



# Collaborative working to end unfairness and discrimination in welfare benefits

## A local perspective

Salli Edwards Citizens Advice Flintshire



# Citizens Advice Flintshire

- Employ 34 staff and have approximately 75 volunteers
- We serve a population of 154,100
- Deliver a broad range of contracts as well as three CAB offices
- We deliver the North Wales Regional Discrimination Service
- We advise approximately 7,000 people per year with 28,000 problems

# Collaborative ways of working internally



We have mandatory E&D training for all people joining the service:

- To ensure that all people fully understand our values and to set out our expectations of them in relation to E&D.
- To ensure people in advisory posts understand the importance of early identification of discrimination and the impact this can have on outcomes.



# Collaborative ways of working internally

- We have two staff members who work on the regional Discrimination Service
- They are increasingly see welfare benefits cases
- They do updates at casework meetings to increase knowledge of how discrimination legislation can be used in benefits cases
- They have assisted advisers by doing template letters for generalist and welfare benefits staff to request reasonable adjustments (this letter also reminds the DWP and their sub contractors of their Public Sector Equality Duties).



# Collaborative ways of working internally

## Example cases

Deaf client on DLA for life award transfer from DLA to PIP. Visited bureau as told she had to make initial claim via phone.

Capita eventually agreed after a number of contacts from CAB to send paper application.

Assisted by welfare rights worker to complete form

Medical assessment abandoned or rearranged 5 times with wrong interpreter being arranged.

Discrimination worker raised complaint now DWP agreed to communicate with client via email and correct interpreter sent to assess the client.



# Collaborative ways of working externally

- In 2011 we persuaded the Local Authority to set up a strategic group 'Advice Management Board' to ensure that there was coordination of advice in the County and no duplication in services.
- As part of this we set up an Advisors Network Forum. This forum met twice a year and was for all frontline workers, including housing and council tax benefits staff and accommodation support workers. This also covered a broad range of people we class as 'problem noticers' i.e. care workers who built up a network of where to signpost / refer clients

# Collaborative ways of working externally

Flintshire was the first County in Wales to roll out Universal Credit.

**Our local experience of the first month of Universal Credit - Full Service**

The Universal Credit 'Full Service' was launched in Shotton Jobcentre on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2017, and in Flint and Mold Jobcentres on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2017. This is a brief summary of our experience of Universal Credit, at Citizens Advice Flintshire, during the month of April, and the type of issues we have encountered.

**21** People asked us for help with Universal Credit

11 of these were female and 10 were male.

The most common issue we have helped with relates to calculation of Universal Credit. Usually this will be to check that people are receiving the correct amount of Universal Credit.

The tables below show the postcodes and age ranges of the clients we have helped so far. The highest numbers of clients helped, 14, were customers of Shotton Jobcentre (CH4 and CH5 postcodes), followed by Flint Jobcentre with 4 clients (CH6 and CH8 postcodes) and Mold Jobcentre with 3 clients (CH7 postcode).

Postcode	No. of clients
CH4	3
CH5	11
CH6	1
CH7	3
CH8	3

Age range	No. of clients
16 - 17	0
18 - 24	5
25 - 34	6
35 - 44	6
45 - 54	1
55 - 64	3

**Our local experience of Universal Credit Full Service - August 2017**

The Universal Credit 'Full Service' was launched in Flintshire in April 2017. This is a brief summary of our experience of Universal Credit during the month of August.

**76 people** in Flintshire approached us for help with Universal Credit during August 2017.

**69%** of these were female and **40%** were male.

**24%** of all queries related to the calculation of Universal Credit and **16%** related to the housing element.

**51%** of all the clients we helped this month have a disability or long-term health condition.

The tables below show the postcodes and age ranges of the clients we have helped so far.

