



## Report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support

### Report to Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Subject: Inquiry into Universal Credit – Tracking of Scrutiny recommendations

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
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?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

### 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 During 2015/16, 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](#)).
- 2.2 The Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Board considered the formal response to its recommendations in July 2016 and then continued to track the implementation of these recommendations. The last update report was considered in February 2017 and six of the sixteen recommendations were officially signed off at that stage. It now falls within the remit of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board to continue monitoring progress against the remaining recommendations.

### 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.
- 3.3 Details of progress against each of these recommendations are set out within the table at Appendix 2 for the Board's consideration. However, in view of the length of time that has lapsed since the original inquiry during 2015/16 and the implications of ongoing national developments surrounding Universal Credit (as detailed in Item 7 of the meeting agenda), the Chair of the Scrutiny Board also met with relevant senior officers to discuss potential next steps.
- 3.4 Moving forward, it is therefore proposed that the Scrutiny Board ceases to formally track the recommendations arising from the original inquiry and assigns a progress category status of 1 (stop monitoring) to the remaining recommendations set out in appendix 2.
- 3.5 In doing so, it is also proposed that a general update report is brought back to Scrutiny in Spring 2019 setting out the position in Leeds once full service for Universal Credit has been in place for six months.

#### **4.0 Recommendations**

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Board is recommended to:

- (a) assign a progress category status of 1 (stop monitoring) to the remaining recommendations set out in appendix 2
- (b) request that a general update report be brought back to Scrutiny in Spring 2019 setting out the position in Leeds once full service for Universal Credit has been in place for six months.

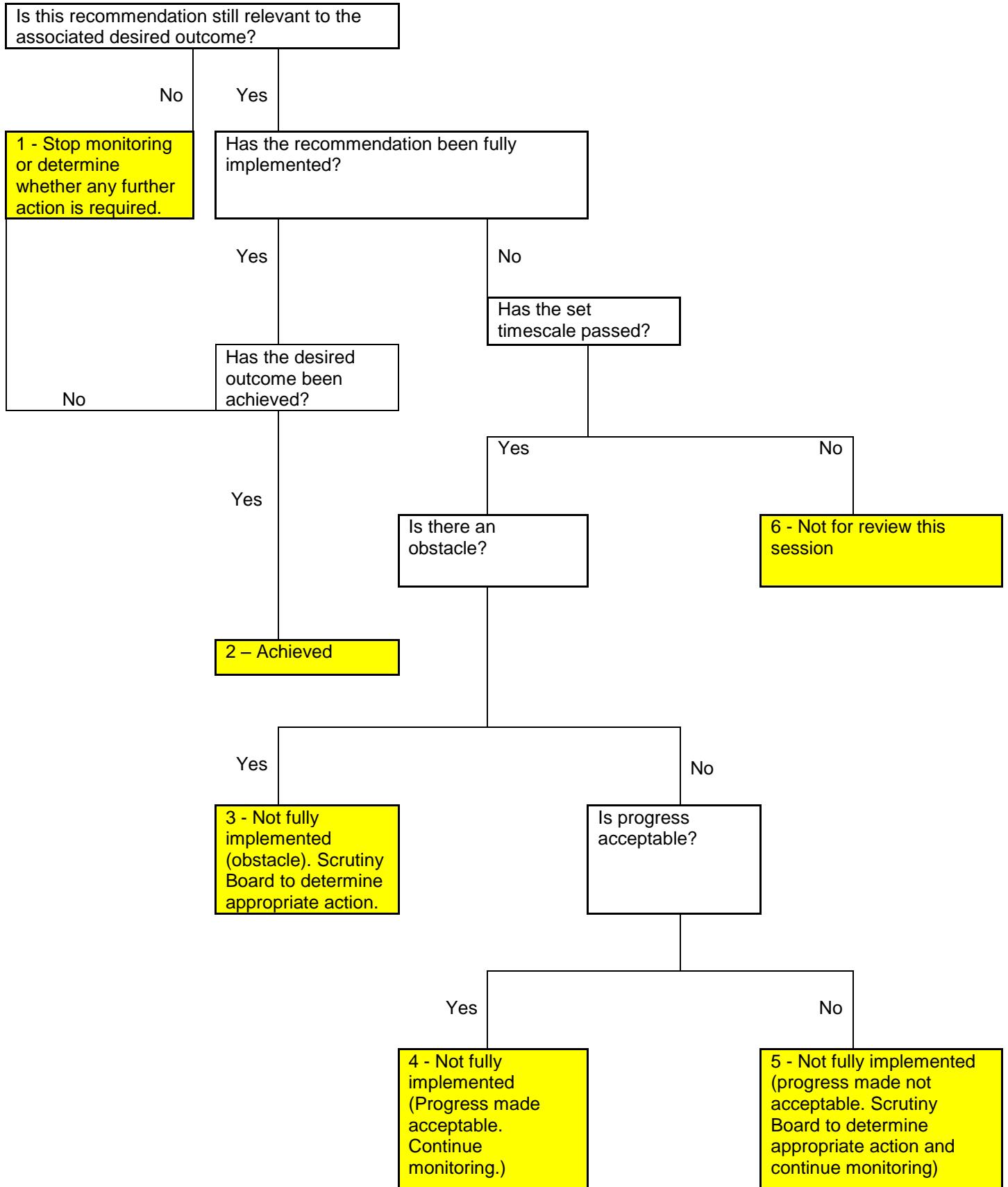
#### **5.0 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 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

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

**Recommendation 1** – That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)<sup>2</sup> 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.

