

Findings from the Evaluation of the Universal Support delivered locally trials

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Summary:

This research presents findings from Evaluation of the Universal Support *delivered locally* trials (USdl).

Universal Support *delivered locally* (USdl) has been developed and trialled by DWP, in partnership with local government. It is intended to ensure that people with complex or multiple needs/barriers are identified and supported to make the transition to Universal Credit. In particular by helping them adjust to some new aspects of the way Universal Credit is designed, such as monthly budgeting or making and managing their claim via online self-service. Where people require support over a longer time period USdl will ensure they get the local, tailored help that they need.

The evaluation identified four key stages in how support was designed: (1) the identification and engagement of participants; (2) how support needs were identified and diagnosed through “triage” and assessment; (3) the referral and case management of support; and (4) how support was delivered.

These stages were underpinned by different delivery and organisational models – with varying degrees of integration, co-location or dispersal of functions, and different approaches to how partnerships were managed and overseen.

The trials were also characterised by the on-going evolution – with design changing in response to challenges, and with some evidence of trials converging on more successful models. In particular, over the period of the trials there was an increasing focus on how support was sequenced, information shared, and services aligned and where possible integrated.

The evaluation concluded that a successful Universal Support service needs to ensure that there are clear and common success measures; that there is the right governance, partnerships and management to oversee these locally; that claimants can be identified, engaged and screened through different channels; that the benefits of co-location and integration are further explored and harnessed; and that the right systems and process are in place to enable effective local delivery of support – in particular around data sharing, local service mapping and case management.

The Department has started to use the findings to develop and inform strategy for Universal Support to support future design and delivery as the full Universal Credit service evolves and expands.