

Report of Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)

Report to Citizens & Communities Scrutiny Board

Date: 25th July 2016

Subject: Universal Credit (UC) Scrutiny recommendations – formal response and progress.

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. Universal Credit (UC) is one of the main elements of the Governments Welfare Reform Programme and roll out for new single job seeking claimants in Leeds started from 1st February 2016
2. During 2015, the Scrutiny Board (Citizens & Communities) carried out an in-depth review into Universal Credit and its potential impacts on a number of stakeholders ahead of its implementation in Leeds on 1st February 2016. A number of recommendations were made with the focus on helping to ensure that appropriate preparations were made both for the initial roll out and for the wider roll out to Full Service which is anticipated to start in Leeds sometime in late 2017 or early 2018 ([Click to access Scrutiny Inquiry report](#)).
3. Relevant Directors highlighted in the scrutiny report welcome and accept these recommendations and are in the process of addressing the points raised.

Recommendations:

1. Scrutiny Board is asked to:
 - a. Note and comment on the progress to date in implementing the recommendations;

- b. Agree further update reports as required to provide information on the preparations for the wider roll out Full Service which is anticipated to come to Leeds towards the end of 2017.

Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The report provides a response and update on the progress made in implementing the recommendations set out in the Scrutiny inquiry report of 15th February 2016. The report also provides an update on the initial roll out of Universal Credit in Leeds as well as providing additional information on aspects where there is still uncertainty.

2 Background information

- 2.1 UC went live in Leeds on 1st February 2016 and is focused only on single jobseekers at this time. This group is considered by DWP to be the simplest cohort for UC purposes and enables the Government to continue to test the delivery of UC while expanding its reach nationally. It is estimated that around 10,000 UC claims will be made in Leeds over the first 14 months from Feb 16 to March 17 and that, in line with experience elsewhere, only around 20-25% of these will be from tenants with a rental liability.

- 2.2 Ahead of go live a series of actions were undertaken by the Council to ensure that the implementation of UC went as smoothly as possible. These included:

- Agreeing a Delivery Partnership with DWP to provide funding to support customers to make an online claim for Universal Credit and to provide Personal Budgeting Support where required
- An extensive programme of briefings about Universal Credit to front line staff across Housing Leeds, Customer Services and other relevant stakeholders. These briefings were supported by written Staff Aids to help staff deal with what were expected to be common enquiries
- The development of processes within the Benefits Unit to deal with Universal Credit claims and the associated notifications from DWP
- Networking with Core City and West Yorkshire councils to learn from their experiences of going live with Universal Credit
- Seminars for elected members on the roll out and implications of Universal Credit

- 2.3 The Council was well supported by Jobcentre Plus in preparing for Universal Credit and it should be noted that since go live there has been no major issues raised from customers or other stakeholders.

- 2.4 In addition to the preparations by the Council for go live, Scrutiny Board also undertook a Scrutiny inquiry which focused on the further roll out of UC which is due to commence late in 2017. Work has now commenced on the recommendations from this enquiry.

3 Main issues

3.1 The Scrutiny inquiry highlighted 16 recommendations to be addressed by directors of services across the Council and DWP. A progress report has been prepared on each of the recommendations and this is attached at appendix 1. Work will continue throughout 2016 to finalise implementation of the recommendations and to ensure that customers continue to be supported as UC expands further.

3.2 A future update report will be produced which will cover the wider roll out processes once the transition and migration approach is known.

Initial roll out

3.3 As at 17th June 2016, 2439 people had made a successful claim for UC in Leeds and had completed the initial interview at JCP. Analysis by JCP has also shown that of these claims, 20 – 25% of claims are being received from tenants with a rental liability, which is in line with original predictions. Appendix 2 shows some of the data collected in relation to Universal Credit roll out in Leeds.