**Formal response in July 2016:**

The rollout to Universal Credit is being done through ‘transition’ and ‘migration’.

‘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.

Migration falls into two areas:

- Managed migration; and
- Natural migration.

‘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.

‘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.

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.

The issue is formally logged on DWP’s Action Point list.

<sup>2</sup> The role of Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) no longer exists. As from April 2017, this responsibility falls to the Director of Communities and Environment.

**Position reported in February 2017:**

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 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.

**Current position:****LCC update:**

Given the Government's decision to delay the roll out of the full service for UC, the managed migration is not due to commence nationally until July 2019 at the earliest.

As stated last year, Transitional Protection will not prevent the full impact of the Benefit Cap being applied when a customer migrates to Universal Credit and they will see a larger reduction in their UC. Given this, on managed migration, the council will be able to identify these customers and ensure any additional support via DHP if appropriate is advised to the customer.

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

1 - Stop monitoring

**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.

**Position reported in February 2017:**

As set out in recommendation 1 above.

**Current position:**

**DWP update:**

All Customers will receive transitional protection regardless of the type of benefit received or their circumstances. Further guidance is to be issued regarding this.

**LCC update:**

As indicated in the earlier response, Transitional Protection only applies to cases moving onto Universal Credit as part of the 'managed migration' programme. Claimants with disabilities who are worse off when they transfer to UC will be eligible to transitional protection. As indicated above, further guidance will be issued on the application of transitional protection.

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

1 - Stop monitoring

**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.

**Position reported in February 2017:**

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.

**Current position:**

The Department for Education (DfE) has completed a consultation on a new eligibility criteria for FSM (closing date 11 Jan 2018) in which they propose to introduce a new net earnings threshold of £7,400 pa for those families in receipt of UC and which will determine the household's eligibility for FSM (note it is only the net earnings threshold that is treated as earnings and not any other additional income received through benefits). DFE propose to introduce this new net earnings threshold in UC from April 2018. For any new UC claims earning above this net earnings threshold after the introduction in April 2018 will not be eligible for FSM.

The most welcome news from the consultation is that DfE propose that during the UC rollout existing recipients of FSM will not lose their entitlement following the introduction of this new eligibility criteria in UC. And every pupil who is eligible for FSM at the point at which the new earnings threshold in UC is introduced in April 2018 will be protected against losing their meals whilst UC is fully rolled out nationally even if their eligibility changes.

Leeds has UC claims from families that have moved to Leeds and the current position is 13 FSM claims covering 30 children. No further eligibility checks will be required for protected families during the UC roll out period and schools will simply leave their pupils flagged as protected pupils in their systems. Any protected pupils who are still receiving FSM once the UC roll out transition is complete would continue to receive protection until the end of their current phase of education (e.g. primary, secondary).

These changes do not affect the criteria for universal infant FSM which will continue to be available to all pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 regardless of parental income.

Once we know the outcome of the FSM consultation and if DfE proceed with their new eligibility criteria for UC customers, then working processes will be agreed as to how entitlement to FSM will be quickly identified and awarded from October 2018  
Clearly the council will learn from other LA's where UC FS is rolled out after April 2018 when the new FSM eligibility criteria is introduced.

From Oct 18 we will adopt a process for identifying and awarding FSM to brand new FSM claims as existing FSM entitlements will be protected. It is likely that this will be a triage process for all new claims to UC to identify entitlement to Council Tax Support, Discretionary Housing Payment and Free School Meals.

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

1 - *Stop monitoring*

**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.

**Position reported in February 2017:**

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.

**Current position:**

DWP have given their full commitment to providing LA's with automated council tax support notifications and are working with software suppliers to deliver this automation. This will allow LA's to identify all UC claimants and target CTS take up accordingly. The LA will only get the automated notification service when full service is rolled out in the LA area which for Leeds will be October 2018.

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

1 - Stop monitoring

**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.

#### **Position reported in February 2017:**

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.

#### **Current position:**

DHP is now claimed online and is accessed through the Council's website at [www.leeds.gov.uk/dhp](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/dhp). The DHP online claim supports LCC readiness for UC full service and managed migration.

In readiness for full service roll out the DWP have issued new guidance which sets out the process LA's must follow when requesting information for DHP. LA must check the DWP's Customer Information system (CIS) to confirm UC entitlement and/or request details of the UC award direct from customer as the award and payment details are available in the customer's UC online Journal. DWP permit LA's to use the Council Tax Support data share information to support any DHP award. The DWP have updated their DHP guidance manual for UC.

