Introducing Universal Credit
Agenda

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1. What is Universal Credit?
Universal Credit - What’s it all about?

• Universal Credit is a new benefit that will replace Jobseeker’s Allowance (income-based), Employment and Support Allowance (income-related), Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Housing Benefit (rental).

• Universal Credit is for working-age people aged 18 to State Pension age.

• It includes support for the cost of housing, children and childcare, as well as financial support for disabled people, carers and people who are too ill to work.

• Universal Credit is a digital service.
Universal Credit Vision

Universal Credit: Making a Difference by Making Work Pay

Enabling those who can work to do so
Supporting those who cannot work
Challenging those who will not work
What is different about Universal Credit?

- Paid twice a month
- Claimant commitment - like a contract
- Claimant commitment requirements
- Full time work search
- In and out of work
- It's about work
- It's like work
- It encourages work
- Earnings, not hours
- A simple taper so better off in work
- Easy transition UC to work (and back)
2. Introducing Universal Credit in Northern Ireland
Introducing Universal Credit in Northern Ireland

New Claims

Universal Credit was introduced in Northern Ireland on 27 September 2017 on a phased geographical basis for new claims.

Natural Migration

Some current benefit claimants will naturally migrate to Universal Credit where their circumstances have changed, this is called Natural Migration. Natural Migration will happen from September 2017 through until March 2023.

Managed Migration

Current benefit claimants will transfer to Universal Credit between July 2019 and March 2023. Claimants will be advised what they need to do and when.
# Universal Credit Roll-out Schedule

| Date         | Office(s)                                      |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 07 Feb 2018  | Foyle and Armagh (Newry Service Centre)        |
| 21 Feb 2018  | Omagh and Enniskillen                          |
| 07 Mar 2018  | Dungannon and Portadown                        |
| 16 May 2018  | Downpatrick and Newry                          |
| 30 May 2018  | Lurgan, Newcastle and Kilkeel                  |
| 13 June 2018 | Falls and Shankill (Belfast Service Centre)    |
| 27 June 2018 | Andersonstown and Banbridge                    |
| 05 Sept 2018 | Holywood Road and Ballynahinch                 |
| 19 Sept 2018 | Newtownabbey and Newtownards                   |
| 03 Oct 2018  | Carrickfergus and Shaftesbury Square           |
| 17 Oct 2018  | Knockbreda and Bangor                          |
| 31 Oct 2018  | Lisburn and Larne                              |
| 14 Nov 2018  | North Belfast and Cookstown                    |
| 05 Dec 2018  | Ballymena and Antrim                            |
NI Flexibilities

• **Twice a Month Payment** - Twice a month payments of Universal Credit will be available to all households as the default payment option.

• **Direct Payment to Landlord** - In Northern Ireland the Housing Element of Universal Credit will be paid directly to landlords as the default option for rented properties.
Changes to Universal Credit

Following the Autumn Budget statement, the Chancellor announced a £1.5bn package to address concerns about Universal Credit.

This includes;

• Abolition of 7 day waiting period (Waiting Days) (February 2018);

• Advances increased from up to 50% to up to 100% of the estimated Universal Credit entitlement will be available to claimants with an extended repayment period of up to 12 months (January 2018); and

• Those moving from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit will be paid an additional two weeks of their Housing Benefit award (April 2018).
Who can apply?

- Job Seekers Allowance\(^1\)
- Employment Support Allowance\(^2\)
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credits
- Child Tax Credits
- Housing Benefit

The service will initially be available to claimants making a new claim, or for certain changes in circumstances.

\(^1\)Income Based
\(^2\)Income Related
## Change of Circumstances that mean a move to Universal Credit

| Natural Migration Triggers |  |  |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Move from out of work to in work | Move from in work to out of work | Move out of work to sick |
| Move from sick to in work (or permitted work becomes permanent) | Move from in work to sick (reduction in hours due to sickness) | Claimants separate |
| Income Support Lone Parent child reaches 5/permanently leaves the household | Household becomes responsible for a child for the first time | Move from sick to out of work |
3. What does Universal Credit mean for the claimant?
UC Video
It’s about encouraging personal responsibility

• Universal Credit promotes personal responsibility to actively seek work and increase earnings, while continuing to provide support for those who need it most.

• Universal Credit is designed to raise expectations of claimants about what they can do to find work and to increase their earnings.
Labour Market Regimes

Legal Conditionality Group

- All work related requirements
- Work preparation
- Work Focused Interviews
- No work related requirements

Labour Market Regime

- Intensive Work Search
- Light Touch
- Work Preparation
- Work Focused Interview
- No work related requirements
- Working Enough
The Commitment

• The Commitment will be agreed between the Work Coach and the claimant; it will be tailored to the claimant's individual circumstances

• Claimants will be required to fulfil the conditions of their Commitment in return for Universal Credit

• The Commitment outlines what activities the claimant is expected to complete in return for receiving Universal Credit

• The Commitment will clearly outline the consequences of not completing these activities
Digital Service

• Claimants will have to apply and maintain Universal Credit claims independently online via nidirect.gov.uk

• Universal Credit staff will enable, support and educate claimants to self-serve

• Assisted Digital support will be offered to claimants who cannot independently make or maintain a claim online
Universal Credit Assisted Digital Offer

- Support from family and friends
- Telephone support when using online channel
- Coaching and support by the First Contact Team or Work Coach in the Digital Zone
- Agent by Proxy* (Telephony)

*Agent by Proxy (telephony claim) by:
- Claimant or with assistance from an outreach officer during a Home Visit
Support for Claimants with Complex Needs

“An individual who is identified as having **complex needs** and requires additional support to enable them to access Universal Credit Services”.

