



Universal Credit and Welfare Update
Update 6

August 2017

The latest GB wide data on Universal Credit has now been released, showing details of claims through to 8th June 2017. It shows that:

- there were 540,000 claimants as of 8th June 2017
- 39% of claimants were in employment
- 59% of claimants are male
- 1.2 million claims have been made for Universal Credit up to 8 June 2017.

There were 21,674 Universal Credit claimants in Wales as of June 2017.

Further information is available here:

<https://tinyurl.com/ybhwh3ye>

Across the UK 101 jobcentres are operating full service. In July full service was introduced in 30 jobcentres and this is expected to increase to 50 per month from October.

In Wales full service commenced in Flintshire in April and Torfaen in July.

The full service roll-out schedule for Wales is as follows:

- October 2017: NPT and Wrexham
- November 2017: Newport
- December 2017: Swansea
- February 2018: Conwy, Denbighshire, Bridgend and Cardiff.
- March 2018: Carmarthenshire, Anglesey, Merthyr and Monmouthshire
- April 2018: Blaenau Gwent and Gwynedd
- May 2018: Caerphilly, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire
- June 2018: Vale of Glamorgan and Powys
- July 2018: RCT

Migration of legacy claimants is expected to commence in July 2019 if the system is ready, and is likely to conclude around March 2022.

The first welsh language claim took place in Torfaen in July. A welsh language version of the full service is still in development and is expected to be available in early 2018. In the interim a temporary solution is in place to assist. Claimants requesting the service in Welsh will have access to a Welsh speaking work coach and claimants are able to send and receive messages in Welsh via the online account.



1. UC Survey

The following information was collected under the fourth CHC UC survey.

33 organisations completed the survey for **December 2016**.

As at December 2016 there were 1438 **known** claimants of Universal Credit within the **sector in Wales**, 105 of which were new claims within December.

There were 471 Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs) in place (28.9%), 403 of which are for a Managed Payment (MP) and 219 include a Third Party Deduction (TPD). Processing times are averaging 30.5 days.

Arrears stand at £658,933 at an average of £500.71 per tenant.

Members generally report that the UC service (Live Service as of December 2016) has neither improved nor deteriorated since the last survey was undertaken.

You can analyse local claimant numbers through the DWP interactive map:

<https://tinyurl.com/y8r964sd>

The next CHC survey will be collected for information up until 31st June 2017 shortly.

2. UC Process Updates

2.1 Payments

DWP are focussed on improving the number of payments that are being made within the first assessment period. As of 19th June 80% of claimants had been paid all of their UC and housing costs by the end of the first assessment period. Out of the remaining 20%, over a third had not agreed their claimant commitment and the remaining two thirds required verification from the claimant.

2.2 Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) UC47 form

In April DWP implemented an improvement to the Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) UC47 application forms and related processes. Further information can be found on Yammer here: <https://tinyurl.com/y8uyitjl> DWP are continuing to review the form to see if it can be improved even further. If you have any comments on how it can be improved further please let us know.



2.3 Rent verification UC182 form

The DWP has updated its UC182 Rent Verification form to include the option for social landlords to apply for an Alternative Payment Arrangement via this form. This will hopefully enable early identification of Managed Payment Alternative Payment Arrangements at the new claims stage. Social Landlords can still request a Managed Payment Alternative Payment Arrangement at a later stage via the existing process, using the UC47 form, however by using UC182 you are ensuring that the APA is raised in the first assessment period.

2.4 Personal Budgeting Support

As a result of feedback DWP are looking to improve how vulnerable people requiring personal budgeting support are identified. They are currently trialling the addition of a question within the full service online claim to ask the claimant if they require help with budgeting, instead of the claimant having to declare this face to face. If the claimant ticks that they require support this will be fed to the service centre to action. This is currently being trialled and will be reviewed.

2.5 Rent changes/increases

DWP are currently reviewing how the rent changes process can be improved for both claimants and landlord in live and full service. CHC has provided feedback to DWP on the issues that had been raised by our members on Yammer. We will ensure to keep you updated as and when we hear more.

2.6 Landlord Portal

The landlord portal is now being trialled by four English landlords including Southwark Council and Curo. The portal is for new full service UC claims and any housing related change of circumstances which generate a new rent verification. The purpose of the portal is to make the transfer of information between DWP and the landlord much more efficient.

CHC raised with DWP that we are keen for Welsh social landlords to be involved in this pilot. We understand that the criterion for participating in the pilot is currently being worked on and we will update you as soon as we hear more.

2.7 Refreshed UC and rented housing guide

DWP have revised the UC and rented housing guide for landlords that sits on GOV.uk. This now includes topics that landlords regularly ask us questions about, such as information to support landlords in applying for a 'Managed Payment to Landlord', part of the 'Alternative Payment Arrangement' suite of products. The new



guidance will also provide more information on how Universal Credit full service 'Managed Payments' are paid.

The guide can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/y75zrzd7>

DWP have also produced a new set of UC YouTube videos to provide an overview of the full service. These are available at <http://www.youtube.com/UniversalCreditinAction>

2.8 UC welsh landlords roundtable with DWP

CHC has organised the next UC roundtable meeting to take place on Thursday 28th September. Please let us know if there are any topics or queries that you would like discussed at this meeting ASAP. We have already requested for DWP to give an update and explain the future plans for trusted partner status and the landlord portal. We will circulate a note of the discussions to all members following the meeting.