3.4 Jobcentre Plus has worked constructively with the Council to help ensure that Universal Credit launch in Leeds is as successful as possible. To this end, the Council and Jobcentre Plus have put in place local arrangements to raise and escalate issues relating to operational issues, including administration and payment issues, through local Jobcentre Plus dedicated contacts. While there have been no major issues arising from the launch of Universal Credit, ongoing monitoring has identified areas that needed to be addressed.

Landlord notifications

3.5 DWP advised that social sector landlords would be notified when their tenants make a UC claim. This allows landlords to provide any support or advice to help tenants deal with the new UC claiming regime. Through monitoring it was identified that many of these DWP notifications were not being sent in a timely manner and some were not sent at all. This is an issue that was also experienced in other live sites. The following steps have been taken to help address this:

- DWP has now acknowledged the wider issue of social sector landlord notifications and has put in place a more structured electronic process for ensuring notifications are issued in line with requirements and sent to a single place within the council;
- In addition, and as an added security measure, the Council's Welfare & Benefits Service is also sharing information on relevant new Universal Credit cases with Housing Leeds.

Maximising Council Tax Support claims

3.6 As people claiming UC are now required to make a separate claim for Council Tax Support, there was concern that take up of this benefit would not be maximised. Evidence from LAs already live with UC suggested that take up of Council Tax

Support did not match the numbers claiming UC. A number of actions have been taken to help address this issue.

- The Council has produced a simplified Council Tax Support claim specifically for UC claimants and have agreed with Jobcentre Plus that this will be issued to claimants at the initial Universal Credit interview undertaken with a Work Coach;
- The Welfare & Benefit Service, which receives notifications of all new Universal Credit claims, is checking to help identify where a claim for Council Tax Support may be required and, where appropriate, issuing claim forms
- Housing Leeds is also being proactive with their tenants in respect of Council Tax Support in ensuring they assist their tenants to complete the simplified application where appropriate.

Rent arrears and Alternative Payment Arrangement

- 3.7 The number of Housing Leeds tenants claiming Universal Credit is growing and the impact on rent accounts is being closely monitored. Many tenants came onto Universal Credit already having rent arrears. The early signs, however, are that the level of average rent arrears is increasing following the move to Universal Credit. At the time of writing, 97 requests had been made for an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) which would see the housing costs element of Universal Credit paid directly to Housing Leeds – 41 of these requests for APAs have been decided and are now in payment to Housing Leeds.

Outstanding Issues

- 3.8 There are a number of areas where policy decisions are still awaited from DWP. These are set out below

- *Free School Meals*: no formal decision has yet been made about the eligibility thresholds for Free School Meals within Universal Credit. For now, the situation remains that anyone entitled to Universal Credit will be able to claim Free School Meals where appropriate;

Decisions on the provision of 'passported' benefits, including the eligibility and verification arrangements to confirm entitlement, remain the responsibility of the Government Departments, Devolved Administrations and the Utility Organisations that deliver them.

DWP has agreed to the introduction of a system of earnings thresholds to enable the continued delivery of 'passported' benefits under Universal Credit. DWP is now working with Government Departments to determine the right earnings thresholds which will be introduced as claimant numbers expand. Information on the current earnings thresholds for the passported benefits is provided below.

- Help with Health Costs – on 1st November 2015, the Department of Health (DH) introduced two earnings thresholds; a higher one of £935 net per

month for claimants who are responsible for a child or who have limited capability for work, and a lower one of £435 net per month for all other claimants.

