

**Report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support**

**Report to Scrutiny Board (Citizens and Communities)**

**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> February 2017**

**Subject: Inquiry into Universal Credit – Tracking of Scrutiny recommendations**

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

**1.0 Purpose of this report**

1.1 This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny inquiry into Universal Credit.

**2.0 Background information**

2.1 Last year, the Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Board agreed to undertake an inquiry into the roll out of Universal Credit in Leeds. The inquiry concluded in January 2016 and a report setting out the Scrutiny Board's findings and recommendations was published in February 2016. This report is available via the Council's website ([Click to access inquiry report](#)).

**3.0 Main issues**

3.1 The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Scrutiny Board to consider the position status of its recommendations in terms of their on-going relevance and the progress made in implementing the recommendations based on a standard set of criteria. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.

3.2 This standard set of criteria is presented in the form of a flow chart at Appendix 1. The questions in the flow chart should help to decide whether a recommendation has been completed, and if not whether further action is required. Details of progress against each of these recommendations are set out within the table at Appendix 2.

#### **4.0 Recommendations**

4.1 Members are asked to:

- Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
- Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.

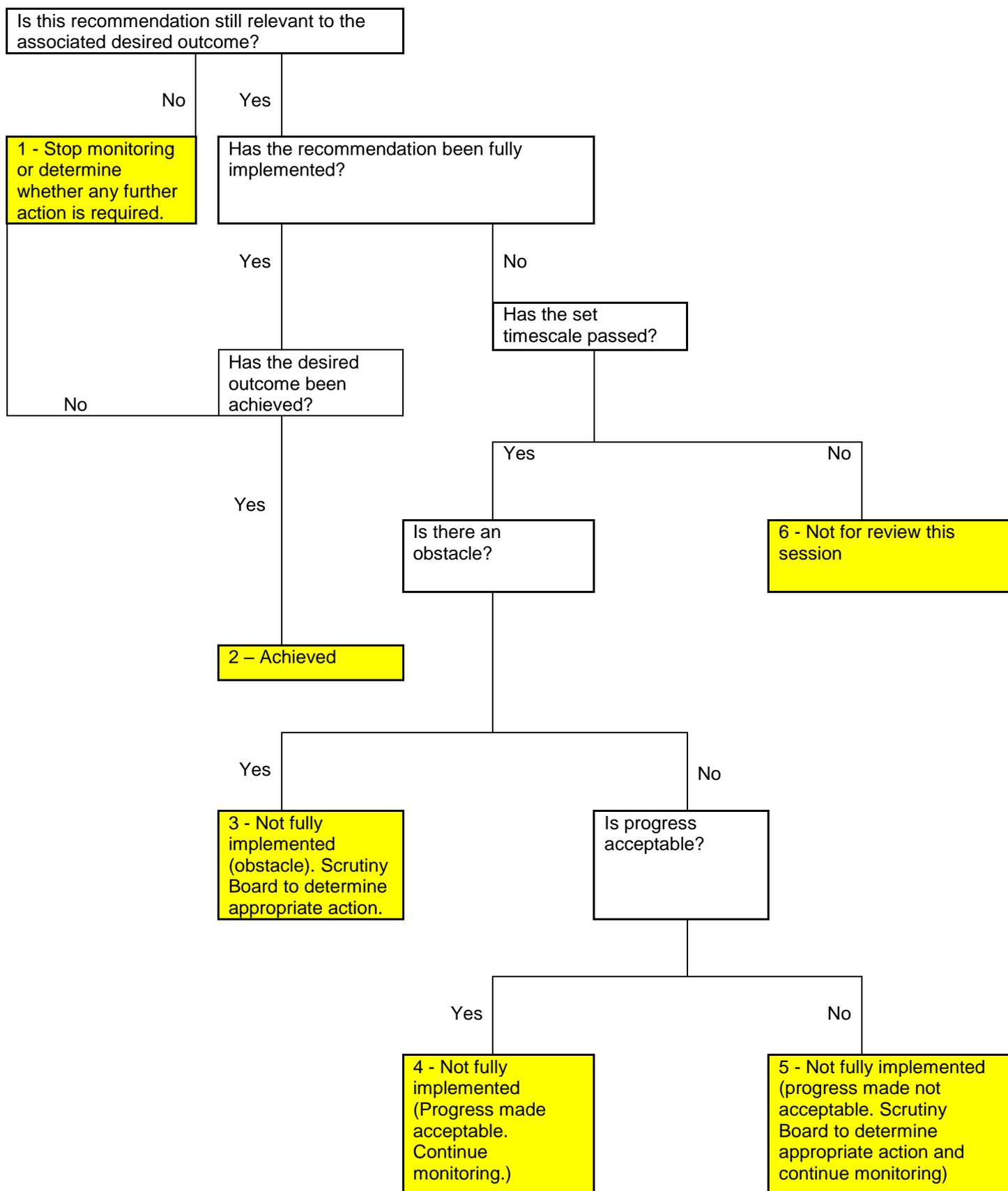
#### **5.0 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

