

Universal Support Delivered Locally pilot project team

Overview

JCP established a 'Universal Support Delivered Locally' pilot project team, forming a VCSE, JCP and Local Authority delivery partnership to trial support services to help benefit recipients prepare for the advent of Universal Credit and the greater control it will allow over their lives.

The multi-disciplinary project team is co-located within three South London JCPs of Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark, and draws on the expertise and specialisms of each of the pilot partners, with Triage provided by a combined partnership team.

This ground breaking partnership has enabled development of an innovative, cost-effective service that will move claimants towards employment, self-sufficiency and greater financial independence.

Introduction of Universal Credit will enable JCP customers to take greater control over their lives and ease their transition into work, however some will need help to manage this change. JCP Universal Support Delivered Locally (USDL) pilots aim to assess the level of need and trial methods of assessment, referral and provision of support.

Local demographics indicates high need for support, the pilot area, being within the top 45 most-deprived local authority areas in the country, with 78,000 on working-age benefits. The Tri-borough pilot is testing a new model of delivering USDL services through a cross-sector partnership between JCP, VCSE providers (Citizens' Advice Bureau with local Credit Unions, SHP and Thames Reach) and three local authorities.

The multi-disciplinary project team combines expertise of each pilot partner and is co-located within three South London JCPs. Customers enter a triage service, which identifies them having no needs, transitional, or high needs in one of four categories (financial, digital, housing and employment). They are signposted to the services best able to meet identified needs.

Services are delivered by our VCSE and local authority partners as follows:

- Financial Inclusion (SHP and CAB)
- Digital Inclusion (extension of 'digi-buddies' digital up-skilling service run by Thames Reach)

- Housing Advice (Local Authorities)
- General Employment Support (Tomorrow's People & Tri-borough community budget pilot)
- Triage (co-located JCP, VCSE and Local Authority team).

The partnership approach adopted has enabled expertise and knowledge of local VCSEs to be utilised to address these challenges.

Collectively pilot partners have developed a well-targeted effective service capable of meeting diverse customer needs within a context of continued efficiency savings.

Impact

This innovative project has enabled us to:

- Establish and test new ways of partnership working between JCP, local VCSE providers and three local authorities
- Develop a triage process that maximises the chance of identifying a customer's UC transition support needs
- Test the commissioning and delivery of innovative new services to develop financial resilience and digital capability
- Transformation of local service delivery by promoting cross-borough working and the integration of USDL and community budget services
- Create a unique service that truly encapsulates localism by tailoring services to local needs
- Utilise the skills, expertise and local knowledge of staff across all partners to truly make a difference to local people
- 3622 people have been referred to the trial and 2389 triaged, enabling direction to services that may not otherwise have been accessed, in preparation for UC.

Wider benefits include:

- Strengthened relationships between participating organisations, improving local service delivery
- In Southwark the local CAB will continue to have a presence in local JCPs beyond the end of the pilot and deliver development sessions for work coaches on locally available VCSE provision
- Establishment of a frontline workers' forum, involving VCSE, JCP and local authority staff
- The team worked collaboratively to develop a solution to sensitive issues around data sharing that can now inform future DWP work with local partners.

This high profile successful pilot has generated considerable interest from stakeholders in learning from and up-scaling the work, and hosted ministerial and policy team visits.

Learning will feed into the DWP's roll out of agreements around support services for live environments, and influence the role of VCSEs and local authorities within these.

In order to support this, the project has been designed to produce a robust evidence base able to inform future policy development.

Lessons learned from the pilot will also feed directly into future initiatives at the local level e.g. a Southwark local triage system based the project's work informing the next phase of the tri-borough community budget pilot.