3 Personal Independent Payments

The Government committed, in legislation (section 89 of Welfare Reform Act 2012), to carry out two independent reviews of PIP, in recognition of the scale of the challenge in implementing the new benefit. The Second Independent Review of the PIP Assessment by Paul Gray was published at the end of March 2017: <https://tinyurl.com/ycqt3vbf>. The review has highlighted some areas of concern, most notably the quality and consistency of assessments, claimant trust in decisions and the Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) process. The review has also identified variation in awards between and within regions.

The latest recommendations build upon recommendations from the First review and focus on four main themes:

- Quality and consistency,
- Further evidence,
- Assessment and,
- Transparency and Trust.

DWP officials have begun working on the response. They are having regular discussions both internally and externally (stakeholders) ensuring that they will be in a position to respond later this year. Improvements have been made to PIP since the first review however DWP appreciate that more needs to be done. They are considering a range of opportunities to improve the assessment process, to drive up the quality and consistency of decisions and to ensure the best possible claimant experience.

The Welsh DWP Strategic Partnership Stakeholder Board are planning to hold a session to review and raise concerns over the implementation of PIP in due course. If you have any comments that you would like to feed in to inform this session please contact CHC.



4 Bedroom Tax

On 1st April changes came into force to allow an extra bedroom when either a disabled child or disabled non-dependant adult reasonably requires overnight care from a non-resident carer, and to allow disabled adult couples an extra bedroom if their LA determines that they cannot reasonably share as a result of a member of the couple's disability. Further information can be found on Yammer here: <https://tinyurl.com/yb2eaov3>

5 Community Partners

Community Partners is a UK wide project with the aim to provide better employment support for those with disabilities and health conditions. The programme comes from the plans contained within the October 2016 work, health and disability Green Paper. Community Partners is a 12 month long project (with the possibility of extension) and aspires to halve the disability employment gap and support 1 million people with disabilities into work. The focus will be on embedding support so that when the project ends it will leave a legacy of improved support for disabled people.

Community Partner teams are now in place in each Jobcentre district across the UK. They will commence three key areas of work:

- Build knowledge and skills of JCP staff to support people with health conditions and disabilities.
- Identify, source and promote new forms of provision for claimants to access. This will include developing a network of support organisations and piloting ways of sharing this information with JCP staff.
- Work with local employers through employer engagement schemes to build awareness about recruiting, employing and retaining people with health conditions and disabilities.

If you have any questions on this programme contact your district lead community partner through your local Jobcentre.

6 Money Advice Service Money Management Tool

The Money Advice Service (MAS) are creating a money management tool specifically on UC that RSLs or any organisation can embed onto their website. The tool asks a number of basic questions to provide a range of advice and support, including signposting the user to other organisations. It also provides the user with a list of tasks such as for example contacting their LA about DHP, paying back arrears, contacting their landlord, opening a bank account etc. This tool has been tested with UC claimants and it has so far received positive feedback.



The performance of the tool will be evaluated once it has reached 1000 users. If you are interested in being an early adopter of this tool please contact lee.appleyard@moneyadvice.service.org.uk

It is expected that the tool will be ready for release in August.

You may already be aware that MAS also have a number of advice leaflets on a range of topics including UC that housing association can order and share with tenants. Each landlord can request up to 2000 a year per leaflet and these can be ordered online at: <https://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/articles/free-printed-guides>

7 Supported Accommodation Review

DWP are working closely with DCLG on the publication of the Green Paper that was due in the Spring of 2017, but is now planned for the Autumn. This will include the Government's response to the public consultation and the joint Communities & Local Government and Work & Pensions committee report.

CHC have lobbied the UK Government to retain a significant proportion of the funding for housing costs in supported accommodation within the benefits system. Our response to the joint committee inquiry has been taken on board by the cross party inquiry, which has called for the creation of a 'Supported Housing Allowance (SHA)', which would accurately reflect the costs of providing supported accommodation, in place of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). The top-up fund would remain under this model, but it is envisaged that it would need to be accessed for a minority of supported accommodation units, as the SHA would cover most rents and service charges. The Green Paper will indicate to what extent the Inquiry's report has been taken into account by UK Government.

In Wales, we continue to work closely with Welsh Government to design a proposed funding model for April 2019 onwards, on the assumption that the policy will go ahead as is currently planned. We have held a number of consultation events both internally to guide our policy stances, and externally to give members direct access to the lead civil servant working on the policy. Further consultation events will be held during the months leading up to April 2019 to influence Welsh Government.

If you would like to discuss any supported accommodation funding policy issues further, please contact Will-Atkinson@chcymru.org.uk

8 Local Housing Allowance

CHC is working with Welsh Government, CIH and WLGA to identify the anticipated scale of the impact of local housing allowance on general needs from April 2019. As part of this work we are exploring the following:

- improvements to or an alternative method of calculating housing costs for social general needs housing



- the impact of ending the freeze and returning LHA rates to the true 30th percentile or the original 50th percentile
- the boundaries of the existing BRMAs and the impact of altering these
- mitigating the impact of the policy on social housing general needs

The first meeting with Welsh Government took place in May and the note from the meeting can be found here: <https://www.yammer.com/chcmembers/#/files/89273068>

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 30th August and we will circulate a note of the outcomes from this meeting shortly after. In the meantime we are very keen to hear how you are modelling the impacts within your organisation so that we can share some of the processes and results at the next meeting and see how we can identify the sector-wide impact. If you are happy to share your analysis please contact hayley-macnamara@chcymru.org.uk

9 Your contacts at Community Housing Cymru

If you have any comments or queries on the content of this briefing or any wider Universal Credit or Welfare related issues, please contact:

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