

## **Appendix 3 – DWP Press Release**

### **31 August 2012 – Freud announces successful Local Authority led Universal Credit pilots**

Local authority led pilot projects that will support people to claim Universal Credit were named by Lord Freud, Minister for Welfare Reform, today.

Twelve pilots will run from Autumn 2012 to explore how local expertise can support residents under Universal Credit, setting examples for other local authorities across the country.

The pilots, spread across Great Britain, will include help for claimants to build online skills to claim Universal Credit and look for jobs, as well as to develop financial management skills.

The pilots include:

- Birmingham City Council's pilot will introduce a digital logbook of government services for residents and highlight those who need extra support with financial skills and digital literacy.
- A joint bid from Melton and Rushcliffe Borough Councils will identify the most vulnerable members of the community in order to provide support in increasing financial inclusion and get customers ready for work, working with the local voluntary sector and the county council
- Oxford City Council will build on their work with DWP as a Direct Payment Demonstration Project to work with residents not in contact with Jobcentre Plus.
- North Dorset District Council will work with a credit union, Citizens Advice, DWP and the social housing provider Spectrum to provide money advice, budgeting support and employment skills for people living in remote areas.

Lord Freud said:

"We know some people will need support when they first claim Universal Credit and these projects will highlight how councils can use their local expertise to help residents."

"Helping people to claim online can combat social exclusion; getting online can improve people's jobseeking skills and help people get ready for the modern workplace as well as giving them the ability to shop, bank or use many internet services for the first time."

Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman of the Local Government Association, said:

"Universal Credit marks an enormous shift in the way benefits and tax credits are administered and it is vitally important that people receive the right support both during and after the transition."

"Councils are uniquely well placed to provide people with the face-to-face help they may need to navigate the new scheme. The pilot councils will be

instrumental in smoothing the changeover for their local residents and will provide invaluable pointers on how the scheme should be rolled out more widely in 2013."

"All the pilot applications were of an incredibly high standard and we were very pleased to see such a positive response from the sector. It is very clear that local authorities feel they have a strong role to play. We look forward to working with the pilot councils and the DWP to ensure local people receive a high level of service and support."

The twelve areas chosen to run pilots are:

- Bath and North East Somerset Council
- Birmingham City Council
- Caerphilly County Borough Council
- Dumfries and Galloway Council
- London Borough of Lewisham
- Melton and Rushcliffe Borough Councils (as a partnership)
- Newport City Council
- North Dorset District Council
- North Lanarkshire Council
- Oxford City Council
- West Dunbartonshire Council
- West Lindsey District Council

Two further pilots by Oldham Council and Wigan Council will be run as part of the Pathfinder preparations.

Universal Credit has been designed as an online service, but the Government understands that some people may still need face-to-face support.

The pilots will examine how councils can help to provide these services and how face-to-face services can help people to become digitally independent.

Further pilot projects are due to be developed after 2015 to set the longer term role for councils in supporting Universal Credit claimants.

### **Notes to Editors**

1. The choice of 12 areas was made following long lists presented to DWP by the COSLA, LGA, and the WLGA.
2. The local authority led pilots will complement work already underway as part of the preparation for Universal Credit, including Pathfinder and the direct payment demonstration project.
3. Universal Credit will replace income-based JSA, income-related ESA, Income Support (including SMI), Working Tax Credits, Child Tax Credits and Housing Benefit.
4. Universal Credit will help to lift as many as 350,000 children and 550,000 adults out of poverty.

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