5.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

**Recommendation tracking flowchart and classifications:**  
**Questions to be considered by Scrutiny Boards**



Position Status Categories

- 1 - Stop monitoring or determine whether any further action is required
- 2 - Achieved
- 3 - Not fully implemented (Obstacle)
- 4 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 5 - Not fully implemented (Progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 6 - Not for review this session

<p><b>Desired Outcome – Having clarity surrounding Transitional Protection entitlement.</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b> – 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><b>Formal response in July 2016:</b></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"> <li>- Managed migration; and</li> <li>- Natural migration.</li> </ul> <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 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> <p><b>Current position:</b></p> <p>The scope and details of the Universal Credit transitional protection scheme are still awaited. As indicated in the earlier response, Transitional Protection only applies to cases</p>

moving onto Universal Credit as part of the 'managed migration' programme. The 'managed migration' programme is not due to start until summer 2018 at the earliest. The lack of detail at this stage is not, therefore, critical. DWP is keen to ensure LA expertise is taken into account when designing the managed migration programme and Leeds has an officer seconded to DWP to help with this aspect.

One issue that appears to have been resolved is that Transitional Protection will not prevent the full impact of the Benefit Cap being applied when a customer migrates to Universal Credit.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – Having clarity surrounding Transitional Protection entitlement.

**Recommendation 2** – 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

As set out in recommendation 1 above.

**Current position**

As set out in recommendation 1 above.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – That measures are put in place to ensure that eligible Universal Credit claimants encounter no delays in accessing free school meals.

**Recommendation 3** – 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

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. 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.

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.

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

Once the final eligibility criteria is agreed then further discussions will take place as to how migration of FSM will take place.

**Current position**

There is no change to the current position in terms of the awarding of FSM under UC. Arrangements continue to ensure FSMs are awarded to eligible UC claimants. Once the final eligibility criteria is known, arrangements will be put into place to ensure continued FSM awarding to eligible UC claimants.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – 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.

**Recommendation 4** – 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

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 25<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

**Current position**

The 14.12.16 Executive Board agreed to recommend to the full Council meeting on 11.1.17 that changes be made to the Council Tax Support scheme for Universal Credit claimants. Item 8 of this Board’s agenda provides an update on these proposals including how the new scheme will mitigate against the frequent changes in UC and so this has recommendation has been taken into account.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – That Council Tax Support claims are administered quickly and accurately for Universal Credit claimants in Leeds.

**Recommendation 5** – 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

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.

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.

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

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.

