

**Update on Universal Credit**

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**Primary Care Commissioning Committee Meeting**

**21 March 2019**

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<b>Purpose of Paper</b>	
To inform the Primary Care Commissioning Committee of progress of implementation of Universal Credit, the implications for claimants and primary care providers and the work undertaken so far to prepare for this in Sheffield.	
<b>Key Issues</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local communities has identified their concerns about the introduction of Universal credit, these are being used to inform actions planned in Sheffield.</li> <li>• SCCG continues to work with partners in the City to develop action plans to address any impact resulting from the introduction of Universal Credit on individuals and agencies within the City.</li> <li>• SCCG is working with Primary Care to implement actions to support practices and patients with the implementation of Universal Credit.</li> </ul>	
<b>Is your report for Approval / Consideration / Noting</b>	
For noting	
<b>Recommendations / Action Required by the Primary Care Commissioning Committee</b>	
The Primary Care Commissioning Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.	
<b>Governing Body Assurance Framework</b>	
<b><i>Which of the CCG's objectives does this paper support?</i></b>	
2. To improve the quality and equality of healthcare in Sheffield 4. To ensure there is a sustainable, affordable healthcare system in Sheffield.	
<b>Are there any Resource Implications (including Financial, Staffing etc.)?</b>	
No	
<b>Have you carried out an Equality Impact Assessment and is it attached?</b>	
Not required for this report.	
<b><i>Have you involved patients, carers and the public in the preparation of the report?</i></b>	
Not required for this report.	

## **Update on Universal Credit**

### **Primary Care Commissioning Committee Meeting**

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#### **1. Introduction**

This paper presents the Primary Care Commissioning Committee (PCCC) with an updated position on the implementation of Universal Credit (UC), the implications for claimants and primary care providers and the work undertaken so far to prepare for this in Sheffield.

#### **2. Background**

The overall aim of UC is to simplify a complex system of benefit payments, it will eventually replace all working age income-related benefits, referred to as legacy benefits, with the exception of Council Tax Support.

There is a risk however that, while many will find UC straightforward, others may, for a variety of reasons, struggle with the additional demands put on them by the new system. This will clearly have an adverse effect on the life of the individuals concerned but will also affect the agencies who work with claimants, including primary care

#### **3. Progress on Implementation of Universal Credit**

People may receive UC through natural migration, when a fresh claim for means-tested benefits is needed, or following some changes of circumstance which force a transition from a legacy benefit to UC, in the latter circumstance claimants do not receive and transitional protection which ensures they are not worse off financially when they move over. Managed Migration will occur when DWP requires current claimants of legacy benefits to transfer to UC. Roll out of this has been delayed. Waiting for managed migration may be right for some people who could apply for UC now or remain on legacy benefits for longer.

#### **4. Impact for New Applicants**

Work within communities has identified a number of concerns about the consequences of the implementation of universal credit on both new applicants and claimants transferring from other legacy benefits.

There is a feeling that claimants are pushed towards UC when it may not be in their interest to move across and that most of the support is geared to the initial claim rather than maintaining it, this is certainly reflected in the new, nationally funded, Universal Support offer discussed in section 5 of this paper.

The online management of a UC claim and journal is a huge concern to community groups where people do not have English as their first language and may lack the necessary digital skills. Not enough information is given to people about being able to

claim UC without going on line. There is concern that people are being given a lot of help to make the claim digitally when they will not be able to maintain their claim on line, which would lead to sanctions and further hardship.

There is no guidance to Work Coaches to assess whether a claimant will be able to sustain their on line claim, so the outcome may depend on which Work Coach a person sees leading to inconsistency of approach and experience.

Once a person is on the digital platform, there is no way to go back to paper if they realise that they cannot sustain a digital claim. If an individual is unable, or chooses not, to claim digitally then they will have contact their Work Coach by telephone and attend a Job Centre in person. The additional costs of calls and travel will be difficult for some claimants to meet.

The claimant commitment each person has to make does not necessarily mean that they have to be looking for a job for 37.5 hours a week, it could include training or volunteering as preparation for seeking work. Not all community groups were aware of this and while this is positive, there was concern that these options were time limited.

## **5. Support to Apply for Universal Credit**

From April 2019 Universal Support will be delivered across England and Wales by Citizens Advice (CAB), rather than by local authorities. The CAB offer will include national web-based support and a telephone helpline (with local calls generally being answered locally) as well as face-to-face support expected to be delivered in existing CAB locations across the city, as well as potentially in job centres.

Significantly, this will be support to apply for UC whereas previously the Government funded local authorities to support claimants at any point, including ongoing management of UC. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), CAB and Sheffield City Council (SCC) are working together locally to understand the implications of this and to find ways to reduce the negative impacts of this change and to manage the transition to the new service. SCC staff have been located in job centres for some time to provide support to UC claimants.

