

# Finance Panel

## Agenda

### Supplemental Agenda

Friday 22 March 2013  
11.30am

Millbank Room (8<sup>th</sup> Floor)  
Local Government house  
Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3HZ

**To:** Members of the Finance Panel  
**cc:** Named officers for briefing purposes



## Supplemental Agenda

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### Finance Panel

22 March 2013

11.30am

The Milbank Room, (8<sup>th</sup> Floor), Local Government House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ

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### **PART 1: FORMAL BOARD MEETING**

**11.30AM – 1.00PM**

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## **Welfare Reform: A role for councils in Universal Credit**

### **Purpose of report**

Update and to seek a steer.

### **Summary**

The statutory framework for Universal Credit (UC) will progressively remove local government's role in benefits processing for working-age claimants. LGA members have always considered benefit claimants will still be people to whom councils have a range of inescapable legal and moral duties.

As a result of much work by the LGA family and partners over the past 18 months the Department for Work and Pensions has begun to recognise that there may be a potential role for local government in the delivery of frontline support for UC. This has resulted in the establishment of the Face to Face pilots programme and the Local Support Services Task Force.

The task force recently published the Local Support Services Framework and is seeking feedback from all local authorities by 15 March. This report provides initial indications of the feedback the LGA has received so far. There is also an update on the work of the Face to Face pilots.

### **Recommendations**

That the Finance Panel:

1. note the feedback so far on the Local Support Services Framework and add its own views;
2. note the feedback from the Executive;
3. endorse the approach suggested at paragraph 18 for taking forward the work with DWP on the Local Support Services Framework; and
4. note the progress made by the Local Authority Face to Face pilots.

### **Action**

As directed by Member.

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## Welfare Reform: A role for councils in Universal Credit

### Background

1. The statutory framework for Universal Credit (UC) will progressively remove local government's role in benefits processing for working-age claimants. LGA members have always considered this would not in fact abolish councils' role in supporting benefit claimants, who will still be people to whom councils have a range of inescapable legal and moral duties. Nor will it stop benefit claimants looking to their councils for help.
2. As a result of much work by the LGA family and partners over the past 18 months the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has begun to recognise that there may be a potential role for local government in the delivery of frontline support for UC. Consequently the DWP and LGA established the Local Government UC Face to Face pilot programme. A specialist "task force" was also established between the LGA, together with WLGA and CoSLA, and DWP. This group produced the UC Local Support Services Framework. Both the establishment of the pilot programme and the task force has been reported previously to the Finance Panel.

### Local support services framework: Feedback on consultation

3. The Local Support Services (LSS) Framework was published on 11 February. The framework sets out more clearly than before the planned pace and scale of the roll-out of UC (see [Appendix A](#) for an account of the government's current plan for the timetable). It also describes the sort of support services for UC claimants which councils might either provide or commission, should they wish, and the kind of partnership with DWP that might involve. There is also an indication of how those services might be paid for and managed.
4. A letter was sent out from Lord Freud asking all Chief Executives to comment on the document by 15 March. The LGA also sent out a letter from Sir Merrick to all Leaders encouraging them to ensure councils' comments are shaped by members' views. On Friday 8 March the LGA held a Universal Credit Conference. Over 100 delegates attended and 60 local authorities were represented. Lord Freud was the main speaker at the conference and was also able to have a private meeting with elected members from the pilot authorities.
5. The resounding message from councils at the conference was that they clearly wanted to help deliver localised support services for UC claimants. However, they now needed more detailed information about the implementation of UC. In particular information about the phasing of the roll out was seen as key to enabling councils to resource their teams adequately. About two-thirds of the councils represented at the conference had briefed elected members on the issues, set up a project group and identified resources to work on UC. Only about a third of councils reported that they had been contacted by their local DWP managers about the issues, and only about a third felt they had effective local working relationships with their District JCP Manager. The key messages from the conference and other feedback we have received so far are outlined below:

### **Local Government's involvement in UC**

6. The general feeling is that local government does want to be involved in the process of supporting residents to deal with UC. Local councils are well placed to co-ordinate the types of support services envisaged in the Framework, as they know their local communities and claimants and have existing links with social landlords, voluntary and community sector partners and others. However, the benefit cap is the immediate and main priority for most councils at the moment. Councils also still feel that further work is needed to define their role within UC.

### **DWP's perception of the role**

7. Authorities feel the Framework is unclear as to whether DWP anticipates local authorities playing a role in the administration of UC in the long term. The Framework itself refers to "a more diverse model of service provision" in the future. Clarification around this is essential in order to assist local authorities in deciding what role they want to play. As one council said "We are not a stepping stone to bail out DWP in the short term". One important issue in play here is whether councils should be seen as providers – in which case Ministers' desire for a more diverse provider base does imply that their role may only be temporary - or as commissioners – in which case councils could be delivering what Ministers are after by commissioning a diverse provider landscape from day one of the new system.

### **Roll out timetable**

8. Although existing claimants will not start to migrate onto UC until 2014, councils need to know now what the detailed roll out schedules will look like so that service planning can be undertaken now, particularly with regards to housing benefit staff. Councils were unclear about how many claimants they should be expecting in phase 2<sup>1</sup> and phase 3 of UC roll out.

### **Success criteria**

9. Councils should not be held accountable for success criteria they do not have direct control over. For example, improving work incentives and increasing the number of people in employment are suggested as success criteria within the Framework. However, it is proposed that mainstream central government job schemes will remain outside the scope of the Framework. Councils also think that the success criteria should be applied to the partnerships and not them alone. Councils are also sceptical about the suggestion that support services should aim to reduce demand on advisory services over time. This is not the experience of local authorities or local advice agencies. Councils' preference as expressed to us so far is for success criteria based on processes.

### **Exemptions and alternative payment arrangements**

10. There was a very clear message from councils that they feel they have a definite role to play in determining exemptions to the standard UC rules (for example, allowing direct payment of rent to landlords). Local councils have local knowledge about residents which would be crucial when making a decision such as payment exemption or alternative

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<sup>1</sup> Phase 2 is limited rollout from October 2013 until end of March 2014



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payments. Currently DWP sees this work as its sole responsibility but is willing to consider a role for councils in recommending to DWP claimants who ought to benefit from exemptions. Councils clearly want to be more involved in this area.

**Provision of work related support**

11. Authorities were mixed about providing or commissioning this unless they are funded to provide it.

**Housing related issues**

12. Councils have told us they feel there is currently not enough information about this in the Framework. The partnership around this requires further consideration as it is a crucial issue for local authorities, particularly given concerns about how direct payments will impact on the finances of councils and social landlords.

**Local Delivery Partnerships**

13. Local authorities welcome the opportunity to establish the partnerships but are worried that the government's approach to welfare reform currently isn't joined up leaving councils locally to make sense of things for residents. It was also felt by a number of authorities that a huge cultural change is needed within Jobcentre Plus as they currently work on a very centralised model. Some councils considered that working across two tiers of local government would present specific issues in their areas.

**Funding model and incentive structure**

14. There are a number of issues raised:
  - 14.1. In the current financial climate councils are dubious about taking on the responsibility of delivering frontline support to UC claimants for a limited time. Councils felt that funding needs to be guaranteed for a three year period in order to make it worth the upfront investment.
  - 14.2. The framework document recognises that UC will introduce some changes that will necessitate increased service requirements. Assurance is needed that these will be fully funded.
  - 14.3. Further clarification is sought around the term "shared strategic objectives" and how these will/won't be funded.
  - 14.4. The funding of housing benefit staff over the next few years needs to be clarified to assist planning processes.
  - 14.5. Lord Freud stated at the conference that "We will pay you to do new things but not to do the same thing". This needs further clarification, particularly as it creates the risk that both DWP and councils will focus on measuring and prescribing processes at the expense of the operational flexibility that may be needed to help clients in complicated circumstances or who have unforeseen needs.

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- 14.6. Most councils are uncomfortable with the idea that local funding should sit with DWP District Managers. If councils are to be held accountable for something they want to hold the funding for it; indeed, some councils saw it as a conflict of interest for DWP to hold the local budgets as proposed.
- 14.7. Further detail required around incentivisation.
15. Further issues which have been flagged up via the Local Government Delivery Council and sixteen further submissions from individual councils are:
  - 15.1. Continued concern about the “digital by default” assumption in UC and the fact that although many people have internet access via their mobile phones, this will not be enough to enable clients to access the UC online system.
  - 15.2. Questionable capacity of voluntary sector to provide level of support DWP is expecting.
  - 15.3. On-going reliance of those with complex cases on local authorities.
  - 15.4. Some councils feel unable to provide financial advice.
  - 15.5. Any funding provided needs to be new money and not top-sliced from elsewhere in local government.
  - 15.6. Funding needs to be looked at locally and not through a national framework or calculated through a national formula.
  - 15.7. Some authorities would prefer a payment system which provides core funding with a top-up of outcome based payments.
  - 15.8. Payment by results per claimant could be a perverse incentive for Local Partnerships.

**Feedback from LGA Executive**

16. At the Executive meeting on Thursday 14 March 2013 the following points were raised about the Framework:
  - 16.1. TUPE issues need to be resolved.
  - 16.2. Learning from the local authority Face to Face pilots needs to be shared across the sector.
  - 16.3. Funding for UC must not be top sliced from elsewhere.
  - 16.4. Greater funding needs to be made available for libraries if they are to provide IT facilities for accessing UC.
  - 16.5. Clarity needed around who will be banker of last resort.
17. The Executive endorsed the recommendations highlighted in section 18 of this report.

### **Next steps with DWP**

18. If we are going to avoid leaving it to DWP to impose its preferred solutions on councils and continue to influence developments, we will need to continue to influence the department's thinking and engage. We therefore suggest the following three next steps:
- 18.1. working together with WLGA and CoSLA, we should provide an overarching written response to the draft Local Support Services Framework on behalf of the sector, drawing together the views of councils;
  - 18.2. we should take forward urgent discussions on the key issues, including those identified in this paper, within the framework of the joint Task Force that developed the Framework; and
  - 18.3. we should add a senior-level political dialogue between LGA lead members and DWP Ministers to guide that process.
19. We have also agreed with DWP that there should be a more powerful and senior official-level group bringing together the project's SRO and council chief executives, among others, to work on Universal Credit issues. Members may be aware, however, that this is a time of transition among the senior official structure of the UC programme and that group is not due to meet until May.

### **UC Local Authority Face To Face Pilots**

20. The Face to Face pilots are all progressing well. **Appendix B** is a briefing paper about the work of each individual pilot. It should be noted that some of the pilots took almost three months to get up and started as they needed to recruit additional staff to help deliver the extra work created by the pilot. We are going to work with the pilots over the next 6 months to organise a programme of events on a regional basis to help share learning.
21. Some of the initial findings from the pilots are that effective triaging can increase the uptake of benefits. Birmingham City Council has identified an additional £6million worth of benefit (predominantly housing benefit) which their residents were not claiming. Bath and North East Somerset have found that only 50% of their client base has access to a PC and of this group 40% of them need support to use IT. They are also working closely with clients to provide them with financial advice. However, they are currently finding that although appointments are being made with financial advisers clients are not turning up for them. Lambeth is doing some innovative work looking at providing budget accounts for claimants as they have identified that 93% of their sample client base has never been responsible for paying their own rents.

### **Financial implications**

22. This is core work provided for within the LGA's policy and workforce team budgets.




**Phased introduction of Universal Credit: Planned Timetabled**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Phase</b>	<b>Implementation Activity</b>
April 2013	Phase 1 Pathfinder	UC starts in the four pathfinder authorities with single jobseekers: Tameside, Warrington, Oldham and Wigan.
Oct 2013 - March 2014	Phase 2 Staged	Extended coverage of UC rolled out, staged across GB.
April 2014 – 2017	Phases 3+ General coverage	UC national implementation due to be completed by end of 2017.



**Appendix B: 2013 Focus LA Led Pilots Monthly Update January 2013**

Key Activities for February 	
<b>Bath &amp; North East Somerset Council</b>	
Aims	The Bath and North East Somerset pilot is city focussed and aims to reduce complexity and provide mediated support. It will provide face to face contact, identifying those customers most in need. This activity will complement the Customer Access Programme which is about delivering standard operating models using the web as the key delivery mechanism.
Update	Piloting activity was launched in January; claimants calling at the one stop shop are being put through the triage process. A JCP employment advisor is available in the one stop shop to provide employability support. Bath one stop shop has been added to the UK online database of national free and cheap internet access sites. Bath has increased its range of support partners with engagement with National Careers Service and the Money Advice Service.
<b>Birmingham City Council</b>	
Aims	This pilot will deliver channel shift by increasing self service and reducing digital exclusion. The pilot will identify, through triage, the level of intervention required to help customers sustain and manage their finances and improve digital literacy and financial capability. It will also introduce an online Digital Logbook which will be a personal account for individuals containing references to support services.
Update	Birmingham successfully launched their online One account to allow customers to access their service online. Birmingham has also launched their Digital Logbook for all new tenants, allowing them to manage and retain their tenancy online, with such things as budgeting support advice and energy efficiency initiatives. Other Local Authorities are showing an interest in the Digital Logbook. The four Letting Suites have identified <b>£6.4m</b> in unclaimed benefits (£4.55m HB / £850k CT / £1m DWP) for tenants since their launch in July 2012. <b>80%</b> of new tenants are applying for their HB/CT online.
<b>London Borough of Lewisham</b>	
Aims	The pilot will develop a model that assesses vulnerability and provides a face to face mechanism for providing intensive support where needed. It comprises 3 stages, design, delivery and evaluation and will develop a holistic approach bringing together advice on employment, housing, financial and digital inclusion. The aim is to complete assessment of individuals in the first three months of the delivery phase. This pilot will begin to impact on claimants during January and it is anticipated that over 1000 will be affected.
Update	The design phase of the pilot completed in December and there is now a live triage and support planning system linked to a corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM). The pilot has also commissioned and is using a bespoke better off calculator to track the impact of UC and the cap on benefits both in and out of work. During January the team have been prototyping the end to end process in a live environment with 100 claimants. Of the 100 claimants, contact was made with 81 and 44 were identified as needing a holistic face to face support appointment. The better off calculator is proving to be effective in building the case for action and the biggest areas of concern for affected residents are employment and housing. The outcomes of the prototype day have been reviewed at a half day 're-design' workshop and will be going live with a refined process for a further batch of 250 residents.

<b>Melton Borough Council</b>	
Aims	<p>This pilot has two key aims. The first looks at improving access to, and take up of online services for working age claimants. This includes understanding and documenting the barriers faced by those who feel unable to self-serve or those who need to be supported to do so. A combination of customer insight, local authority and partner data will enable the pilot to capture customer journeys and behaviours in order to target and tailor plans to meet the needs of customers in specific groups.</p> <p>The second deals with the council's most vulnerable customers in the community. The pilot aims to identify who these people are and how best to support them towards becoming more financially independent and ready for work. This will be achieved by working closely with a small group, on an in-depth personal basis, to try to meet their specific individual needs. Partnership working is key to helping Melton achieve their aims, and they will integrate partner services wherever possible.</p>
Update	<p>The pilot steering group took place on 15 January at which all members agreed to the formation of a Delivery Partnership Group the aim of which is to provide a single forum at which partners can raise and resolve issues. Work is underway to develop the terms of reference for the group and the first meeting date has been set for 18.02.13 and invites sent to all identified key partners.</p> <p>The pilot has been approached by the BBC regarding potential coverage of the pilot as part of a regional politics TV programme. The local authority has been working with the BBC to develop programme content which will include feedback from a resident who has benefited from help and support provided by the local authority's employment and skills officer and its partners.</p> <p>A local Town Forum Event is planned in Melton on 19 February in which the Council and partners are fully engaged. The event will promote general awareness of the Welfare Reform agenda to local residents and help inform future planning – invites have been sent to all working age customers in the area together with promotion of the event also being made via twitter and the website.</p> <p>Good progress continues to be made around delivering the first online service due to go live in April 13.</p>



