

SUBJECT:	UNIVERSAL CREDIT DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP
MEETING:	Cabinet
DATE:	2nd September 2015
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to sign up to a Universal Credit Delivery Partnership agreement jointly with Torfaen County Borough Council (as part of the Benefuts Shared Service) and with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To agree to enter into agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions as a delivery partner to support the roll out of Universal Credit in Monmouthshire. **See Appendix 1.**

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 As part of the on-going National Government's approach to Welfare Reform, the DWP are currently rolling out Universal Credit. Universal Credit aims to ensure that claimants are better off in work rather than on benefit and is designed to make work 'pay.'
- 3.2 Claimants will be able to apply for their benefit on line and single payment will be made to a household rather than an individual. This will include housing costs and will be paid monthly in arrears. The move to on-line applications (together with the need for claimants to have a digital CV and to look for employment on-line) and how claimants are paid their Universal Credit award will have fundamental impacts on claimants. Some claimants may find it difficult to adapt to the changes. Also, the benefit requires claimants to accept a 'Claimant Committee.' This sets out what is expected in return for receiving assistance.
- 3.3 In addition, local support will be available to help claimants where appropriate. This will be provided through DWP and local authority delivery partnerships. This forms part of a fundamental aspect of Universal Credit, which is to encourage a new type of relationship with claimants (typically through Job Centre Work Coaches), through support being provided to claimants to become more independent in their worksearch activities.
- 3.3 This Partnership Agreement particularly focuses on the provision of budgeting support to claimants and support with getting on-line. The Agreement effectively provides provision for the DWP to refer in applicants considered to need additional support through each Council. For Monmouthshire residents, the DWP will be able to refer claimants to Housing & Communities Financial Inclusion Officer and the Shared Benefits Service.
- 3.4 The expectation and projections are that the numbers of individuals requiring budgeting and digital support will be low. The projection is particularly reinforced by the Torfaen

CBC experience to date since Universal Credit went live in April 2015. Just three referrals have been received to date for budgeting support.

3.5 The anticipated demand for Monmouthshire is broken down below:

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
Claims	26	82	83	68	64	70	58	451
On-line Support	1	4	4	3	3	4	3	22
Budgeting Support	1	3	3	3	2	3	2	17
Budgeting Support - Complex	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Local Council Tax Reduction	5	16	0	0	0	0	0	21
Support for UC Service Centre	5	16	17	14	13	14	12	90

4. REASONS:

Partnership working is crucial to the delivery of Universal Credit.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 The DWP have agreed to fund actual costs incurred as a result of this agreement. It is estimated that the cost of providing support for both Monmouthshire and Torfaen residents until March 2016 will be £22,000. A funding application forms part of the agreement.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 There are no negative Sustainable Development or Equality implications relating to this report. **Please see Appendix 2.**

7 SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no Safeguarding or Corporate Parenting Implications with this report.

8. CONSULTEES: Cabinet; Senior Leadership Team; Head of Community Led Delivery; Head of Revenue & Benefits; Accountant (Housing & Communities); Head of Legal; DWP Partnership Manager. Please see **Appendix 3** for comments.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

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