

Expecting too much?

Welfare Reform and Homeless Single Parents

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Homelessness in Westminster

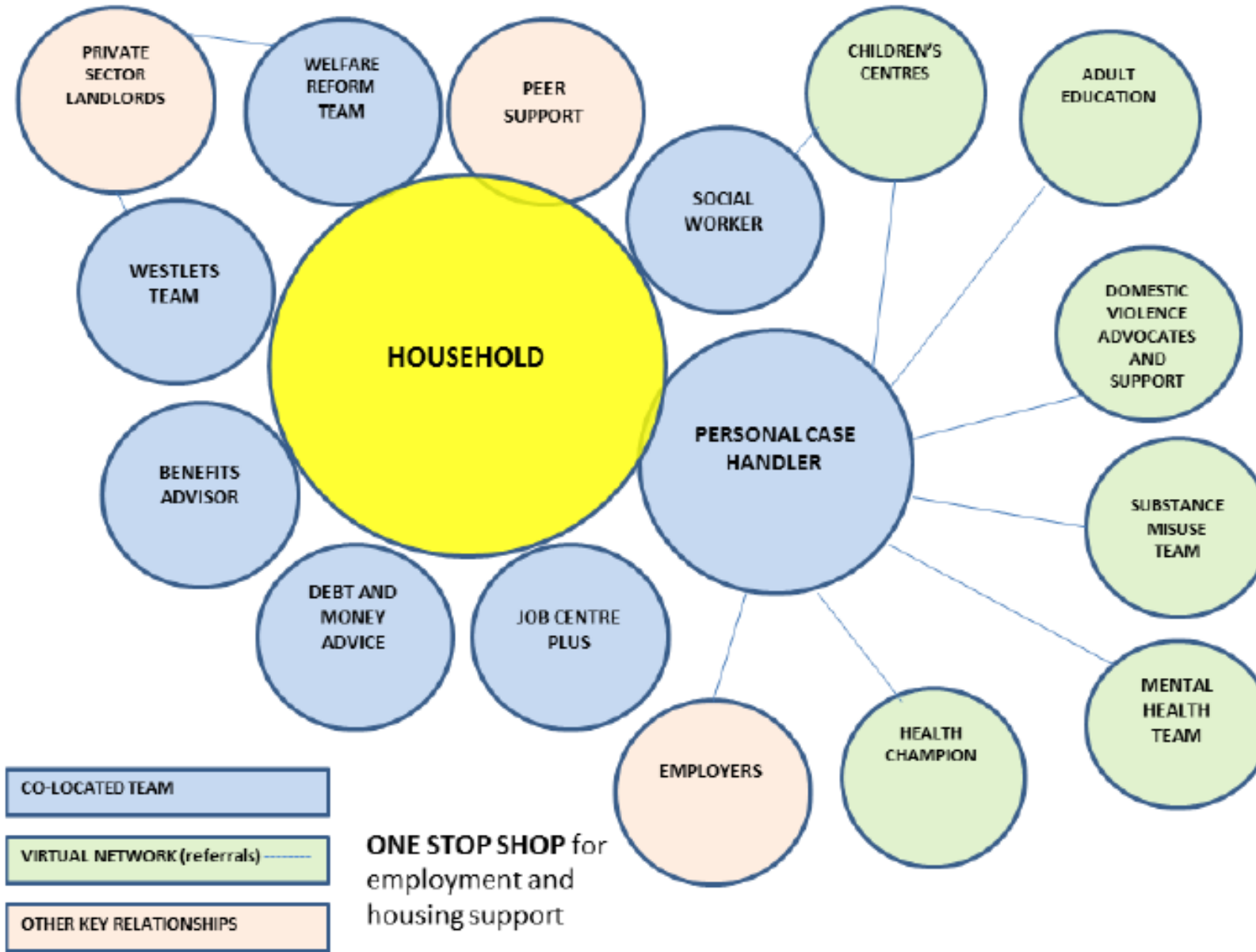
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Housing in Westminster

