

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

17 OCTOBER 2023

QUESTION NO. 1 in accordance with Standing Order No.

Richard Tredgett and Ann Dally to ask the Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources:

Legacy Benefits

Could the Council please let us know what information and support will be available to the approximately 4000 households currently receiving either legacy benefits (Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support) and/or tax credits during the first stage of the upcoming managed migration to Universal Credit, when people living in the Reading Job Centre area receive their Migration Notices from the DWP ?

And has the Council plans to update its website to include information advising people to complete a benefit calculation to ensure they are getting their full entitlement to legacy benefits before moving onto Universal Credit and stressing when residents receive their Managed Migration Notice they need to make a claim for Universal Credit themselves by the three month deadline given in this Notice or their benefits will end ?

REPLY by Councillor Terry (Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources):

As stated in the question there are approximately 4,000 households in Reading who are in receipt of a legacy benefit and/or tax credits.

Universal Credit is replacing 6 benefits called legacy benefits. These are: Housing Benefit, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Child Tax Credits (CTC), Working Tax Credits (WTC) and Income Support.

The Department of Work and Pension (DWP) are undertaking this transfer through managed migration or where household circumstances change.

Since April 2023, more Tax Credit only claimants are being asked to claim Universal Credit in order to continue to receive the benefit they are entitled to. This change is part of plans to streamline and simplify the benefits system, with legacy benefit claimants moving onto the modern benefit system.

On 15 September a letter was sent to the Chief Executive informing the Council when the DWP will begin to issue Migration Notices to Tax Credit only claimants in this area.

We have identified 610 cases with Tax Credits that will be subject to the first stage of managed migration.

We have a webpage containing information on Universal Credit. It is in the process of being updated in relation to managed migration, claimants responsibilities and how to seek assistance in making a claim: <https://www.reading.gov.uk/housing/benefits-and-assistance/universal-credit/>

The page also contains an online benefit calculator to assist claimants.

Where a Universal Credit claim is made, if the claimant is in supported/temporary accommodation the Council will continue to award their Housing Benefit. Where they are not, Housing Benefit will automatically cease and be replaced by Housing costs within the Universal Credit award.

Council Tax Support will continue and there will no need to make a new claim.

We are reviewing our Housing Benefit notification templates; we intend to provide signposting to our Universal Credit webpage and encourage use of the online calculator.

We are not currently intending to undertake a direct mailing with our Housing Benefit recipients, the DWP will be responsible for this activity.

We will however continue to monitor our communications strategy to determine whether appropriate to undertake a direct mailing with identified managed migration customers later.

We will support any communications issued by the DWP and push out through our own channels as required.

At this time, we have not received information from the DWP to advise when other legacy benefit types will begin the managed migration process. It is however anticipated that the managed migration will be completed by 2029.