

<b>Scrutiny Panel</b> <b>3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020</b> <b>Item 7 – Update on the impact of Universal Credit in Hackney</b>	Item No <b>7a</b>
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## OUTLINE

Below is information about the impact of Universal Credit in Hackney. The figures are as at Dec 2019.

- 74% of Council Housing tenants on Universal Credit are in rent arrears (1,596 /2,146 tenants) - £1.848m arrears (Hackney Housing Service data).
- 20% of Food Bank clients primary reason for seeking help is because of benefit delays in 19/20 (down from 25% in previous years) (Trussel Trust Hackney data).
- 8,548 Universal Credit Claims in Hackney Central Job Centre, up by 908 in three months (As Hoxton includes Tower Hamlets claimants figures are provided for Hackney Central to provide an indication in the way claims are increasing).
- Key to managing the risks and impacts arising from Universal Credit is partnership working in Hackney. We have formed close working relationships between Job Centre Plus (who will lead on the UC claim process), Council services and the Hackney Voluntary and Community Sector, especially Advice and Guidance providers. We have developed a shared action plan which we use to ensure that residents are supported to manage the claim process and that potential difficulties that have arisen during the roll-out elsewhere are identified and addressed. We continue to fund an independent Advice Sector and to work with them to improve the support they can offer, and more effectively respond to increasing demand.
- Our cross sector Universal Credit Steering Group has maintained oversight of a partnership plan. We have tried to keep payment timeliness above 90% and DWP have attributed this high rate of timeliness to the close and constructive partnership working at a strategic and operational level, underpinned by the work of this group.
- Our Resident Sustainment Team continues to work very closely with vulnerable tenants and those affected by Universal Credit. Universal Credit cases are reviewed on a weekly basis. Contact is made with those not making payments to ensure they have submitted all relevant documents in relation to their claims. In July 2019, all tenants on Universal Credit were contacted to identify their support needs, and referrals were

made to our Financial Inclusion Team and external agencies where appropriate. The team was able to bring in just over £1m in unclaimed benefits in 2018/19 and so far this year they have brought in £646k.

- We have invested £800k in independent advice services. We are also working closely with the advice sector to improve the advice offer making it more person centred and solution focused.

Attending for this item will be:

**Michael Honeysett**, Director Financial Management

## **ACTION**

Members are asked to give consideration to the information above and ask questions.