

**RU Ready for UC, Partnership between Springboard and ShARP****£30,000**

The current partnership project between Springboard and ShARP commenced in July 2018 to help people to prepare and apply for Universal Credit. The RU Ready for UC project complements current provision and responds to local need. In the last quarter to January 2019 there were 26 UC advice sessions delivered at ShARP and Hetton Hub. One to one support was provided to 32 clients, bringing the total to over 100 during the lifetime of the project to date.

Many clients have attended interviews and at least 3 clients have found employment though using the RU Ready for UC Project since it started in July 2018.

The project has helped enrol 55 clients onto the Universal Credit service and has increased the digital skills of many more. Staff actively promote relevant services to assist claimants access multi organisation services such as free school meals, Universal Credit Advance Payments, ShARP first tier Welfare Rights team, Sunderland Council advice pages, local Food banks and Welcome Cafes.

Clients have included people with learning disabilities, drug and alcohol issues, long term sick or unemployed, and low educational attainment. Clients are supported to work online at their own pace and take ownership of their digital skills improvement. Many clients, initially, do not want to learn ICT skills and would prefer others to perform these tasks for them but they are given all the support they need to get them to achieve learning themselves.

The demand for the services the project offers far outweighs estimates. Predictions from DWP have been exceeded and clients are requiring longer term support than anticipated.

It is proposed that the project continues until June 2020 and is adapted to meet the needs of clients and respond to the changing requirements of DWP and the support available.

One part time worker from Springboard will provide the IT support and one part time worker from ShARP will provide the benefits and welfare advice support. Both staff, and volunteers supporting the project, will provide information about, and signpost clients to, other services relevant to the needs of the individual.

**Recommendation: Approve. This has been identified as a major priority by the People Board and meets Area Priority 'Working in partnership to address key issues that affect residents emotional and mental wellbeing'**