



## **Editorial**

Welcome to the November edition Housing Benefit Direct, there is a heavy Universal Credit theme in this month's publication. Things are really progressing. You will know that our Secretary of State recently announced that Universal Credit will be rolled out nationally from early 2015. This means every local authority will very shortly be involved with claims for Universal Credit. To help you prepare there is an article explaining the role of Universal Support Development Managers, Delivery Partnership Agreements and Universal Support – delivered locally. You can also find out much more about Universal Credit and the benefits that claimants are reaping in the "Universal Credit at Work" report.

This edition includes the latest on the ATLAS/ETD merger. The early adopter phase has been a success and we are aiming to begin national implementation from 12 January 2015. Thank you to the early adopters and everyone that has been involved in this important initiative.

The Housing Delivery team here in DWP has been kept very busy lately responding to the National Audit Office Value for Money report on Housing Benefit Fraud and Error (published on 17 October) and preparing the top of the office for the Public Accounts Committee hearing which took place on 29 October. If you are interested this is available to watch on Parliament TV.

Finally, a reminder that this newsletter exists to keep you up to date with developments in the Housing Benefit world, if there is any way you think we can improve it so it adds more value please do let me know. It's important we provide you, the reader, with the type of articles and information you find most useful and relevant. Of course, do feel free to alert us to any good practice you think it would be valuable to share too.

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## Universal Support Development Managers

The Rt. Hon Iain Duncan Smith, Secretary of State at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has announced that Universal Credit will be rolled out across Great Britain to all Jobcentres and local authorities (LAs) from early 2015. This is a significant acceleration in making Universal Credit available across Great Britain, and will help people into work and earn more.

To ensure that we successfully deliver Universal Credit we need to increasingly build on partnerships with LAs and partners to deliver Universal Credit in a safe and secure way by providing support for claimants needing additional help to make and manage a Universal Credit claim and move into work.

The Universal Support Development Manager role is an enabling role; we are working with Jobcentre Plus Managers and their LA Partners and teams in continuing to build strong, productive partnerships to identify and develop the range of local support services required to deliver Universal Credit.

To ensure the right integrated local foundations are established for expansion, **Delivery Partnership Agreements** between Jobcentre Plus and LAs will be put in place to make available funded support for those who need extra help. Through national expansion we will establish these partnerships to help households progress into work as we develop '*Universal Support – delivered locally*' building on the '*Local Support Services Framework*'.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-at-work>

## Universal Credit at Work

On 22 October 2014 the DWP published "Universal Credit at Work" which provides progress on the implementation of Universal Credit: how we are restoring work incentives, renewing fairness and transforming lives.

The report covers a recap on the weaknesses in the legacy welfare system and the rationale for introducing Universal Credit including the scale of the challenge to design and deliver a new benefits system. As part of the report we highlight the strategy for rolling out Universal Credit, the economic benefits it will deliver and how we are measuring the success of Universal Credit.

The key messages from the report set out how people on Universal Credit are beginning to move into work more quickly and that they are spending almost double the time looking for jobs as those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.

The report can be accessed through the following link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-at-work>

## National go-live date

We advised you in July 2014 that the Electronic Transfer of Data/Automated Transfer of Data to LAs (ETD/ATLAS) merger had been replanned and that the implementation would commence with an early adopter phase for a small number of LAs from October 2014.

We can now confirm that the early adopter phase commenced on 27 October 2014. During the early adopter phase we'll be handling any issues that arise and using the experience of the early adopter LAs to identify good practice which can be shared ahead of national go-live. The early adopters will also be giving us feedback on the revised version of the ATLAS Awareness Pack which we will issue to all LAs closer to the go-live date.

Following consultation with LA representatives on the Practitioners Operational Group we have agreed that, provided all goes well during the early adopter phase, the national implementation will commence on **12 January 2015**.

We have considered the most practical dates for national implementation of the merged data, taking account of all the relevant factors including:

- busy periods over Christmas and New Year
- allowing time for any issues to be identified and handled during the early adopter phase
- allowing dual running of ETD, as per current service, and ETD/ATLAS merged data. This provides contingency against any significant live running issues identified.

As well as this, we have to decommission the DWP ETD server in line with the rationalisation of DWP IT estate and this has to be done by the end of March 2015. We'll let you know the exact date when this will happen as soon as we can because from that date ETDs will no longer be sent.

The plan is that from 12 January 2015 all LAs will receive ATLAS notifications that include merged data which is data that is currently received from the Customer Information System together with data that is currently received via ETD. New claims and change of circumstances processed on Friday 9 January 2015 will be merged in the ATLAS system and delivered to LAs from 12 January 2015.

ETDs will continue to be issued for a short period following the implementation. This is intended as a back-up facility only and LAs will be expected to treat the ATLAS notification as the primary source of data from 12 January 2015 onwards.

If you have any queries on this please contact [lds.deliveryteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:lds.deliveryteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Housing Benefit Matching Service (HBMS)**

HBMS are pleased to introduce a new member of the team.

Mark Emmott has recently joined us and will be helping to process HBMS Referrals. Please direct any queries to

Jenny Nugent	01253 688505
Mark Emmott	01253 688435
Leigh Park	01253 688526

[hbms@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hbms@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Local welfare provision - consultation**

The government consultation on local welfare provision in 2015/16 was published on 10 October 2014. The consultation can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-welfare-provision-in-2015-to-2016> and will run for 6 weeks.

Responses to this consultation must be received by 21 November 2014. The government will consider the responses to the consultation alongside the findings of the DWPs' review into the existing provision and will make a decision on funding for 2015/16 in time for the provisional local government finance settlement in December 2014.

If you have any queries please contact [lwpc.consultation@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:lwpc.consultation@communities.gsi.gov.uk)