**Current position**

We continue to apply processes aimed at ensuring take-up of CTS. This includes:

- DWP automation so that we receive details of UC claims;
- Issue application forms where no CTS claim received
- Working with DWP to issue simplified claim form at the face to face meeting with Work Coaches
- Working with Housing Leeds to ensure that claims are made from HL tenants on UC

As at 16<sup>th</sup> January there are 758 live Council Tax support claims from people who are on Universal Credit and, although there can be no guarantee that council tax support is claimed in all universal credit cases, changes to the council tax support scheme from April 2017 will help to make improvements to the claiming process to help ensure council tax support is maximised

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – That there is an effective process for easily identifying, awarding and paying Discretionary Housing Payments linked to the administration of Universal Credit.

**Recommendation 6** – 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

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.

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

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

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.

**Current position**

An updated module has now been applied to the Academy Benefits system which supports effective delivery of Discretionary Housing Payments for Universal Credit cases. This will continue as roll out expands and will provide continued accurate DHP claims linked to UC within the system.

As at the end of December 2016, Discretionary Housing Payments were in place for 74 Universal Credit cases.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – That access to Jobcentre Plus Work Coach services is maximised through the Council's Community Hub model.

**Recommendation 7** – 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

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.

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.

The West Yorkshire District Manager is considering co-location activity but will need to undertake further investigation.

**Current position**

There is also a connection here with the work around the Personal Work Support Package element of the CTS scheme and dialogue continues with Jobcentre Plus.

Both parties are keen to eradicate any duplication in provision and/or conflict in obligations for the jobseeker. In relation to the PWSP programme, this is acknowledged within the Claimant Commitment. Ensuring consistency of practice remains a challenge. Nevertheless, this issue remains a priority and joint working to review process and practise will remain in place.

As Universal Credit moves from a partial 'Live' service to the 'Full' service, there will be additional requirements in supporting people to manage Universal Credit claims. It is important that appropriate arrangements are in place between the Council and Jobcentre Plus when Full service rolls out to Leeds in 2018.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – That there is clarity surrounding the implications of Universal Credit in line with new charging policies reflected within the Care Act.

**Recommendation 8** – 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

Adult Social Care response

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.

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.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

2 – Achieved.

**Desired Outcome** – 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 changes.

**Recommendation 9** – 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

Housing Leeds response

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.

**Current position**

Housing Leeds now sends a letter to the DWP for all tenants who are claiming UC. The letter verifies the tenancy including their rent details. This is done automatically as soon as it is established the tenant has made a claim and helps the DWP speed up the processing of the claim.

The verification issue has been raised by Housing Leeds and other landlords through the Northern Housing Consortium. Housing Leeds continue to raise this in meetings with the DWP. To date there has not been any alignment of automated processes between social landlord systems and those at the DWP.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – 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.

**Recommendation 10** – 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

Housing Leeds response

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.

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.

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.

**Current position**

Housing Leeds sends a letter to all tenants who have made a claim for UC. The letter explains it is now the tenant's responsibility to pay their rent. The letter informs the tenant Housing Leeds are able to offer support and advice in a number of areas including budgeting and debt management and encourages them to make contact with their local Housing Office.

Housing Officers attempt to contact all UC claimants to verbally reiterate the message regarding it is now the tenant's responsibility to pay their rent. The Housing Officers will make an arrangement with the tenant to pay the rent, coinciding with their UC payment date, whilst continuing to promote Direct Debit as the preferred method of payment.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – 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 in Leeds.

**Recommendation 11** – 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

Housing Leeds response

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.

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.

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.

There are website links for Universal Credit on our PRS pages on the Council website and refer landlords to this information.

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.

Managed Migration

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..

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. This issue will continue to be raised at Transitional Working Groups.

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.

## **Current position**

The Private Sector Housing Team continues to liaise with the landlord associations and raise awareness at the PRS Housing Forum. In addition, updates are provided on a regular basis through the private sector email alert which goes out to over 4,000 private landlords and agents.

At the annual landlord conference, held in November 2016, we made the impact of Universal Credit one of the headline topics for the day. The DWP attended and gave a full update to over 200 landlords and agents on the progress with Universal Credit, impact to date and how it was likely to affect the private rented sector. Key to this was the processes in place and advice to landlords on how they could obtain further information to help them support their tenants sustain the tenancies.

