

To:	Policy & Resources (Finance & Customer Services) Sub-Committee	Subject:	Welfare Reform: Programme Rollout of Universal Credit
From:	Head of Revenue Services		
Date:	01 May 2015	Ref:	BC / PD

**1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) is introducing Universal Credit (UC) to replace the following six means tested benefits for working age households. Income Support, Job Seekers Income Based, Employment Support Allowance Income Based, Working Tax Credits, Child Tax Credits, and Housing Benefit.
- 1.2 UC was initially implemented in specific pilot sites and for specific target claimant groups. DWP are rolling out the new benefit nationally in tranches initially focusing on specific new claimant groups with the eventual migration of all legacy benefits to Universal Credit planned by 2019.
- 1.3 The rollout of UC commenced in North Lanarkshire from 9 March 2015.

**2 Delivery Of Universal Support**

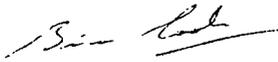
- 2.1 As part of the national programme to support claimants the DWP and Local Authorities have been engaged in discussions on the methodology of the support to be provided and the level of recompense to LAs for delivery of the support.
- 2.2 The DWP have a Delivery Partnership Agreement (DPA) which is operated with each LA and details the service delivery obligations and expectations for both parties. The support provided to claimants encompasses digital support and personal budgeting. In addition to this the DWP have agreed to fund Council Tax Reduction referrals which they will pass to NLC.
- 2.3 Within the Council support will be provided through the Housing Benefit team within Finance & Customer Services, Money Advice Team within Environmental Services, and staff from Housing Services/Financial Inclusion Team from Housing & Social Work Services. This will allow the Council to target support and assistance on behalf of the DWP allied to any expanded assistance that is identified from the Council.
- 2.4 DWP estimate 5,780 eligible applicants will make a UC claim in the period to March 2016. Of these they anticipate that support for both digital support and personal budgeting will be approximately 5% respectively:
  - Their expectation is that digital support will be required for 289 customers who are unable to make an online claim without assistance. The support is sought only to the extent of enabling the claimant to make an online application.
  - In respect of personal budgeting support DWP estimate 217 straight forward cases will be referred in the first year with support sessions lasting on average two hours and 72 more complex cases which will require on average a six hour support session.
- 2.5 As part of the agreement DWP have requested assistance in relation to housing costs from NLC Housing Benefit Team. They estimate assistance will be required in 1,156 cases where additional information will be required to determine UC housing costs.

- 2.6 The DWP have also agreed to provide funding for the 1,400 CTRS referrals which they expect to occur over the period to March 2016.
- 2.7 Following negotiations DWP have agreed to provide approximately £100,000 (excluding VAT) for the period to March 2016 to recompense the costs that the Council will incur for supporting the referrals.
- 2.8 The DPA will operate for the first year and then be subject to a review to ascertain any necessary amendments prior to an agreement for the Council to continue support into future years.

### **3 Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to

#### 4.1 Note the report



Head of Revenue Services

Members wishing further information please contact Mr Brian Cook, Head of Revenue Services, Tel: - 01698 – 403929.