- Healthy Start Vouchers – DH is currently considering where to set the threshold for Healthy Start with the aim of continuing to target groups of pregnant women and families with young children who have the greatest need for support from the scheme.
- ECO Affordable Warmth – the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) is currently using an earnings threshold of £1,250 net per month.
- Assisted Prisoner Visitors Scheme – Ministry of Justice (MoJ) will continue to use an income threshold of £1,250 net per month.
- Civil Court Fees Remissions – Ministry of Justice will continue to use an earnings threshold of £6,000 gross per year for fee remissions.
- Civil and Criminal Legal Aid – MoJ is considering how the current eligibility regulations should be adapted to accommodate the roll out of UC. A consultation paper will be issued in due course.
- *Transitional Protection:* the scope and details of the Universal Credit transitional protection scheme are still awaited. Key decisions concern how claimants affected by welfare reforms relating to other benefits will be treated when they move to Universal Credit and whether claimants transitionally protected from some of the welfare reforms will continue to be transitionally protected. There is also a question about how transitional protection will apply to claimants who are moved to Universal Credit as part of the managed migration programme and under what circumstances they might lose it.
- *The full transition and migration plan:* details of the areas and councils that will transition to Full Service up to the end of December 2016 have been issued have been issued (Leeds not included in this list) but no details of further roll out are available nor are there yet details relating to the managed migration programme which is due to start in July 2018. DWP is keen to understand Local Authorities issues around managed migration and a Leeds City Council is currently seconded to the DWP managed migration team to help with this.
- *Treatment of specialist accommodation:* This covers hostels and supported accommodation. No decisions have yet been made on whether housing costs support will be provided through Universal Credit or remain with Housing Benefit or some other provision.
- *The role of social sector landlords:* DWP is continuing to run a pilot to test the 'Trusted Partner' approach for social sector landlords. Under this approach, social sector landlords would have more influence over decisions around Alternative Payment Arrangements.

Next steps

- 3.9 Work will continue on implementation of the recommendations with a clear focus on preparations for the wider roll out of Universal Credit. Work is continuing on understanding the financial impact of Universal Credit. Housing Leeds has reflected potential impacts on rent collection in its longer term financial planning. Discussions continue with DWP about the impact of Universal Credit roll out on the Housing Benefit administration grant and work has started on more indirect financial implications such as the impact of Universal Credit roll out on the volume of Housing Benefit overpayments and the ability to recover overpayments.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 This report provides an update on the recommendations from the Scrutiny Inquiry on UC and does not require consultation at this stage.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 Equality impact assessments will be carried out as part of the on-going preparations for the further roll out of Universal Credit, particularly for families and disabled customers. This will be done to help ensure that the appropriate level of support is put in place.

4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 A key priority for the council is addressing poverty and deprivation. A thorough understanding of Universal Credit is essential in helping to maximise benefits arising from Universal Credit and mitigate risks arising from the way Universal Credit is delivered. The approach to implementation has included cross sector working, particularly with the Advice Sector and 3rd sector organisations such as Leeds Credit Union and has been aimed at ensuring tenants and residents receive support to manage the changes. This will continue once further roll out is known.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 Supporting residents to deal with Universal Credit and dealing with the administrative implications has cost implications for the council. DWP provide funding to help with these costs and in return they require evidence of all customers helped with Universal Credit. However, DWP payments are limited to the areas covered by the Delivery Partnership and do not extend to other issues such as increased customer contacts, increased rent arrears etc.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.2 Universal Credit is part of a wider welfare reform programme that is already covered by the Corporate Risk on welfare reform, which is reviewed on a regular basis and which looks at risks around rent arrears and other housing issues.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Scrutiny inquiry has been welcomed by officers responsible for ensuring a smooth implementation. The recommendations from this inquiry have highlighted ongoing areas of work to ensure the Council continues to understand the implications of UC for its residents and ensure all stakeholders are fully prepared and informed.
- 5.2 There are still areas where Universal Credit policy is being determined and areas where decisions have yet to be made by DWP. These include Free School Meals, the transition and migration plan and the roll of social sector landlords.

6 Recommendations

Scrutiny Board is asked to:

Note and comment on the progress to date in implementing the recommendations;

Agree further update reports as required to provide information on the preparations for the wider roll out Full Service which is anticipated to come to Leeds towards the end of 2017.