The private sector housing service will continue to provide information and advice to the sector as and when it is available and maintains an up-to date link on our website which allows landlords to access the latest information and advice from DWP and partners.

There is no further work the Council can undertake at this stage with landlords.

Further general information will be provided to landlords in relation to the roll out of Full Service in the summer of 2018. There will also be a need for Councils to work with landlords around the migration from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit once the 'managed migration' programme starts.

However, once claims have been migrated to Universal Credit, there is little, if any, support the Council will be able to provide to landlords around individual tenants' Universal Credit claims.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – That identified financial implications associated with the roll out of Universal Credit are factored into the Council's future financial models.

**Recommendation 12** – 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

Housing Leeds response

This recommendation also links to the Director of Environment and Housing due to the impact on Rent Loss Income and increased Rent Arrears.

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.

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.

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.

**Current position**

The main financial implications arise from the impact on Housing Benefit overpayments. The implications are twofold:

- Firstly, there is the impact on collection rates as a consequence of HB cases migrating to Universal Credit. One of the key elements for collecting HB is through deductions from ongoing HB. Once a case is on Universal Credit, recovery of outstanding HB overpayments will require deductions from Universal Credit;
- The second issue relates to the value of HB overpayments identified and how this affects the Council's budget position. As the HB caseload reduces there will be fewer HB overpayments and this has implications for the Council's budget.

The DWP is currently looking at the issue of HB overpayments and Leeds is one of the Councils providing data on this issue.

The Board may be interested in a report on HB overpayments that was taken to Corporate Governance and Audit Committee in September 2016 – a copy is attached at appendix 3

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – That Universal Credit training to frontline staff addresses the wider implications associated with Universal Credit.

**Recommendation 13** – 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

Housing Leeds response

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.

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.

Front line staff will include: Childrens Services / Adult Social Care / Customer Services / 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector partners / Social Sector Partners and Private Landlord forums

Training will include:

- 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

A full go live training plan was implemented for LCC/ 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

**Current position**

Housing Leeds staff are provided with regular updates relating to the roll out of UC when information is released. Full Service will be introduced in Leeds in July 2018; all staff have been made aware of this. Housing Leeds is developing an updated implementation plan for the introduction of Full Service in through the citywide Universal Credit Operational Group.

This will include the delivery of timely updates to teams and further training for front line staff in the months leading up to July 2018.

An updated transition and migration timetable is attached as appendix 4. This addresses the issues arising from the next 2 stages of UC roll out (transition and migration) This will include the need for front line services to be equipped with the necessary skills to support people to make and manage an online UC account.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – 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.

**Recommendation 14** – 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 and capacity to identify and support eligible Universal Credit claimants, and particularly vulnerable claimants.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

As set out in recommendation 13 above.

**Current position** See Recommendation 13

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – That Elected Members are kept fully aware of developments linked to Universal Credit as it continues to evolve and be rolled out in Leeds.

**Recommendation 15** – That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) leads on:

- (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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

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.

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.

Further seminars will be run as more information about Universal Credit becomes available.

**Current position**

A UC guide has been produced for members which outlines UC and its implications. An escalation route for members to refer UC queries has also been included.

A link to the UC DWP website is available to members and this can be saved in members favourites menus

A further members' seminar was given on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016 providing updated information on UC. Further seminars will be provided as more information is available

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – That employers across the city are being actively encouraged to identify and assist eligible employees to claim Universal Credit.

Recommendation 16 – 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

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

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.

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.

**Current position**

Exploratory work has been undertaken to look at how some employees within the Council might be affected by Universal Credit. Key issues are around frequency of payment, access to online systems and hours worked.

These issues are particularly relevant under the Full Service and it is important that information provided to Chamber of Commerce is timely and takes place when a) the roll out of Full Service in Leeds is confirmed and closer and b) DWP has had the opportunity to benefit from the experience of rolling out Universal Credit to people already in work.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*