- **UC Advance**
- **Appointee**
- **Discretionary Support**
- **Signposting to Third Party provision**
- **Easements to work related requirements**
- **Biographical Test for claimants without ID**
- **Alternative Payment Arrangements**
- **Exceptional Payment Methods**
- **Home Visit**
- **Access to Recoverable Hardship Payments**
- **Regular interventions with Work Coach**
- **Interpreting Services**
4. Customer Journey
## Universal Credit – Payment Timeline

**Claim Submitted**

**Assessment Period Start**

**Assessment Period (1)**

- Calendar Month

**Advance of up to 100% of the estimated monthly amount can be considered - 12 months to repay**

**Payment 7 Days**

- Payment calculated
- Payment issued

**Payment issued to claimant**

### Table

| Assessment Period 1 | Assessment Period 2 | Assessment Period 3 | Assessment Period 4 | Assessment Period 5 |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| **Paid Twice Monthly** | Advance up to 100% of UC Award | **£500** | **£500** | **£500** |
| **£500** | **£500** | **£500** | **£500** | **£500** |
| **8th April to 7th May** | **8th May to 7th June** | **8th June to 7th July** | **8th July to 7th August** | **8th August to 7th Sept.** |

Payment will be Award less Housing Element (if paid direct to landlord) and any other deductions
5. Housing
Northern Ireland Housing Position

• The Northern Ireland default position is to pay the Housing Element of the Universal Credit award **directly to the Landlord**

• A claimant can opt out of the NI default arrangement, criteria applies

• Housing Element of Universal Credit does not include help towards rates

• Landlords can request direct payment of Housing Element, criteria applies
Social Rental Sector

• Universal Credit additional amount for Housing Element will be the actual housing costs

• Service charges that are not covered by Universal Credit or charges for utilities, such as water or electricity are not included in the Housing Element

• Payment schedule file will be in same format as now
Private Rental Sector

- Universal Credit Housing Element will either be the claimants actual housing costs or the Local Housing Allowance rate, whichever is lower

- Responsibility of claimant to pay landlord any shortfall between Housing Element and their rent

- The Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (NI) 2012 were introduced on the 25 February 2014 - requires all landlords who let properties, in NI, under a private tenancy to register under the scheme

- The Housing Element of Universal Credit will be paid directly to registered landlords
Housing Element Payment Timeline

Assessment Period

NIHE & Housing Association > DfC will verify housing costs

Private Rented Sector > claimant will provide verification of housing costs

Payment issues

Payment will issue four weekly in line with existing payment schedule

Payment will issue monthly in line with date claimant receives their first payment
Supported Accommodation

Supported Accommodation costs are not included in Universal Credit Housing Element

Supported Accommodation is paid through Housing Benefit which is administered by NIHE

Housing Benefit is claimed online [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)
The ‘Big Picture’
6. Universal Credit – Feedback
Progress to date

- **Live**: 19 offices, 3 Service Centres & an Operational Control Centre
- **Next**: Andersonstown & Banbridge
- **2018**: Phased go live

Applications

- Method of Claim
- Advances
7. What does Universal Credit mean for the Advice Sector?
What does Universal Credit mean for the Advice Sector?

• Key stakeholders in the successful delivery of Universal Credit

• Support delivery of Universal Credit

• Demand for services will change; service may be delivered differently

• The Executive made a commitment to provide £8million funding over four years to provide additional independent advice services on Welfare Reform

• Advice Sector will receive training around Universal Credit and also digital up-skilling
How can the Advice Sector help their clients prepare for Universal Credit

Promote the benefits of Universal Credit. Claimants keep more of what they earn and getting a job and/or increasing earnings is the best choice for individuals and families.

Encourage and support their clients to set-up an email account and know how to access it.

Encourage their clients to set-up a bank account.

Encourage and support their clients to improve their online skills.
What do I need to do to prepare?

• Avail of opportunities to improve my IT skills, and transfer of these skills to my clients

• Attend future Universal Credit awareness sessions

• Supporting information on nidirect including, interactive tools, information booklets and ‘how to make a claim’ guides
8. Next Steps
Next Steps

• Continued engagement with regional and local Advice Sector
• Further event around 6 weeks before go-live
• Feedback – what do you need from us?
Questions?

For information on all the Welfare Changes please visit
www.nidirect.gov.uk/welfarechanges

If you have any questions please contact us at
universalcreditcommunications@communities-ni.gov.uk