

# Individual Executive Decision Notice

<b>Report title</b>	Universal Support 2018/19	
<b>Decision designation</b>	GREEN	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor John Reynolds Cabinet Member for City Economy	
<b>Wards affected</b>	(All Wards);	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Keren Jones, Service Director, City Economy	
<b>Originating service</b>	City Economy	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Heather Clark Tel Email	Service Development Manager Tel: 01902 555614 Heather.clark2@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Not applicable	

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## Summary

To agree to sign a grant offer letter, funding agreement and data sharing agreement to draw down a grant to provide Universal Support to Universal Credit claimants for 2018-19.

## Recommendation for decision:

That the Cabinet Member for City Economy, in consultation with the Service Director, City Economy agree to the Council entering into a grant offer letter, grant funding agreement and data sharing agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions relating to Universal Support grant.

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Signature

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Signature

Date:

Date:

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Cabinet (Resources) Panel agreed on 13 January 2016 to enter into the Universal Credit Delivery Partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to deliver Universal Support – delivered locally and delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for City Economy, in consultation with the Service Director City Economy to commission Universal Support – delivered locally. DWP have recently contacted us to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement to deliver Universal Support in 2018/2019 by 12 March 2018.
- 1.2 A further Cabinet (Resource) Panel report on 20 March 2018 is seeking approval to establish a revenue budget relating to the delivery of Universal Support and commission providers to deliver the support.

## 2.0 Universal Support

- 2.1 Universal Credit (UC) will eventually replace both out of work and in work benefits and will require a culture change and behavioural shift for claimants. New and existing claimants with a change in circumstance now sign up to full service UC whereby claimants need to claim and manage their account on line.
- 2.2 Some residents in Wolverhampton will face challenges in the transition to UC in relation to:
  - The move to monthly payments and direct payment of housing costs will require claimants to be responsible for managing their money and paying their bills. The extent of indebtedness in Wolverhampton could impact on people's ability to manage the transition to monthly payments.
  - Claiming and managing their account online - currently many Wolverhampton residents do not have access to the internet at home and some lack the confidence or skills to use a computer independently.  
The potential impact of getting this wrong for residents – debt, homelessness, mental health issues – is significant, and could also lead to a significant increase in demand for public services.
- 2.3 The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) are working with local authorities with the aim of delivering a joined up and coherent journey between services for claimants. To support residents affected by UC, the City of Wolverhampton Council set up an information hub <http://www.universalcreditwolverhampton.co.uk/> to help people understand the changes and access support to avoid getting into financial difficulty. This tool has been successful in helping people to navigate the complex support system, provide simple accessible information and access to support. The Council commissioned personal budgeting and assisted digital support in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 funded by DWP
- 2.4 The Council has the opportunity to continue to deliver Universal Support in 2018-2019 funded through a DWP grant including Personal Budgeting Support and Assisted Digital Support. Universal Support includes advice, assistance or support provided by agreed

Universal Support partners such as Local Authorities; Citizens Advice; social landlords or charities to a Universal Credit claimant for the purpose of assisting them with:

- **Personal budgeting support** – two hours working out monthly income and outgoings, recognising priority bills, budgeting plan, setting up post office or transactional bank account, set up direct debits.
- **Assisted Digital Support** – two hours supporting claimants to get on line and complete a claim and subsequently manage their claim online

2.5 The UC project is co-ordinated by a partnership of City Economy, Welfare Rights and Revenue and Benefits working with external partners including Wolverhampton Homes. Support will be delivered by a number of providers including Wolverhampton Homes, CAB, Wolverhampton Learning Platform and Accord Housing. It is anticipated that all the grant will be defrayed via payment to providers based on unit costs.

### 3.0 Evaluation of alternative options

3.1 DWP have made a grant available to the Council to provide assisted digital and personal budgeting support. The Council could choose to deliver the support directly or commission providers to deliver the support as outlined in the Grant Funding Agreement.

### 4.0 Reasons for decision

4.1 Given the Council does not currently provide personal budgeting or assisted digital support and volumes of referrals cannot be guaranteed, it is proposed to continue the current arrangements from 2017/2018 whereby the Council commissioned local providers who have the expertise and capacity to deliver the support. These organisations also tend to be where residents would go for support as referrals cannot be guaranteed.

### 5.0 Financial implications

5.1 Financial breakdown for Universal Support is based on estimated take-up as follows for assisted digital and personal budgeting support and unit costs.

	Assisted Digital Support		Personal Budgeting support	
	Volume	£000's	Volume	£000's
Quarter 1 Apr-Jun 2018	232	£12	387	£24
Quarter 2 Jul-Sep 2018	251	£13	418	£27
Quarter 3 Oct-Dec 2018	260	£14	432	£27
Quarter 4 Jan-Mar 2019	336	£18	559	£35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1079</b>	<b>£57</b>	<b>1796</b>	<b>£113</b>

5.2 The Council will be paid on actual take-up of support based on a set unit cost. DWP will pay 50% of the funding allocation at the beginning of 2018/19 financial year, provided the documents are returned by 12 March. 50% of funding is minimum payment guaranteed if take-up is less than 50% estimated volume. An additional payment will be calculated at the end of each quarter for actual take-up above the 50% already paid. Take-up of above 120% of the quarterly estimate will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

<b>UC Universal Support revenue</b>	<b>2018/2019 £000's</b>	
Assisted Digital ( <i>Full Service</i> )	£57	This allocation is based on an assumption that 9% of those seeking to claim Universal Credit will need Assisted Digital Support.
Personal Budgeting Support ( <i>Full Service</i> )	£113	This allocation is based on an assumption that 15% of those seeking to claim Universal Credit will need Personal Budgeting Support.
TOTAL	£171	+ 20% or – 50% depending on take up of support

[ES/08032018/G]

## **6.0 Legal implications**

6.1 A grant funding agreement will need to be entered into between the DWP and City of Wolverhampton Council in relation to delivery of the universal support for Universal Credit. Agreements relating to commissioned activity will include a requirement to provide the management information required by DWP.

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## **7.0 Equalities implications**

7.1 Some equalities group experience particular challenges relating to digital and financial inclusion therefore the availability of personal budgeting and assisted digital support will have positive equalities implications.

## **8.0 Environmental implications**

8.1 Digital inclusion has positive environmental implications since it allows transactions to be undertaken online.

## **9.0 Human resources implications**

9.1 There are no human resource implications.

## **10.0 Corporate Landlord implications**

10.1 There are no corporate landlord implications.

## **11.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 11.1 Cabinet (Resources) Panel 13 January 2016 report Universal Credit Delivery Partnership.