7 Background documents¹

None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Appendix 1

Universal Credit Scrutiny enquiry recommendations and progress July 2016

No	<i>Desired Outcome / Recommendation</i>	Progress
1	<p><i>Having clarity surrounding Transitional Protection entitlement.</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) continues to seek clarification from DWP as to whether Transitional Protection will apply to those housing benefit claimants affected by the Benefit Cap when they move onto Universal Credit.</p>	<p>The rollout to Universal Credit is being done through ‘transition’ and ‘migration’.</p> <p>‘Transition’ relates to new claims for a benefit that is now dealt with under Universal Credit and in these cases there is no Transitional Protection.</p> <p>Migration falls into two areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managed migration; and - Natural migration.
2	<p><i>Having clarity surrounding Transitional Protection entitlement.</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) seeks clarification from DWP as to whether existing claimants with disabilities will receive Transitional Protection, where appropriate, when moving from the current system of means- tested benefits to Universal Credit.</p>	<p>‘Natural migration’ happens where someone in receipt of a legacy benefit (for example, Jobseekers Allowance) has a change in their circumstances that ends their existing claim or requires them to make a claim for new benefit. These cases will be migrated to Universal Credit but there will be no entitlement to Transitional Protection.</p> <p>‘Managed migration’ relates to those claimants still getting legacy benefits at the point that the Government closes down the legacy benefits. These claimants will be migrated onto Universal Credit and, if they would be worse off under Universal Credit, will be entitled to Transitional Protection. Where this occurs, and the total household Universal Credit entitlement would have been lower than their total existing award of benefit and tax credits, Transitional Protection will be applied as a cash top-up to make up the difference.</p> <p>Aside from this DWP has yet to set out its overall approach to Transitional Protection for cases moving to Universal Credit through the managed migration process. There remains considerable uncertainty around claimants affected by the Benefit Cap, who face a</p>

		<p>large reduction when they move to Universal Credit, and their right to Transitional Protection.</p> <p>The issue is formally logged on DWP's Action Point list.</p>
3	<p><i>That measures are put in place to ensure that eligible Universal Credit claimants encounter no delays in accessing free school meals</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) and Director of Children's Services work closely with DWP to put in place local measures that will help alleviate any delays in accessing free school meals for eligible Universal Credit claimants.</p>	<p>This initial roll out (single people) will see minimal claims for Free School Meals (FSM) as these will only arise when a single claimant becomes a family unit . The current UC process automatically entitles claimants to FSM and these claims will be identified as part of the CTS claim process</p> <p>Leeds also uses a single FSM claim form for people who do not have a council tax liability and these forms will continue to be used for UC claimants.</p> <p>The main emphasis initially is ensuring the continuation of FSM whilst there is a 5-6 week wait for the UC decision. Working procedures are already in place to ensure there is a short term continuation of FSM entitlement when an existing Housing Benefit claim ends. We have extended the FSM entitlement for the small number of cases where UC has been claimed. This gives both parents and schools time to adjust to the award being withdrawn ahead of any UC decision.</p> <p>Agreement needs to be reached with both Childrens services and schools that this arrangement will continue once we move into a wider roll out programme</p> <p>Once the final eligibility criteria is agreed then further discussions will take place as to how migration of FSM will take place.</p>

