
REPORT TO: LOCAL GOVERNMENT NORTH YORKSHIRE AND YORK

DATE: 12 JULY 2012

REPORT OF THE: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (RYEDALE)
PAUL CRESSWELL

TITLE OF REPORT: UNIVERSAL CREDIT (UC) PILOT

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report provides an update on the UC Pilot bid.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) worked with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to explore pilot working in preparation for Universal Credit. Following this exploratory work Lord Freud wrote to Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman of the LGA, confirming that the DWP would work with the LGA on the development of short term pilots, to help to ensure that local authorities are ready for the implementation of Universal Credit in 2013 and longer term pilots to help develop integrated working as well as more diverse model for delivering Universal Credit after 2015.

2.2 The bid prospectus was issued in April 2012 and the closing date for applications was the 18 May 2012.

2.3 The North Yorkshire districts submitted a joint bid, City of York Council submitted their own separate bid.

3.0 THE BID

3.1 From the submitted joint bid:

Main aims of your pilot – Service solutions, all at one point...

Our Pilot will provide a triage face to face service for advising, assessing and verifying working age claimants' entitlements to UC and for helping claimants into work - at over 20 locations and online, by phone and signposting at many more locations (up to over 60 "wider locations") using the County Council, community and partner agency selected sites. The pilot will offer visits at home and at the wider locations if needed and an ongoing internet digital offer through the high speed NYnet.

The Pilot will to some extent mirror the JCP current offers and will cross refer of course, but will concentrate on face to face with claimants with more complex or vulnerable needs. The Pilot will add value by also providing assistance on money management and ensure that details on job opportunities and "it pays you to work" calculations are provided – Benefits; debt advice; housing support, and council tax.

Our aim is to provide a focus on the needs of the claimant and their whole context or household and improve the collaboration and networking of the agencies that will make a difference to that person's circumstances.

A further aim of the Pilot is to ensure a problem solving approach when a person presents as needing assistance. Our core offer is a full UC triage service, validation and assessment and then working with DWP's appointed agency for processing and delivery, but sharing the accountability for successful resolution for the claimant and equipping them with life skills.

- 3.2 It had been hoped that participating in this bid stage could lead to pathfinder status at a later date; that is the Authorities undertaking processing and face to face contact for UC claimants on behalf of the DWP. The first tranche of pathfinders have already been announced, however participation at this stage if successful may lead to an opportunity to undertake this role for and on behalf of the DWP in the future.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 It is thought that the districts bid was strong and would allow the DWP and LGA to explore issues within a two tier area, where access to Job Centre Plus is limited.
- 4.2 The final date for approval of the pilot is unknown however the bid document suggested July/August 2012. The pilot ends before September 2013.