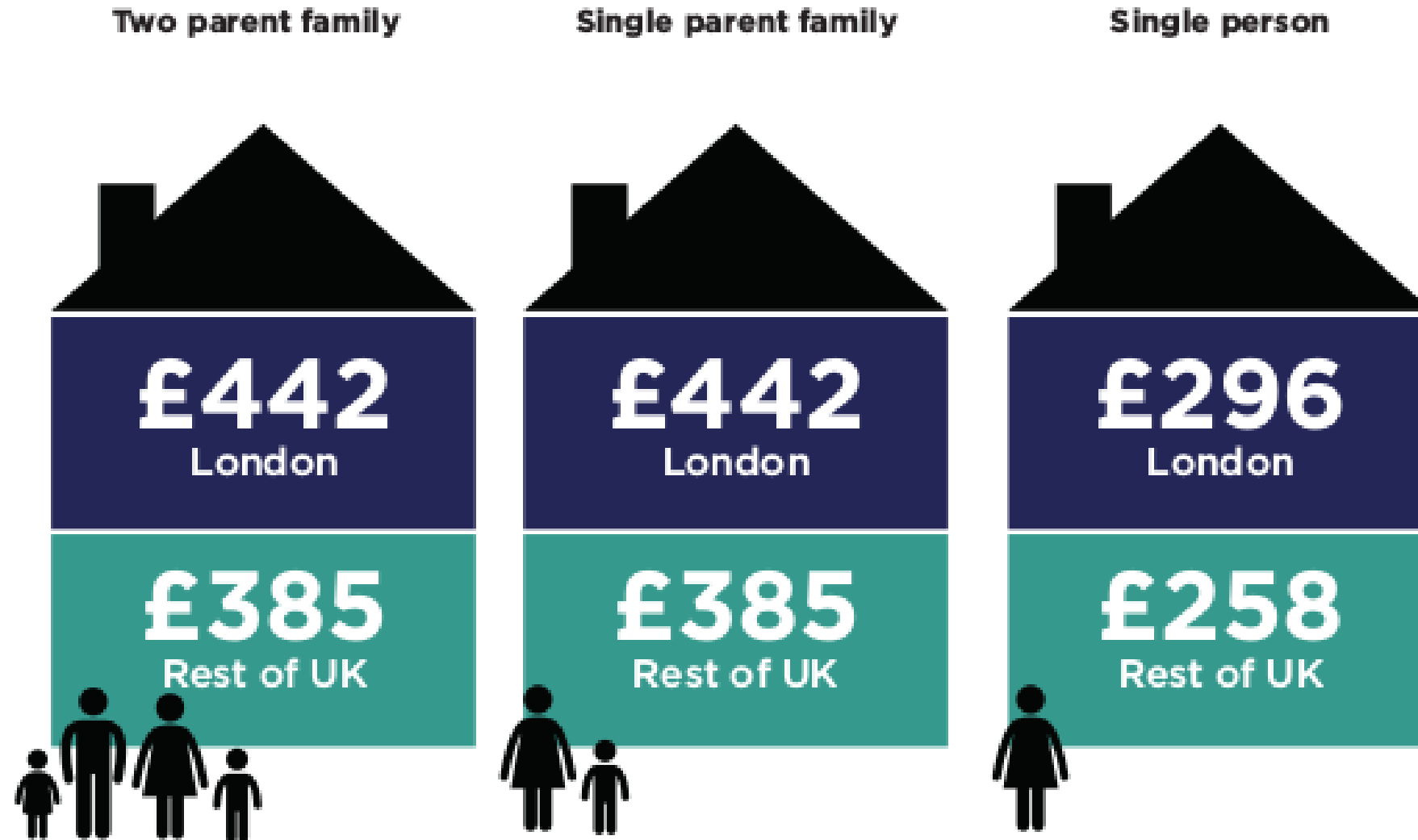


The EaSI HELP Project

Our vision is to create an integrated approach to solving the housing and employment needs of residents

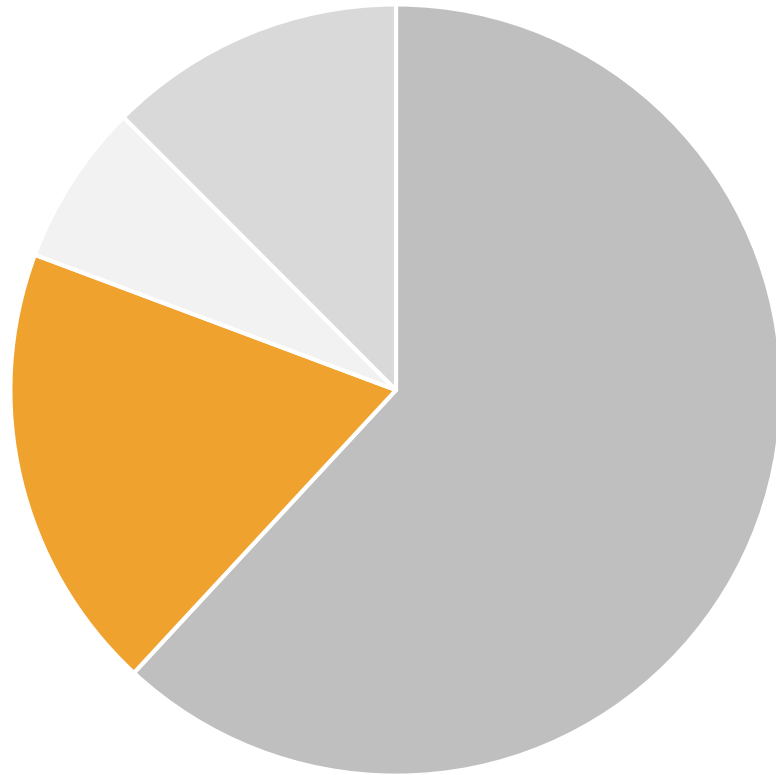


Overall Benefit Cap

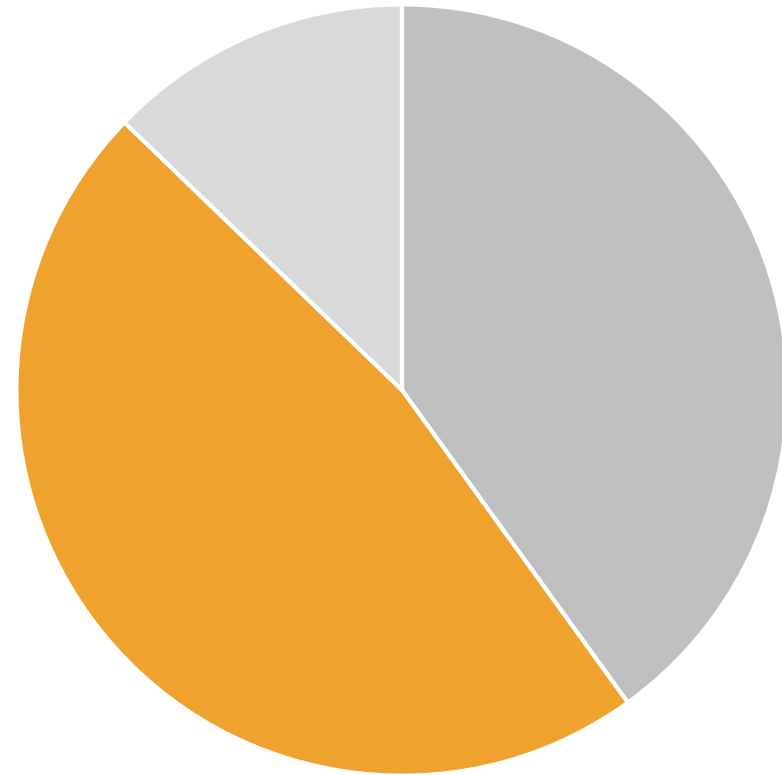


Social Exclusion of Single Parents

Westminster Benefit Claimants



Westminster Benefit Cap



The Benefit Cap and Single Parents

- what effect does it have on their motivation to work
- what effect does it have on their temporary housing
- how do employment support and the benefit cap interact to effect resident's ability to find sustainable housing and employment

Expectancy Theory

Expectancy: the belief that one's effort will result in attainment of desired goals

Instrumentality: the belief that a person will receive a reward if the goal is met

Valence: the value an individual places on the rewards of an outcome, which is based on their needs, goals, values and sources of motivation

Expectancy

OBC has not had any impact on belief that they can find a job

People still face the same barriers to employment

But homeless single parents experience significant barriers to employment:

- Low self confidence
- Poor English language
- No previous work experience
- Poor understanding of how to attain work
- Needing flexible hours

I went to Westminster Council, you know because of the welfare reforms...I think they were expecting me to get a job straight away to cover the rent which is quite tricky

I said I have no experience! I had no work because I never work in my life, when I look for work I have no experience

Instrumentality

The OBC has not had a discernible effect on the instrumentality of single parents i.e. their belief that if they get a job, they will stay where they are

- There is a low level of trust in council policies
- They perceive arbitrary and opaque decision making

Homeless single parents now feel that finding work is *necessary but not sufficient* to remain where they are

And I don't want to move, I saw what they did to my friend. They put my friend away. Ilford, Stratford, it's crazy.

They like playing with you – they move you from place to place to place to place. You know my situation, you know I not work. So why you put me in a place that is too expensive for me. You're the one who put me in that place in the first place.

Valence

Single parents have particularly strong reasons for wishing to remain in their current home, or nearby to Westminster:

- Children to stay in school
- Don't want to move
- Lack of support networks in new areas
- Cultural isolation in new areas

OBC has increased their motivation to work so that they can provide for their children and remain near to their support networks

So housing benefit they help me, they give me to [HELP]. And I wanna stay there because the kids love their school and it is near to uni and friends. I don't wanna go back to Sudan so that man look after me.

No I was looking for work because I don't want to go to some far place. So the problem out in Kent, is that you're not in your community.

Impact of employment support

Expectancy

Standard employment and personalised support techniques clearly improve clients expectancy that they can attain work:

- Help with CVs and job search
- Training & work experience
- Emotional support
- Travel and food payments
- Benefits advice
- A consistent and persistent advisor

Because of your programme, I get experience, I get job and I happy. When I went to do the training I was successfully selected, I couldn't believe it. I said yes, I did something isn't it. I said wow I can do this job.

I'd been to lots of things like this where people promise to help and then they don't but then I had my first meeting with HELP and we made a little bit of progress and then we had a 2nd and a 3rd and suddenly I made progress and "something switched".

Impact of employment support

Instrumentality

*HELP is not just about a job. Its also about **information** – about housing and the council and benefits and advice and support with all of my life*

So at that time, I hoped that housing would relocate me from Feltham to East London so that I could actually go to university as it's not possible to commute.

***Six months ago**, housing said that they would move me...*

Conclusion

- OBC is increasing resident's incentive to work in order to remain housed near Westminster
- But in isolation, it is having little impact on their motivation
- In the **absence of unconditional, integrated support**, motivation remains low

Conclusion

Unconditional, integrated support can act as a “carrot” to improve the expectancy and instrumentality, which effect of which is amplified by the OBC

Even with effective employment support, the benefit cap is still leading to the effective social exclusion of homeless single parents, in comparison to other household types