

COMMITTEE REVIEW - UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND OTHER WELFARE BENEFIT CHANGES

Committee name	Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee
Officer reporting	Anisha Teji, Democratic Services Officer
Papers with report	None
Ward	All

HEADLINES

The Committee is undertaking a review into Universal Credit and other welfare benefit changes and how the Council can support residents through the transition to, and future successful management of, their Universal Credit (UC) claims.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee:

- 1) notes and comments on the information presented in this report.
- 2) listens to the witness evidence.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The agreed Terms of Reference for the review are set out below:

Terms of Reference

1. To understand the impact that the introduction of the full UC service has had in areas where it has been rolled out. To include the cumulative impact of the introduction of UC and other welfare benefit changes.
2. To understand the impact that UC, alongside other welfare benefit changes, is having and is expected to have on local residents in Hillingdon and on the income and costs of the Council, housing associations and other local organisations.
3. To examine how the Council services, housing associations and voluntary groups are supporting residents to transition to UC and manage their claims.
4. To make practical, prudent recommendations to Cabinet (and other bodies if applicable) from the Committee's findings to support residents transitioning to UC and to manage their claims.

Review update

Throughout the course of its review, the Committee heard from a variety of witnesses.

Date of witness session	Witnesses attended
Witness session 1 26 September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Debby Weller – Policy and Strategy Manager (Housing)• Inderpal Mudhar – Partnership Manager for The Department of Work and Pensions
Witness session 2 17 October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ellen Salkeld – Income Manager at Catalyst• Stuart Coleman – Head of Housing Management at The Barnet Group
Witness session 3 28 November 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rod Smith – Tenancy Management Team - Service Manager• Mark Billings – Homelessness - Housing Manager
Member site visit 5 December 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sukh – Customer Lead Manager for Hayes and Uxbridge• Inderpal Mudhar – Partnership Manager for The Department of Work and Pensions
Witness session 4 16 January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heather Brown – Director and Barbara Maccauley – Policy Manager from the Citizens Advice Hillingdon• Nigel Gee – Senior Mental Health Worker from MIND• Giles Stratchan – Uxbridge College Partnership Manager from Uxbridge College
Witness session 5 14 February 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nigel Gee – Senior Mental Health Worker from MIND• Inderpal Mudhar – Partnership Manager for The Department of Work and Pensions

At the meeting on 30 July 2018, Members agreed that the Committee's first review topic would be 'Universal Credit and Other Welfare Benefit Changes'. Following this agreement, Members heard from a variety of witnesses.

This information was set out within a draft final report, alongside the recommendations that were discussed at the meeting on 18 March 2019. This draft final report was circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting on 11 April 2019, and Members considered that further information was still required from the witnesses in order to properly explore matters in relation to mental health concerns.

The witnesses attending the meeting on 12 June 2019 are:

- Angela Wegener – Dash
- Inderpal Mudhar – the Department of Work and Pensions
- Heather Brown – CAB
- Nigel Gee – Hillingdon MIND

Implications on related Council policies

While much of this topic is set nationally set, for any changes locally, the role of the Policy Overview Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

Policy Overview Committees directly engage residents and external partners in the work they do.

Financial Implications

These are primarily for residents claiming UC, as set out in the background papers. There may also be an impact on the Council's finances in respect of residents being unable to pay rent and Council tax.

Legal Implications

The primary legislation relating to Universal Credit is the Welfare Reform Act 2012, with further regulations following thereafter.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Scoping Report

Previous Committee papers on the review published on the Council's website