4	<p><i>To have a local Council Tax Support system that helps to mitigate frequent fluctuations of Council Tax Support awards linked to the administration of Universal Credit</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) undertakes a review of the Council's existing Council Tax Support system to explore methods of helping to mitigate frequent fluctuations of Council Tax Support awards linked to the administration of Universal Credit</p>	<p>Proposals to revise the current Council Tax Support scheme were presented to Executive Board in June 2016. The proposals incorporate a scheme that would interface more simply with the Universal Credit assessment. This, in turn, would provide additional discretion when dealing with changes reported through from Universal Credit. The proposed Council Tax Support scheme will be subject to Scrutiny Board review at the meeting on 25th July 2016.</p>
5	<p><i>That Council Tax Support claims are administered quickly and accurately for Universal Credit claimants in Leeds</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works closely with DWP to monitor the effectiveness of the new Local Council Tax Reduction automation process to ensure that Council Tax Support claims are administered quickly and accurately in Leeds.</p>	<p>The DWP currently issues notifications and information regarding UC to LAs via a "Data Hub". DWP have now completed the automation of referrals to LA's.</p> <p>The effectiveness of this automation is being monitored and currently manual intervention is taken in each of these notifications to ensure a Council Tax Support (CTS) claim is either received and then promptly processed or an application is issued to the customer. Monitoring of the numbers of CTS claims being made in line with the numbers of UC claims is ongoing and working practices are being developed to ensure CTS is maximised in UC claims.</p> <p>A single CTS application has been produced to make CTS claiming linked to UC a streamlined process and this is issued by each Job Centre Plus (JCP) as part of the work coach interview</p> <p>In addition to this process, data from the hub is shared with Housing Leeds to ensure Council Tenants are fully supported through the UC claim to manage their rent liabilities and also encourage CTS claiming at the tenant contact.</p>

<p>6</p>	<p><i>That there is an effective process for easily identifying, awarding and paying Discretionary Housing Payments linked to the administration of Universal Credit</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works with DWP to explore the feasibility of establishing an effective process for easily identifying, awarding and paying Discretionary Housing Payments as part of the preparations for the wider roll out of Universal Credit in Leeds.</p>	<p>The revised DWP Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) guidance clarifies what LA's need to do to award DHP and what to take into account for UC.</p> <p>Identification of DHP cases will continue to be driven by Housing Leeds / Social Sector Landlords and tenants (as is the case now) and in addition we will continue to identify cases affected by other Welfare Reforms which may also be linked with UC to ensure DHP is considered if appropriate</p> <p>The DWP have confirmed that they will notify Councils of any UC claimant that is affected by the Benefit Cap. This will allow the Council to consider whether DHP will be appropriate in these cases</p> <p>DWP have awarded additional funding to LAs for system enhancements for the DHP administration process. This module will simplify the current UC DHP award process to ensure DHP claims are maintained accurately within the system.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p><i>That access to Jobcentre Plus Work Coach services is maximized through the Councils Community Hub model</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works with the DWP's West Yorkshire Work Services District Manager to explore the feasibility of co-location of other services, such as Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches, with the Council's Community Hub model to improve accessibility of services and maximise resources linked to the administration of Universal Credit.</p>	<p>Agreement has been made to continue with the current JCP secondee. This role will help to resolve any issues that are raised via the LA Local Hubs, to increase staff understanding and to provide a resource for Customer Service Officers to help resolve issues quickly. The JCP officer has access to the DWP systems. We expect the role to continue to evolve as we move forward with UC.</p> <p>Discussions have taken place with Jobcentre Plus West Yorkshire District Manager about the potential for co-location of other services, such as Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches, with the Council's Community Hub model.</p> <p>The West Yorkshire District Manager is considering co-location activity but will need to undertake further investigation.</p>

8	<p><i>That there is clarity surrounding the implications of Universal Credit in line with new charging policies reflected within the Care Act</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works with DWP and the Director of Adult Social Care to seek further clarity surrounding the implications of Universal Credit in line with new charging policies reflected within the Care Act.</p>	<p><u>Adult Social Care response</u></p> <p>It has been confirmed that there will be no adverse impact on the Social Care Financial Assessment. As is currently the case, the 125% of Income Support is calculated by ascertaining what the customer would be entitled to claim; not what they get paid. Therefore, if a customer received a particularly high payment of UC in the same month as the Social Care Assessment, this would have no bearing on the 125% figure used in the assessment. These figures are based on standard “applicable amounts” which are used to calculate benefit entitlement and they include basic personal allowances plus any applicable premiums based on disabilities or whether the person is a carer.</p> <p>Just as now – even if someone has their benefit sanctioned and therefore receives a lower payment of benefit than they otherwise would get, they still have 125% of what they should receive disregarded in their financial assessment.</p>
9	<p><i>That there is an alignment of existing automated systems to improve the verification process for Universal Credit linked to proof of social housing tenancies and associated rent charges</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) and Director of Environment and Housing works with DWP to explore opportunities for improving the verification process linked to proof of social housing tenancies and associated rent changes through the alignment of existing automated systems.</p>	<p><u>Housing Leeds response</u></p> <p>This recommendation will require a change in DWP policy nationally. Housing Leeds has begun discussions with Citizens and Communities as to how this can be taken forward, possibly the Welfare Reform Strategy Board. Currently the DWP UC process put the onus on the tenant to provide any verification proof. Housing Leeds will also raise the issue with other social housing landlords via the Northern Rents Benchmarking Group and seek support in making proposals to DWP. The issue has also been raised at the DWP Universal Credit Steering Group which has Leeds’ representation but there is as yet no firm commitment from DWP to automate this aspect. Housing Leeds is participating in a research project with the Northern Housing Consortium along with other social landlords. Issues facing landlords and tenants will be highlighted and relayed to DWP.</p>

<p>10</p>	<p><i>That Housing Leeds tenants in receipt of Universal Credit are made fully aware of their responsibility to use their Universal Credit payments to pay their rent direct to the council</i></p> <p>That as part of the roll out of Universal Credit, the Director of Environment and Housing writes to Housing Leeds tenants in receipt of Universal Credit to reiterate their responsibility for using their Universal Credit payments to also pay their rent direct to the Council.</p>	<p><u>Housing Leeds response</u></p> <p>Housing Leeds sent a Universal Credit Leaflet to all tenants in September 2015 enclosed within the tenants' newsletter, which explains Universal Credit and the rent responsibility to tenants. Click here for the link to the leaflet on the website. We have continued to provide regular communications via the housing webpages and tenant newsletters. We have also established a Voice of Involved Tenants Across Leeds (VITAL) sub-group to work with tenants to develop a clear communication plan for tenants in relation to Welfare Reform.</p> <p>Housing Leeds have produced a standard letter template which will be sent to any tenants claiming Universal Credit and this will be recorded on their rent account.</p> <p>Additional resources of 16 Housing Officers were employed from January 2016 to support tenants through Welfare Changes such as Universal Credit, Under Occupation and the Benefit Cap by providing an enhanced service similar to another project which targeted Under Occupied tenancies in multi storey flats. The enhanced service offer provides a much higher level of support to tenants in key areas including: benefit and debt advice, budget advice, banking and financial advice, getting online support, plus job skills/training/volunteering support, fuel poverty and media switching amongst other services to enable customers to get back into work and maximise their income and rent payment ability. Housing Leeds' Enhanced Income Team are contacting all Universal Credit tenants over the telephone, home visit, office appointment, and email/mail to offer this tailored enhanced support. During the interviews rent liability is highlighted with the tenants and rent payment arrangements are agreed. Direct Debit is promoted as the most cost effective and efficient payment method and can now be set up immediately by the member of staff.</p>
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<p>11</p>	<p><i>That DWP identify a key role for the Council to play in actively engaging the Private Rented Sector in the roll out of Universal Credit</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) and Director of Environment and Housing works with DWP to explore how the Council can be given a greater role in engaging the Private Rented Sector in the roll out of Universal Credit in Leeds.</p>	<p><u>Housing Leeds response</u></p> <p>As with Recommendation 9, Housing Leeds will work with Citizens and Communities to consider the most effective way of engaging with DWP to strengthen the Council’s role in engaging with the Private Rented Sector.</p> <p>The Private Sector Housing (PSH) Team have been liaising with both the National Landlord Association (NLA) and the Residential Landlords Association (RLA) for the past 2 years+ regarding Universal Credit implementation. This has included providing briefing sessions and encouraging them to update all their members which they do on a regular basis. Universal Credit discussions have been held at our quarterly Strategic meetings with representatives from the Private Rented Sector – this includes the RLA and NLA but also local landlord representatives and local landlord forums.</p> <p>The PSH team have sent out regular updates on Universal Credit (supplied by colleagues in Benefits and from DWP) via our email alert system – this reaches nearly 3,000 separate private landlords. DWP spoke at the annual landlord conference November 2015 to explain the impact of Universal Credit on the Private Rented Sector in Leeds which was also followed by a Q&A session at the end of the conference.</p> <p>There are website links for Universal Credit on our PRS pages on the Council website and refer landlords to this information.</p> <p>The PSH team also hold regular training sessions for licenced HMO landlords and the Universal Credit is included as part of the course. A leaflet was produced for Private landlords as part of the initial roll out to advise of the implications for them and their tenants.</p>
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		<p>Managed Migration</p> <p>There are limitations as to what information can be shared with Private landlords. DWP have not yet made a decision on what role the Council will play in this..</p> <p>It is anticipated that where a landlord receives Housing Benefit direct for their tenant , the council will be able to advise that the HB payment will be ending once a UC claim is made.</p> <p>This issue will continue to be raised at Transitional Working Groups.</p> <p>It is intended that as part of managed migration further work with private landlords will take place to ensure they understand the “transition and migration” phase and how best to support their tenants.</p>
12	<p><i>That identified financial implications associated with the roll out of Universal Credit are factored into the Councils future financial models.</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) ensures that as Universal Credit continues to be rolled out, the financial implications identified as part of this Scrutiny Board inquiry are factored into the Council’s future financial models.</p>	<p><u>Housing Leeds response</u></p> <p>This recommendation also links to the Director of Environment and Housing due to the impact on Rent Loss Income and increased Rent Arrears.</p> <p>The 2016/17 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget includes £1.9m provision for bad debts. In addition to this, the HRA has £2m set aside in a reserve specifically earmarked to fund the implications of the Government’s Welfare Change programme (including the impact of the rollout of Universal Credit). To put this into context, should the level of current tenant arrears double from what it is at present, £1.6m of this reserve would be required as an additional contribution to the bad debt provision.</p> <p>At present it is difficult to accurately assess the impact Universal Credit will have on rent collection and arrears. However, arrears will continue to be monitored monthly and the bad debt provision reviewed quarterly to ensure adequate provision.</p>

