



# Leicestershire Partnership Revenues & Benefits

## Universal Credit – Update

## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide an update on the migration to Universal Credit Full service and its implications for each of the three partner authorities.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the content of the report is noted.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Universal Credit was introduced on 29 April 2013 in selected areas of the North West and is intended to support people who are on a low income or out of work and will replace the following benefits:

- Jobseekers Allowance income based
- Employment and Support Allowance income related
- Income Support
- Working tax credit
- Child tax credit
- Housing benefit

### **3.2 Full Service**

Prior to going live the DWP arranges a 'handover event' which explains how Full service differs from the Live service and the customer journey. This event is normally attended by Customer Services, Benefits and the Housing team (if appropriate)

The "Full Service" is being phased in and the partner authorities have gone live or will be going live on the following dates

- Harborough District Council - 30 November 2016
- Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council - 8 March 2017
- North West Leicestershire - February 2018

UC full service will be introduced on a phased basis postcode by postcode, once a postcode goes onto full service the following will happen:-

New claimant's that would normally have claimed, for example, Job Seekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance will have to claim UC and should be signposted to the DWP Jobcentre if they wish to claim Housing Benefit.

Those on existing legacy benefits, including Housing Benefit will remain on those benefits until there is a change of circumstances and then they will migrate onto UC, such a change in circumstance can include a change in their employment status (e.g. working more than 16 hours) or a change in their family circumstance (e.g. change of address).

The claimant's postcode will determine whether they migrate from the live to the full service and currently both HDC and HBBC have gone live with seven postcodes.

### **3.3 Main Differences between Live and Full Service.**

- UC Full Service is a much more interactive service. You will often come across the Full service roll out being referred to as the digital roll out.

- Once an on-line claim has been completed the claimant will be instructed to book an interview via the service centre. If a customer does not book their appointment within 7 days of making their UC claim online, the claim will be cancelled and they will need to reapply again..
- Claimants can manage their claim using an internet-enabled device such as a smartphone, tablet or PC. Claimants will also be able to report changes in circumstances on-line, contact their work coach and access details of their payments and awards.  
If a claimant declares that they cannot claim online they should be signposted to the nearest DWP Jobcentre
- Live Service will be available for all claimant groups from the start; full service has a number of gateway conditions that exclude claimants with certain circumstances from making a new claim. .
- In order to verify housing costs the service centre will contact the housing team directly.

### 3.4 Funding

The DWP previously funded Universal Support through Delivery Partnerships; the new funding arrangements will mean that from April 2017 funding will come directly from the DWP. This will be based on our respective caseloads.

Funding has been split into several elements, based on a number of assumptions and will be paid to LA's quarterly:

Assisted Digital (Full Service)	It is currently estimated that 6% of those seeking to claim Universal Credit will need Assisted Digital support
Personal Budgeting Support (Full Service)	It is currently estimated that 7.5% of those seeking to claim Universal Credit will need Personal Budgeting Support
<b>UC Implementation Support</b>	UC Implementation Support will be paid via 'New Burdens payments'
Management Support	This is to support Universal Credit Implementation
Support for complex housing cases (Full Service)	This is to fund Local Authorities for the clerical process of providing further information for complex housing costs to Universal Credit.
Housing Benefit Stop Notices	This is to fund Local Authorities for the clerical process of closing down a Housing benefit claim that has since migrated to Universal Credit
Payment Deduction Programme	This is to fund Local Authorities for the clerical process of closing down a Housing benefit claim that has since migrated to Universal Credit

### 3.5 Timetable

The original timetable has been refined to take account of the welfare reform changes made during 2016, the full service roll out will now proceed as follows:

- 5 jobcentres a month until June 2017.
- 30 jobcentres in July 2017
- There will be a break between August & September
- 55 jobcentres a month from October to December 2017,
- 65 jobcentres a month from February 2018 until September 2018.

The managed migration of the existing caseload will now not start until July 2019 and will finish in March 2022. This means that local authorities will continue to administer the existing housing benefit caseload for working age applicants until at least July 2019.

The Government also announced that it will not begin the incorporation of Housing Benefit for pensioners into Pension Credit until the completion of the Universal Credit timetable so we can expect to be delivering HB for pensioners for some years to come.

### 3.6 Our responsibilities (Benefits team)

- To ensure that all members of staff whose job roles will be impacted by UC are fully trained and able to support claimants as and when required.
- Sign post claimants to the job centre where appropriate-this will include instances where the claimant is unable to apply on-line.
- To not accept a claim for HB from those persons within the prescribed post code areas.
- Stop paying housing benefit when requested to do so and provide details of any overlapping HB that may have been paid during the migration of the claim.
- Identify and alert the DWP to those cases where the claimant is in specified accommodation (in these cases HB will continue to be paid)
- Pay LCTS based on their UC income, UC is paid monthly and we will need to make any monthly adjustments to LCTS entitlement based on any revisions to their award.
- Assess and award claims for Discretionary Housing Payments.
- Ensure the website is updated with the latest prescribed postcodes

### 3.7 Early Learning

The partnership has been assigned a DWP partnership manager through which concerns are raised and outcomes of early learning from both perspectives are shared. The DWP adopt a 'test and learn' approach and it is therefore essential that any issues we come across are shared which will help to improve and shape the service moving forward.

Examples of such early learning and concerns raised include:

- DWP insisting that Universal Credit is to be paid for specified accommodation
- Housing costs not being in payment for up to 3 months
- DWP staff unsure if housing costs are paid by Universal Credit..
- DWP having no computer available (or help) for people to make claim for Universal Credit on line.
- The Apollo register provides the DWP with a list of approved LA staff who are able to access DWP data. Unfortunately UC full service has not yet caught up and even though our names show on the Apollo list, the UC service centre are not allowed to disclose any information if a claimant is receiving UC in a full service area.
- Customers are having problems printing off their Universal Credit award from their journal.
- Universal Credit awards not including correct incomes, leaving off PIP, carers allowance etc.