In addition a Landlord portal is being introduced to simplify and speed up the process for rent verification and requesting alternative payment requests (APAs) for Landlords in the

Social Rented Sector. A landlord will be able to request an alternative payment arrangement (APA) or third party payment and view the status of this request using the portal. If the APA request is approved, this will trigger action to generate a conversation with the customer about Personal Budgeting Support and which will also include a check to see if DHP is appropriate.

At the end of December 2017 Discretionary Housing Payments were in place for 109 UC cases.

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

1 - *Stop monitoring*

**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.

**Position reported in February 2017:**

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.

**Current position:**

**DWP update:**

On-going as above.

We currently (and have in the past) worked closely with the Customer Services Team. An Implementation Group has been set up, there are dates scheduled throughout the year. We have also shared the Local Authority Hand Over Pack and we will continue to work together to ensure that Universal Credit does not have a detrimental impact on our joint Customers.

Supporting people to make UC claims will be part of joint working for full service roll out. Co-location is not currently under consideration by DWP. Chief Officer Customer Access and Welfare, will keep in mind any possibilities which might arise in the future for co-location, but this does not seem to be a possible option in the immediate term.

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

1 - *Stop monitoring*

**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<sup>3</sup> 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.

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<sup>3</sup> The role of Director of Environment and Housing no longer exists. As from April 2017, this responsibility falls to the Director of Resources and Housing.

## **Position reported in February 2017:**

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.

## **Current position:**

### **DWP update:**

DWP already have a good working relationship. The Leeds DWP Partnership manager has strengthened this further by engaging and meeting on a regular basis with Housing Options, who are the link between the homelessness agenda and the Private Sector Landlords Forum.

A meeting has already been arranged for June with the Private Sector Landlords Forum, we will be delivering an awareness and understanding of UC. This has been agreed with Chris Towns who runs the Forum.

### **LCC update:**

Further information will be provided to private landlords in relation to the roll out of Full Service in October 2018 and we will work with landlords around the migration from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit once the 'managed migration' programme starts. We are working closely with the DWP to develop a strong approach to information sharing and support for Private Landlords to ensure that vulnerable tenants within the private sector are supported.

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.

Other than full service communications to private landlords, there is no further work that LCC can progress in this area.

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

1 - *Stop monitoring*

**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.

**Position reported in February 2017:**

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 was provided to the Scrutiny Board. 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.

**Current position:**

**DWP update:**

A claimant with complex needs is usually someone who is experiencing difficult life events or personal circumstances, which could include difficulties when dealing with the demands of our processes at the time they need to access and use a service

They may be unlikely to be able to use normal channels to access the service, and are likely to benefit from extra or face-to-face support. Some customers will have obvious physical disabilities which mean they may need extra personal support, or that adjustments are required to enable them to access services. Other customers may have conditions that are less obvious. We do recognise that complex needs are not always a static state. To ensure that individuals complex needs are supported we have a 'Complex needs plan' in every Office across Leeds, which is updated and reviewed regularly.

We have also put in place Social Justice Work Coaches that are out in the community to support the most vulnerable and in Leeds we also have a bespoke service for the Syrian refugees

**LCC update:**

DWP will supply a full service training pack which will be tailored to the requirements of the council in terms of front line staff training.

Customer Access are in the process of developing a training timetable for Customer Service Officers who will be dealing with all initial front facing queries. Housing Leeds will link into the training delivery processes to ensure consistent messages are delivered ahead of full service. By the time of full service all front facing staff in Customer Access and Housing Leeds will have received appropriate training.

Housing Leeds have planned UC training sessions into their training calendar.

Housing Leeds has increased the specialist Housing Officer resource from 16 to 18 in order to prepare and implement the full service, these Officers along with all front line staff will be provided with varying levels of training to ensure we have a flexible workforce that can meet the demand of the required UC support for tenants.

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

1 - Stop monitoring

**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.

**Position reported in February 2017:**

See Recommendation 13

**Current position:**

See Recommendation 13

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

1 - Stop monitoring

**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.

**Position reported in February 2017:**

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.

**Current position:**

**DWP update:**

We work with Employers Locally to update them on Universal Credit. If there are any redundancies in Leeds we have a package of support which we use with the Employees and the Employer, so they can fully understand what they need to do if they have to make a claim. If additional support is required we will put this in place. We always endeavour to find Employment for individuals before they have to claim any benefits.

We are currently awaiting advice on the process with regards to tax Credit recipients who will need to transition over to UC.

**LCC update:**

Training sessions have been delivered to key services within the council (catering / cleaning services) to raise the profile of UC and help managers understand the implications of UC for LCC staff. Key issues are around frequency of payment, access to online systems and hours worked.

DWP will lead on raising the profile of UC to other employers across the city and will have more in depth information when they have had the opportunity to benefit from the experience of rolling out Universal Credit to people already in work. Employer's organisations will be provided with appropriate DWP information prior to full service roll out.

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

1 - *Stop monitoring*