## **6. Universal Credit Partnership**

A Universal Credit Partnership has been set up to coordinate the City's activity on Universal Credit, bringing together representatives from SCC, DWP, CAB Sheffield, Housing Associations, Manor & Castle Development Trust, ZEST, SOAR, SCCG, Carers Centre, Sheffield Credit Union, Shelter, Good Things Foundation, Church Action on Poverty, and Sheffield Food Bank Network.

Community groups and public services are working closely together in localities to bring together support for people on UC and to provide local information on UC. A Universal Credit Information Sheet and website have been developed which set out key aspects of UC and where people can get help in Sheffield.

Comprehensive signposting about locality-based support is currently being compiled and will be available soon for staff in libraries, housing offices, job centres, GP practices, community hubs and other services to help ensure that people are directed to the most appropriate support. This will include information about online access, digital skills

support, help to apply for UC, guidance/information about UC, food banks and job clubs.

The UC Partnership is starting to track the impact of UC on people and organisations via data from partners. It is also planning to focus, over the next few months, on the experiences of people from particular communities or with particular circumstances to better influence the development of solutions.

Work is also being carried out to identify issues with digital inclusion in the city, particularly relating to UC and this will support the development of solutions to enable more people to feel confident online over the next few years.

SCCG is part of the city wide signposting group working on the resource tool for use by front line staff. Work has been undertaken with SCC colleagues to map digital access across Sheffield and is engaging with CAB and DWP to develop training sessions on UC.

CCG staff are attending community group meetings in Firth Park and Burngreave to better understand local needs and support in these areas to feed back to GP practices.

The LMC has been asked to support work done to ensure practices can signpost their patients to correct agency for help with UC. Meetings are taking place with LMC, DWP, CAB and Work Capacity and SCCG is working with LMC to agree what practices will find most useful, resources will be made available on the CCG intranet page and the link sent out in the GP bulletin.

## **7. Support to Primary Care**

In addition to engaging in the multi-agency planning and developments described in section 6 above, SCCG has implemented a number of initiatives specifically to support primary care.

### **Training**

In general practice the front line staff are the receptionists and it is anticipated that a resilient and informed administrative workforce will be crucial to successfully manage the impact of UC in primary care. An introduction to UC was offered as an Administrative Protected Learning Initiative in autumn 2018 and some personal resilience training is being considered to equip reception and administrative staff with the skills to manage increased pressure this may cause.

### **Wifi and Digital Support**

Practices in areas where there is limited access to free wifi could offer patients space to access their public wifi to look at their work journal and reply to emails from their work coach. A request has been made to prioritise completion of wifi installation at practices in the Deep End.

### **Signposting**

Practices will need to know where in their local area they can signpost people for further support. This will involve knowing where patients can access help getting on line and receive help with their application as well as the location and opening times of these resources. This will be especially important in areas where digital literacy may be poor.

Other sources of support such as food banks, CSWs, and local community groups will

also be important. A simple leaflet devised developed by SCC has been adapted to give information and dos and don'ts when claiming UC with city wide resources and a space to list local services.

The Primary Care Team is working with SCC on the city wide resource documents which can be adapted for each neighbourhood, a prototype has been shared with the SAPA neighbourhood for comment. Once finalised this will be made available on the CCG intranet for practices to download and print out as necessary.

### **Care Navigation**

Care Navigation has been offered to every practice in Sheffield. Some practices already have Care Navigators in practice and the primary care team is working to assess who has been trained and how active they are doing Care Navigation. This will ensure UC is part of Care Navigation.

### **Medical Reports**

There has been some confusion about reports requested from GPs to support claims or appeals. The LMC has produced guidance and the Team continues to liaise with the LMC to consider if some updates on UC would be appropriate and seek clarification as necessary from DWP.

CAB have devised a letter to GPs to help with appeals against work capacity decisions. This condenses the work capacity assessment, including the relevant descriptors, the GP can then read this and initial that s/he agrees with the CAB assessment. It is intended that this will reduce GP workload and speed up appeals. It is hoped that North 2 neighbourhood will pilot the form for CAB.

### **Coding for GP Clinical Systems**

Practices will only know if the patient tells them however, it may help if they come in with medical symptoms and tell the GP, to alert the rest of the team that they may need support. Work is underway to enable practices to identify patients in receipt of UC by using Read codes in the clinical record.

## **8. Recommendations**

The Primary Care Commissioning Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

Paper prepared by: Lynda Liddament, Locality Support Officer  
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On behalf of: Nicki Doherty, Director of Delivery, Care Outside of Hospital

Date 8 March 2019

## **Further information**

Previous briefings (February 2018 and July 2018) on Universal Credit in Sheffield can be found here <https://citizensadvicesheffield.org.uk/get-involved/about-us/our-impact-and-outcomes/report-list/>

An information sheet about UC in Sheffield is available to download from here: [www.sheffield.gov.uk/universalcredit](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/universalcredit)

Please email [cat.arnold@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:cat.arnold@sheffield.gov.uk) if you would like to receive periodic updates on Universal Credit in Sheffield.

Further information about Universal Credit can be found at [www.sheffield.gov.uk/universalcredit](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/universalcredit) and [www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk](http://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk).