



Department for Work & Pensions

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In February this year I published the Local Support Services Framework, which was developed in partnership with local authorities and sets out the principles for providing support for claimants with additional or complex needs to help them make and manage Universal Credit claims and prepare for work.

The Framework sought comments on the proposed approach and I am pleased to be able to confirm that we have received 149 responses from across the local government, housing and voluntary sectors. This feedback will be invaluable as we develop the local delivery partnerships that will assist claimants in the new system.

We are recording and analysing the feedback in detail and will be using it in three main ways:

- To finalise aspects of the design of the framework that we need in place before Universal Credit is rolled out more widely – for example, the details of how funding will be arranged and managed;
- To inform the development of overarching and local partnership agreements that will be put in place over the coming months;
- To help us develop a revised framework that will provide planning baselines for 2014/15.

Responses to the consultation strongly endorsed the Delivery Partnerships Approach to providing localised support, and highlighted a range of existing partnerships that have the potential to deliver local services for Universal Credit claimants. These included Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland, local authority led Welfare Reform Groups and local Economic Regeneration Partnerships.

In addition, many of you consider it important that partnerships include a wide range of organisations to ensure good local knowledge and make the most of existing services. We remain committed to supporting localism and will highlight examples of inclusive and innovative partnerships in the revised framework document which will be published in October this year.

Some of you suggested additions to the list of vulnerable claimant categories set out in the framework or emphasised the importance of thinking beyond “categories” when delivering services. I concur with this view and am keen

that, while claimant support should be holistic and joined-up, it should also be tailored to meet differing and individual needs.

Many of you also suggested there was a need to more clearly distinguish between those claimants who need only a little help to engage with Universal Credit, and those who may need longer term support to move towards financial independence. We will continue to discuss these issues with our reference groups with a view to reflecting our learning in our approach to funding and outcomes, and in the revised framework.

The need for clarity about funding and associated outcomes was a central concern in many responses. Work is already underway, through the Local Support Services Taskforce, to develop a detailed funding instrument. In addition, we will be working with a range of stakeholders to develop an approach to outcomes that balances the need for certainty about funding for service providers with the need to achieve positive outcomes for claimants and value for money for the taxpayer. The funding instrument will address key questions, such as the minimum offer for local support services, and the way in which both funding and outcomes should reflect variations in local needs (e.g. to take account of factors like rurality and levels of deprivation). We hope to be able to say more about the funding instrument over the next couple of months.

In developing the framework we drew on insights from organisations working directly with claimants, and worked in close partnership with Local Authorities Associations. As we work towards the national roll out of Universal Credit, and accompanying Local Support Services we will continue these conversations with local authorities, housing providers and the voluntary and community sector through the work of the Taskforce and Reference Groups.

Locally, our JobCentre Plus District Managers are already working to support the development of partnerships that will deliver services to support claimants. Responses to the framework, as well as learning from the Direct Payment Demonstration Projects and Local Authority led Pilots, will inform this work.

Universal Credit will make work pay – so that people are better off in work. It is essential that claimants with additional needs are supported to be successful in using the new system, to move towards independence and, wherever appropriate, to find work or better paid work.

I look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you to make sure this happens.

Lord Freud
Minister for Welfare Reform

Weblink to the framework: www.dwp.gov.uk/ucla