

Get Ready for Universal Credit – Partnership project Springboard and ShARP £25,000

ShARP will deliver “Get Ready for Universal Credit” a targeted project in partnership with Springboard who will lead the project and provide the digital training, support and expertise. As added value Springboard will also provide access to other training and pathways to employment. ShARP will provide Advice services and Volunteering opportunities as additional value. Universal Credit (UC) will replace all working age means tested benefits paid to those IN or OUT of work who are eligible. UC will replace:

- Income Support
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income based Employment Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit

The full roll out of UC will happen in Sunderland in July 2018. Evidence gained from the other parts of the country shows that the transition from other benefits to UC has been difficult and created hardship for many people because of the delay from the claim to the first payment.

The move to UC and delay in payments of several weeks has increased the number of people with no income or reduced income experiencing periods of crisis who have had to rely on Foodbanks or seek financial support from family and friends until payments are in place. Get Ready for UC will meet people in local centres where they are comfortable and provide advice so people can prepare for the change and better understand steps they can take to manage that transition.

The Get Ready For UC project will deliver 3 training sessions on UC and the aims of the project to staff and volunteers of the host organisations. The training will help staff to identify and support their communities engage with the Get Ready for UC project. Training will also raise awareness generally of UC, challenges and other services and projects available to help eg SCC, SNCBC etc. Following the training sessions for host organisations the partners will actively promote the project and recruit those people they know will need to have support through the change to UC. The project will deliver 4 sessions per week across the 4 venues in the Coalfields area. Sessions will be delivered over 3.5 hours and include groupwork and have allocated time for 1:1 advice.

When people are identified as having other issues or vulnerabilities during the sessions, the relevant partner will be alerted and will be helped by the project to provide further assistance including help to engage with other support eg local Jobcentre, DWP, housing provider and SNCBC.

This project will work with some of the most disengaged and marginalised people in the Coalfields area who often find it difficult to engage with services and will therefore add value to the work already commissioned or delivered by Sunderland City Council. Springboard is a respected organisation with the necessary skills to deliver the digital element of this project. We will operate in local premises, which are fit for purpose. We expect that helping local people plan and prepare for UC will prevent increased demand on the crisis support resources of Sunderland City Council.

ShARP will make full use of the existing networks and partnerships in the Coalfields area to ensure that the project is known and understood. The project will complement the work of other providers including ShARP Advice on Prescription, CAP, Hetton New Dawn providing an additional specialist resource to aid with the roll out of UC and the impact that is likely to have on local people if they are unprepared. The knowledge and expertise of both partners will ensure that the focus of the project remains targeted to helping people with Getting Ready for UC. ShARP currently work in partnership with Springboard on the Digital Inclusion project to deliver a weekly drop in that promotes digital inclusion.

Recommendation: Approve, the project was designed by the People Board and meets the priority ‘Reduce stress caused by financial concerns’