<b>North Dorset District Council</b>	
Aims	<p>Their proposal is to work in specified rural areas to provide services from CAB, Spectrum (the local housing provider), Jobcentre Plus, and Credit Union, to deliver money advice, budgeting and employability support in a rural environment and to learn lessons about the most effective approaches to deliver positive outcomes for remote customers. This will deliver lessons around engagement with online access in remote areas. The key focus of the proposals is a deprived ward in Blandford and a remote village.</p>
Update	<p>Work is ongoing to finalise the first evaluation report. The pilot has been operating since 1 December 2012, primarily dealing with face to face and telephone claimants. Claimants are being encouraged to complete online benefit and housing forms, either personally or with mediated support. So far the main issues for claimants are not having access to a pc or broadband access. North Dorset is very rural and broadband access in some areas is limited or non-existent. Working with partners, additional public access points have been provided around the District for claiming online.</p> <p>The next stage is to undertake home visits to vulnerable groups. The pilot is focussing on more deprived wards within the District, which is also likely to impact on access.</p> <p>Training for housing association tenants on money management has commenced. The training is being provided by Adult Learning with assistance from the First Dorset Credit Union and the intention is to extend this to the wider community in the pilot area.</p> <p>All employers in North Dorset have been contacted, requesting information on job vacancies. This has demonstrated the challenge small businesses experience because of the lack of expertise in recruitment. The voluntary job clubs are now assisting with advertisements and preliminary selection. The job clubs have helped a number of people into work.</p> <p>To date, detailed learning is limited but this will build as further information is gathered through surveys and building foundations to provide a more accurate evaluation of living in a rural area.</p>
<b>Oxford City Council</b>	
Aims	<p>The aim of the pilot is to identify customers who may be adversely impacted by the benefit reforms and is primarily intended to assist claimants into work</p>
Update	<p>A Project Manager is now in post. Data analysis has revealed around 1000 Oxford claimants will be impacted by under occupancy changes and 150 households by the Benefit Cap. Under occupancy letters were sent to customers at the end of January. The Oxford pilot project will triage callers responding to under occupancy letters where further advice or supports are required. The revised benefit cap will be analysed to inform claimant targeting. A number of scripts have been developed to support the triage process. Partner organisations have also been approached to start discussions around the delivery of the support.</p>

<b>Rushcliffe Borough Council</b>	
Aims	Rushcliffe aim to deliver an improved service to working age claimants by offering an integrated service through multi-skilled front line advisers at their Community Services Centre in West Bridgford and a number of outreach locations throughout the borough. Local authority staff are already experts in council, housing and police matters and will work with partners, including Jobcentre Plus, to gain the skills and knowledge required to provide job broking services and advice, to support claimants in accessing online services. They will also offer advice on financial management. Partnership working will enable more enquiries to be resolved at the first point of contact and provision of self service terminals with mediated support where necessary, will move claimants towards independence.
Update	<p>The pilot has been working with Jobcentre Plus to enable some provision of Jobcentre services from Rushcliffe Community Services Centre in West Bridgford. A member of Jobcentre staff has started to operate from the Centre one day a week and is providing advice to customers on job search, helping with on line access, and also working with Council and Police staff based at the Centre to improve their knowledge of Jobcentre Plus activities and services. Jobcentre Plus and Rushcliffe are continuing to work together to further develop the service provided.</p> <p>Rushcliffe has launched a new look self-service site following feedback from customers. Customer surveys about the site have been reviewed to ensure the capture of as much information as possible about reasons why customers are not choosing self service and also what services they access if they do choose to go on line. The new site featured in a marketing campaign which included a press release and a notification to 15,000 residents. Marketing will continue with a flyer in every council tax bill in March</p> <p>The local authority continues to forge strong links with partners and has recently met with Nottinghamshire County Council and will meet again to further explore opportunities for working together.</p>
<b>West Lindsey District Council</b>	
Aims	The pilot is aimed at ensuring benefits are: easily accessible; provided in an efficient way and allows for the discovery or prevention of fraud. The pilot will also ensure links with other service providers by providing a seamless process through the joint working of services provided by WLDC, Jobcentre Plus, Lincolnshire County Council, third sector partners and CAB.
Update	<p>New public access PCs are now in place and available for use. A joint LA/DWP team is now located in the Guildhall. Upskilling is taking place on both sides to enable all team members to deal holistically with customers.</p> <p>This pilot has a phased approach starting in the Guildhall and then moving to include children's centres, libraries and other community venues. There may be some slippage in start dates for the phases due to a delay in the production of the on line housing benefit form. Initial meetings have however been held with all proposed venues and briefing meetings are in place.</p>

