

MOTION ON NOTICE – SUPPORTING RESIDENTS IMPACTED BY UNIVERSAL CREDIT

16th January 2020

Harrow Council notes that:

- The roll-out of Universal Credit (UC) represents the largest overhaul of the welfare system for working age people in a generation.
- If and when it is fully implemented, there will be in the region of 15,000 families in Harrow claiming the benefit, including nearly 28,000 children.
- While the aims of UC are laudable - consolidating six complex benefits into one and ensuring that everyone is better off in work- its implementation has been deeply flawed.
- ~~The roll-out of UC has been riddled with issues that have impoverished families, driven our residents to use food banks, and made families homeless~~
- The National Audit Office says UC is “not value for money now and... it’s future value for money unproven”. Child Poverty Action Group believes it simply “isn’t working for working people”.
- In Harrow, UC has already pushed many tenants into rent arrears. For example 26% of Council tenants who claim Housing Benefit are in arrears compared to 73% of those claiming UC.
- The UC application process is digital by design. Claimants are expected to have an email address and a bank account to complete an application. Yet there are 1.5 million unbanked adults in the UK and 38% of people on low incomes have limited access to the internet.

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Harrow Council launched a cross-Party Commission on the Implementation of Universal Credit in Harrow in late 2018 to identify a set of practical actions the Council could take to support our residents.

Harrow Council resolves:

- To adopt the final report of the Commission, including its action plan. This includes supporting residents to access digital services, improving links between Council officers and Jobcentre Plus staff, and making provision within the Council Tax Support scheme to help people migrating onto Universal Credit.
- To continue to develop new ways of supporting people impacted by the roll-out of Universal Credit.
- To incorporate the findings of the Commission into the development of the Borough Plan as part of the Council's drive to tackle poverty and inequality.

Amendment proposed by Councillor Richard Almond

Amendment seconded by Councillor Pritesh Patel