		<p>The HRA 10 year Financial Plan is currently being updated and as the impact of Universal Credit becomes clearer the financial impact will be factored in to ensure adequate provision.</p>
13	<p><i>That Universal Credit training to frontline staff addresses the wider implications associated with Universal Credit</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) ensures that the Universal Credit training provided to frontline staff considers the wider implications associated with Universal Credit, including other cohorts such as couples and families, from the outset. This should take into account the DWP Training material which has been handed over.</p>	<p><u>Housing Leeds response</u></p> <p>Also links to the Director of Environment and Housing and the front line staff delivering Housing Services across Leeds. Housing Leeds have procured external training from Housing Benefit Systems and sessions have been delivered in July, August and October to key members of front line staff, and Senior Managers. In addition to this all front line Area Housing Teams have had staff briefings during September and again in January with some final sessions taking place in February 2016. The DWP also delivered 2 sessions to Housing Leeds in December 2015. Regular communications, updates and guides have been produced and circulated via Housing Hot Topics newsletter sent to all Housing Staff. Going forward refresher training will be provided with additional training for new staff members, and more in depth training will be scheduled in conjunction with the migration phases as Universal Credit rolls out, but the Council is waiting on more details from DWP in relation to the specifics for the next roll out phase, currently expected in late 2017.</p>
14	<p><i>That there is a high take-up of Universal Credit frontline staff training to ensure staff are equip with the knowledge and capacity to identify and support eligible claimants and particularly vulnerable claimants</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works closely with other directorates to actively raise the profile of Universal Credit amongst key frontline staff and encourages the uptake of staff training to ensure they are equip with the knowledge</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the transition timetable will be made available in September 2016. Once details are known then a program of training for front line staff will be developed to ensure adequate online claiming support and relevant Personal Budgeting Support for the new cohort is provided.</p> <p>Front line staff will include: Childrens Services / Adult Social Care / Customer Services / 3rd Sector partners / Social Sector Partners and Private Landlord forums</p>

