

Meeting: Council

Date: 29 November 2023

From: David McMullan, resident

To: Councillor Wright, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health & Housing.

Question:

Could the Council please let us know what information and support will be available to the approximately 2030 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 Bracknell 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 3-month deadline giving in this Notice or their benefits will end.

Answer:

The move from legacy benefits, such as Housing Benefit, onto Universal Credit, is being led by the Department of Work and Pensions rather than Bracknell Forest. The DWP will be the lead agency for providing advice and support to residents about the move, but we have been informed that anyone in scope will receive a leaflet to advise about the change in the first instance. This will then be followed with a migration letter, setting out the timescale that a resident would have to make an application for Universal Credit.

It is very likely that many of those who receive legacy benefits and so are in scope to move over to Universal Credit, may feel anxious about the change, but a high number may also not be known to the Council. As we do at present, where a customer reaches out for assistance, we refer into the Citizens Advice Help to Claim service for new claims to Universal Credit. All staff within the Housing Benefit team and wider Welfare Service are aware of the change, and the process that residents will need to follow and will be available to assist with any queries regarding the benefits that we administer.

Our website has been updated and includes information to signpost people to the government information on migration to Universal Credit.

In many cases, those who are in scope to move, may receive a benefit such as Housing Benefit and may already have been advised to complete an online calculation, as many who are in work, are better off on Universal Credit, than the legacy benefits it replaces. We will maintain our commitment to provide guidance and support to residents in the borough who reach out for assistance, and to seek to support those in scope to move, during this challenging period.