<b>Dumfries &amp; Galloway Council</b>	
Aims	<p>The authority recognises that there is presently very little in terms of services for Housing Benefit and Council tax online. A survey conducted by the authority 18 months ago concluded that only 2% of users wanted on-line access to services. The LA will look to change tenant behaviour and develop evaluation to monitor the impact. Broadband access is around 42% for the area, RSL's, CAB and other partners such as Women's Aid will encourage access. They recognise they are at an early stage for setting up digital by default but will pursue a system of self service. This is a channel shift rather than more resource.</p>
Update	<p>The number of claimants utilising the HB on line service dropped by 6% in month. There was a corresponding rise in paper applications and the LA is analysing findings to determine the contributory causes. To test the effectiveness of the HB on line application attendees at a Computer course currently being run have been asked to complete a "mock" application with a view to assessing standards, access and quality.</p> <p>The second phase of the pilot-Financial Awareness commenced in February with a session delivered to 9 members of the Work Club .A third of attendees identified debts with 1 person requesting 1-1 support. JCP have been involved in discussing how to support and initiate referrals from disadvantaged groups.</p>
<b>North Lanarkshire Council</b>	
Aims	<p>The intention is to target around 6,000-7,000 council tenants who will be affected by the new "under occupancy" rules and to look at those that have the worst financial impact.</p> <p>There is a clear recognition that the people being targeted have the highest levels of poverty and poor levels of tenancy sustainment. Many live in workless households where there is generational worklessness. The advice they intend to offer will be based on individual needs, not just welfare changes, and will include information and advice around returning to work.</p> <p>The intention is to set up a new system which will compare council rents to information on under occupancy and use data such as birthdays (e.g., someone about to reach 18) to enable early intervention to be initiated especially with the vulnerable. Housing and social work will provide a conduit to direct customers to a range of services based on their individual needs (including employment and advice services).</p> <p>Historically Housing Benefit services have sat alone but this pilot will provide links to other services.</p>
Update	<p>From 4<sup>th</sup> February LA staffs started follow up visits to 1300 council tenants likely to be financially affected by the 25% under occupancy charge. This exercise is due to be completed by early March. Information will be gathered on subsequent referrals to Financial Capability and Tenancy Sustainment teams.</p> <p>RSL tenants have been contacted, similarly to above, initially by letter and with follow up calls if there is no initial response but with mixed success. To date 65% have replied to questionnaires and other contact methods are now being looked at to increase engagement.</p> <p>Benefit Cap claimants are also being contacted to determine financial capability status and will be offered advice services.</p>