	<p>and capacity to identify and support eligible Universal Credit claimants, and particularly vulnerable claimants.</p>	<p>Training will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making a claim as a couple • How Free School Meals will be paid un UC • What support can be given to couples and families during transition to UC • Updated written briefings <p>A full go live training plan was implemented for LCC/ 3rd sector and other stakeholders/ partners to ensure UC awareness was maximised. It is intended that this area will be revisited once a transition timetable is available. The transition phase will bring new challenges for the council to ensure front line staff are equipped with the relevant information in order to advise customers and a programme of delivery will be determined.</p>
15	<p><i>That elected members are kept fully aware of developments linked to Universal Credit as it continues to evolve and be rolled out in Leeds</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) leads on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Developing a dedicated guide to Universal Credit for Elected Members; (ii) Making the DWP website easily accessible to Elected Members (eg. through a mobile application); (iii) Periodically arranging Member Seminars to generate awareness and better understanding of Universal Credit as it continues to evolve and be rolled out in Leeds. 	<p>Universal Credit is a complex benefit affecting many different client types. An overview booklet for elected members is in draft form and, once agreed, this will be followed by a series of information guides looking at Universal Credit from different aspects e.g. 'In work and claiming Universal Credit', Disabled and claiming Universal Credit' etc.</p> <p>The website is available through a link on the Leeds City Council website. Arrangements are also being made to support elected members who need help in creating a direct link on their homepage or mobile phone.</p> <p>Further seminars will be run as more information about Universal Credit becomes available.</p>

16	<p><i>That employers across the city are being actively encouraged to identify and assist eligible employees to claim Universal Credit</i></p> <p>That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) reports back to Scrutiny in relation to progress made in working in collaboration with the Trade Unions; Leeds, York & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce; and the District Manager of DWP to help raise the profile of Universal Credit and encourage other employers across the city to identify and assist eligible employees to claim.</p>	<p>Internally steps are being taken to ensure that the Council, as an employer, understands the type and degree of support needed for its employees in making and managing a Universal Credit claim. This will be used to develop information guides for large employers in the city on supporting employees through the Universal Credit process</p> <p>Discussions have also taken place with Jobcentre Plus West Yorkshire District Manager to jointly meet with Leeds Chamber of Commerce to discuss the implications of Universal Credit for employers and employees. This is expected to take place following confirmation of the timescale for roll out to Full Service for Leeds.</p> <p>WY District Manager has also agreed to attend the next West Yorkshire Revenues and Benefits Managers meeting to discuss this and other issues around Universal Credit.</p>
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Appendix 2

Latest Universal Credit data June 2016

Type of data	Accumulative
Number claimed Universal Credit	3340
Number getting Universal Credit	2439
Number of CTS claims in receipt of UC	365
Number of HB claims closed down	398
Number of DHP awards	25
Number of UC claimants accessing Local Welfare Support schemes	25
Number of Council Tenants on UC	284
Number of Alternative Payment Arrangements requested (CT only)	97
Number of Alternative Payment Arrangements accepted (CT only)	41
Number requiring online support:	35
* <i>Basic</i>	17
* <i>Mediated</i>	18
Number requiring Personal Budgeting Support	12
* <i>Telephone support provided</i>	12
* <i>Face to face support provided</i>	0