Postcode	No. of clients this month	Total since April 2017
CH4	2	12
CH5	32	108
CH6	6	33
CH7	23	71
CH8	8	34
Other	5	10
Total	76	268

Age range	No. of clients	Total since April 2017
16 - 17	0	2
18 - 24	12	40
25 - 34	12	56
35 - 44	17	64
45 - 54	14	40
55 - 64	21	66
Total	76	268

**Our local experience of Universal Credit Full Service - January 2018**

This is a brief summary of our experience of Universal Credit, at Citizens Advice Flintshire, during the month of January 2018.

**185 people** in Flintshire approached us for help with Universal Credit during January 2018. This is the highest number of clients approaching us for help with Universal Credit since the launch of the 'Full Service' in April 2017.

**Clients with UC issues 2017-2018**

**Our local experience of Universal Credit Full Service - December 2017**

The Universal Credit 'Full Service' was launched in Flintshire in April 2017. This is a brief summary of our experience of Universal Credit, at Citizens Advice Flintshire, during the month of December. The figures are lower than previous months due to our office closure for Christmas and New Year.

**54 people** in Flintshire approached us for help with Universal Credit during December 2017.

**70%** of these were female and **30%** were male.

**23%** of all queries related to calculation of Universal Credit and **16%** related to the disability element.

**43%** of all the clients we helped this month have a disability or long-term health condition.

The tables below show the postcodes and age ranges of the clients we have helped so far.

Postcode	No. of clients this month	Total since April 2017
CH4	2	29
CH5	20	218
CH6	5	67
CH7	16	132
CH8	8	66
Other	3	25
Total	54	537

Age range	No. of clients	Total since April 2017
16 - 17	0	3
18 - 24	7	67
25 - 34	15	121
35 - 44	10	112
45 - 54	9	107
55 - 64	15	127
Total	54	537

**Our local experience of Universal Credit Full Service - September 2017**

The Universal Credit 'Full Service' was launched in Flintshire in April 2017. This is a brief summary of our experience of Universal Credit, at Citizens Advice Flintshire, during the month of August.

**73 people** in Flintshire approached us for help with Universal Credit during September 2017.

**64%** of these were female and **36%** were male.

**21%** of all queries related to calculation of Universal Credit and **29%** related to the housing element.

**40%** of all the clients we helped this month have a disability or long-term health condition.

The tables below show the postcodes and age ranges of the clients we have helped so far.

Postcode	No. of clients this month	Total since April 2017
CH4	5	17
CH5	23	131
CH6	9	42
CH7	20	91
CH8	10	44
Other	6	16
Total	73	341

Age range	No. of clients	Total since April 2017
16 - 17	1	3
18 - 24	7	47
25 - 34	16	72
35 - 44	17	81
45 - 54	19	59
55 - 64	13	79
Total	73	341

**Our local experience of Universal Credit Full Service - June 2017**

The Universal Credit 'Full Service' was launched in Flintshire in April 2017. This is a brief summary of our experience of Universal Credit at Citizens Advice Flintshire, during the month of June.

**51** People asked us for help with Universal Credit

33 of these were female and 18 were male.

A quarter of all queries related to calculation of Universal Credit. Usually this will be to check that people are receiving the correct amount of Universal Credit.

The tables below show the postcodes and age ranges of the clients we have helped so far.

Postcode	No. of clients this month	Total since April 2017
CH4	2	8
CH5	24	55
CH6	4	13
CH7	12	31
CH8	6	12
Other	3	4
Total	51	123

Age range	No. of clients	Total since April 2017
16 - 17	1	2
18 - 24	8	17
25 - 34	11	26
35 - 44	10	34
45 - 54	11	12
55 - 64	10	28
Total	51	123

All Holywell postcodes (CH8) joined the full service rollout in June, prior to this some postcodes were excluded.

# The future

## Opportunities

- Need to get more training and awareness to MP's and AM's Caseworkers as they are increasingly involved with benefit work
- In Wales the National Advice Strategy is looking at regional models of needs and advice delivery – includes discrimination and welfare benefits and is valued at £6 million per annum

## Challenges

- Continued decline in funding
- Increased complexity in advice provision