<b>West Dunbartonshire Council</b>	
Aims	The key focus of the pilot is to evaluate the delivery of a new service called <b>Working 4U</b> . The proposal is to fund additional evaluation, specifically to focus on the 'customer experience'. This evaluation will look at how customers are benefiting from the pilot in terms of the cultural change and getting them ready for the introduction of Universal Credit
Update	<p>The authority now has a secondee in place to carry out face to face, telephone and focus group interviews to evaluate the Working 4U service. Initial findings from a mixture of current attendees and recent leavers will assess how many services the customer undertook [ie-financial/employability/advice] and how effective the service was in meeting the customer's expectations.</p> <p>The JCP District Manager has expressed a strong desire to fully support Working 4U and is keen to use the evaluation to work jointly with the LA to enhance the customer experience.</p>
<b>Caerphilly County Borough Council</b>	
Aims	The overall aim of the pilot is to reduce the need for mediated support for claimants. This will be achieved by increasing their awareness of the move to Universal Credit and its capacity for self-service via greater access to digital services and access to work. The pilot will also explore the viability and efficacy of enhancing support available to help citizens make claims within their communities (eg, in local libraries) and from agencies other than the Council, such as Registered Social Landlords
Update	Digital Fridays are being delivered in 4 libraries and proving to be successful with approx. 20-25 attendees at each session. UC officers are carrying out floor walking sessions in Customer First centres to support claimants with self-serving. The on-line Housing Benefit and Change of Circumstance forms went live on the CCBC website in mid-January and <b>17%</b> of new claims were completed on-line by the end of the month. Financial awareness training sessions for frontline staff have been agreed with CAB. A fast track referral process with the JCP has been agreed and is being trialled
<b>Newport City Council</b>	
Aims	The key focus is to greatly increase the number of customers accessing services via non-mediated channels, and will support their activity with an aggressive marketing/publicity campaign. Newport recently introduced an Information Station where they have co-located their face to face services, including partner organisations eg, Jobcentre Plus, CAB, and RSL's. These partners are keen to be involved in the pilot and extend their service to further support work service activities and financial inclusion. Newport will mobilise Customer Service Officers into their Information Stations to encourage customers away from face to face support and onto self-serve machines.
Update	Newport's advertising campaign 'Save Time, Go online' was launched on 28th January with billboards and posters being displayed in Supermarkets, train stations, bus shelters and petrol pumps across the Newport area. All project staff are now in place and finalising their training with JCP involvement. Touch screen kiosks have also now gone live within the Newport area allowing customers online access to council services, including at Newport's Information Station, a one stop shop for council services (JCP also have a presence here part time).

<b>Pathfinder area</b>	
<b>Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council</b>	
Aims	The pilot aims to reduce the demand for face-to-face support by encouraging the use of on line services. It will also improve community resilience and self-help by equipping a broad range of community leaders at a local level with a tailored training programme who would offer peer-to-peer support initially focusing on specific BME groups within the borough.
Update	The sub group dealing with the specific tasks of the Face to Face pilot is now in place and we are in the process of identifying and setting up engagement with our BME (Black and Ethnic Minority) Groups and identifying other vulnerable groups. The procurement of our Housing Benefit e-form is almost complete and we will use this to allow our team to demonstrate the ease in which an electronic claim can be made. Our team are about to receive a course on Personal Budgeting Support (PBS) so that they can discuss this with the groups they engage with. This course will form the basis of the course which is being developed for PBS in Pathfinder from 29 April 2012 where a customer has a payment exception.
<b>Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council</b>	
Aims	The pilot aims to increase on line services and build confidence in self service when using them. It also aims to give individuals the ability to achieve financial independence through increased earnings and the ability to earn and manage their money well, providing claimants with the skills and knowledge to achieve budgetary competence.
Update	<p>Wigan has set an initial Programme Delivery Board with Key stakeholders for Welfare Reform. A Project group has been established specific to Universal Credit. Wigan has already begun to see an increase of unsupported claims for the target group.</p> <p>The specification of the 'Digital Training Course for Beginners' has been drafted and will be delivered by Digital Inclusion Champions. Work has begun with the Ebenefits form provider to track and monitor progress of trainees that undertake the course. This will be interactive and encourage customers to take the online training away and continue to interact online.</p> <p>The specification for the 'Made of Money' course has been drafted and commissioned to two local stakeholders. Partnerships with credit unions have been established and an option of accessing bank accounts and low cost loans is in place.</p>

