Linked to 3.1		FB	Completed	28.02.25	18.07.25
							CSC Payments ContrOCC Recording Action Plan.xlsx		FB	Completed	28.02.25	30.09.25
						Utilise ContrOCC/Liquidlogic to record payments made to individuals, linked to child(ren) the payment relates to, also include: • Date the last payment was received. • Amount of last payment received. • Type of last payment received. • Preferred payment method. • Reason for needing additional funds.	Linked to 4.1		FB/LCS/ Finance	Completed		12.08.25
							Payment Request form updated with request from Audit			Completed		28.07.25
							CSC Payments ContrOCC Recording Action Plan.xlsx		FB/LCS/ Finance	Completed		31.08.25
10	Only authorised officers to process s17 payments. Not all officers processing s17 payments were on the authorised personnel list. Staff not authorised to process s17 could potentially process inappropriate payments, or not process them correctly.	The authorised personnel list needs updating, and a process put in place which only allows those on the list, to process s17 payments.	2	1#5123	10.1	Review to be undertaken as to who can request a payment; tightening controls to ensure payment requests are within government guidance regarding not a substitute for benefit payments	Linked to 3.1 Linked to 6.2		FB	Completed	28.02.25	18.07.25
							CSC Payments ContrOCC Recording Action Plan.xlsx		FB/LCS/ Finance	Completed		30.09.25
					10.2	Review authorised personnel who can approval s17 payments linking with Scheme of Delegation, promoting authorised individuals on the Council's Intranet.	Scheme of Delegation last updated 2022		FB/RD	Ongoing	28.02.25	30.11.25
							AD CSC reviewing		RD/EB	Ongoing		31.11.25
					10.3	Introduce parameters in online forms to authorised personnel only.	Assyst manager approval process in place.		FB	Completed	28.02.25	
11	Missing NI numbers. Testing of a sample of s17 payments, showed that claimant's National Insurance numbers or other I.D. were not routinely recorded. To avoid the risk of inappropriate payments or fraudulent activity, records should clearly show that identity checks have been undertaken	That National Insurance numbers or other formal ID documents are routinely recorded on requests for s17 payments.	2	1#5130	11.1	Review current forms for s17, making fields mandatory without which, request for a payment cannot be processed.	Linked to 3.1		FB	Completed	28.02.25	18.07.25
					11.2	S17 claimants NI number to be recorded on Liquidlogic	Linked to 3.1 Mandatory field in Liquidlogic		FB/GMs FB/LCS/ Finance	Completed Completed	28.02.25 30.09.25	31.08.25
							Included within the S17 guidance			Completed		28.07.25
12	Standardised Locality Office form for processing s17 payments. A standardised form needs to be rolled out throughout the locality offices so that there is uniformity in the data that is recorded for s17 payments requests.	A standardised form to be utilised throughout the Locality offices, that only named authorised personnel can use to process s17 requests.	3	1#5118	12.1	Once guidance, forms and processes are reviewed as part of the agreed actions for findings, reduced personnel and restricted parameters to online forms, mandatory fields will provide a standardised form and process across CSC Localities and Assessment Teams for all s17 payments	Linked to 3.1		FB	Completed	28.02.25	31.08.25
13	Receipts for some claims require consideration. During testing it became apparent that there were differing opinions on whether receipts were expected to be received back from claimants in respect of purchases made using s17 payments. It is our opinion that it is reasonable for claimants not to produce receipts for food and fuel allowances. However, a claimant was seen where s17 assistance was being requested on a frequent basis and the Social Worker had noted that they were not using the funds appropriately. Where there is a suspicion that a claimant is not using s17 payments appropriately, or where the funds are supporting the purchase of household goods, it does not seem unreasonable to ask for receipts to support that expenditure. The understanding of that requirement needs to be made explicit and known by all internal stakeholders to avoid any confusion.	Consideration be given to requesting receipts for certain claimants where there is a suspicion that s17 payments are not being utilised appropriately or where payments are supporting the purchase of household goods. This needs to be incorporated into the procedural document and made known to all internal stakeholders.	3	1#5128	13.1	Due to the efficiency of I-procurement and P Cards household goods should be purchased in the first instance via this route – electronic receipts/invoices will always be provided.	Linked to 3.1 Expand Pcard users to Team Coordinators		FB/LS	Completed	28.02.25	31.08.25
					13.2	Exploration of All-Pay Cards to be issued should there be a requirement for claimant to make the purchase, this will provide electronic evidence as to the purchase and the validity of the request.	Awaiting on Cash and Banking to expand usage of All-Pay-Cards; delay due to contract.		FB/LS	Completed	28.02.25	31.07.25
						Issue E-vouchers as alternative solution to gift cards. Will enable tighter controls as to what funds can be spent on in shops plus provide overview of spend.	Set up meeting organised with Finance and Commissioning to scope potential expansion of the contract already in place with HCC		FB/HN/PM	Completed		21.07.25
						Options paper to be produce, benefits, costs, impact of using E-vouchers, All-pay cards and current gift cards/vouchers, analyse currently taking place to provide evidence of current situation			FB/LS	Ongoing		30.11.25
						Reintroduce Food Cupboards at CSC sites as alternative solution to issuing Supermarket Gift Cards enabling VAT to be reclaimed and essential food supplies to be issued	Pilot to be introduced at Kenworthy House, view to evaluate stock rotation and yp and family feedback		HN/SR	Completed		25.08.25
							to roll out East and North Localities following evaluation		HN/SR	Ongoing		30.11.25
						Offer families home delivery by Supermarkets as alternative solution to issuing Supermarket Gift Cards enabling VAT to be reclaimed and essential food supplies to be provided			HN/SR	Ongoing		30.11.25
					13.3	Why receipts are essential to be included within s17 guidance documentation	Linked to 3.1		FB/LD	Completed	28.02.25	18.07.25
					13.4	Promote to workforce financial procedures, why receipts are required, the necessity in line with councils' guidance.	Missing receipt tracker created FoH to update should receipts not be provided.		FoH/FB	Completed	28.02.25	30.06.25
							Attending WSLT 30.09.25		FB	Completed		30.09.25
					13.5	Performance information to be provided to Group Managers for missing receipts monthly.	Missing receipts tracker to be presented to GMs monthly at GM meeting, continuing of monitoring to be maintained with escalation to HoFs should receipts remain an issue.		FB/GMs	Completed	28.02.25	30.06.25
							Missing receipt tracker inplace, monitoring and chasing missing receipt regularly undertaken, escalate to GM/IM receipts not received		FB/GMs	Completed		30.07.25