

# Introducing Universal Credit

# Agenda

1. Universal Credit - What's it all about?
2. Introducing Universal Credit in Northern Ireland
3. What does Universal Credit mean for the claimant?
4. Customer Journey
5. Housing
6. Universal Credit Feedback
7. What does Universal Credit mean for the Advice Sector?
8. Next Steps

# 1. What is Universal Credit?

# Universal Credit- What's it all about?

- Universal Credit is a new benefit that will replace Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based), Employment and Support Allowance (income-related), Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Housing Benefit (rental)
- Universal Credit is for working-age people aged 18 to State Pension age.
- It includes support for the cost of housing, children and childcare, as well as financial support for disabled people, carers and people who are too ill to work.
- Universal Credit is a digital service.

# Universal Credit Vision

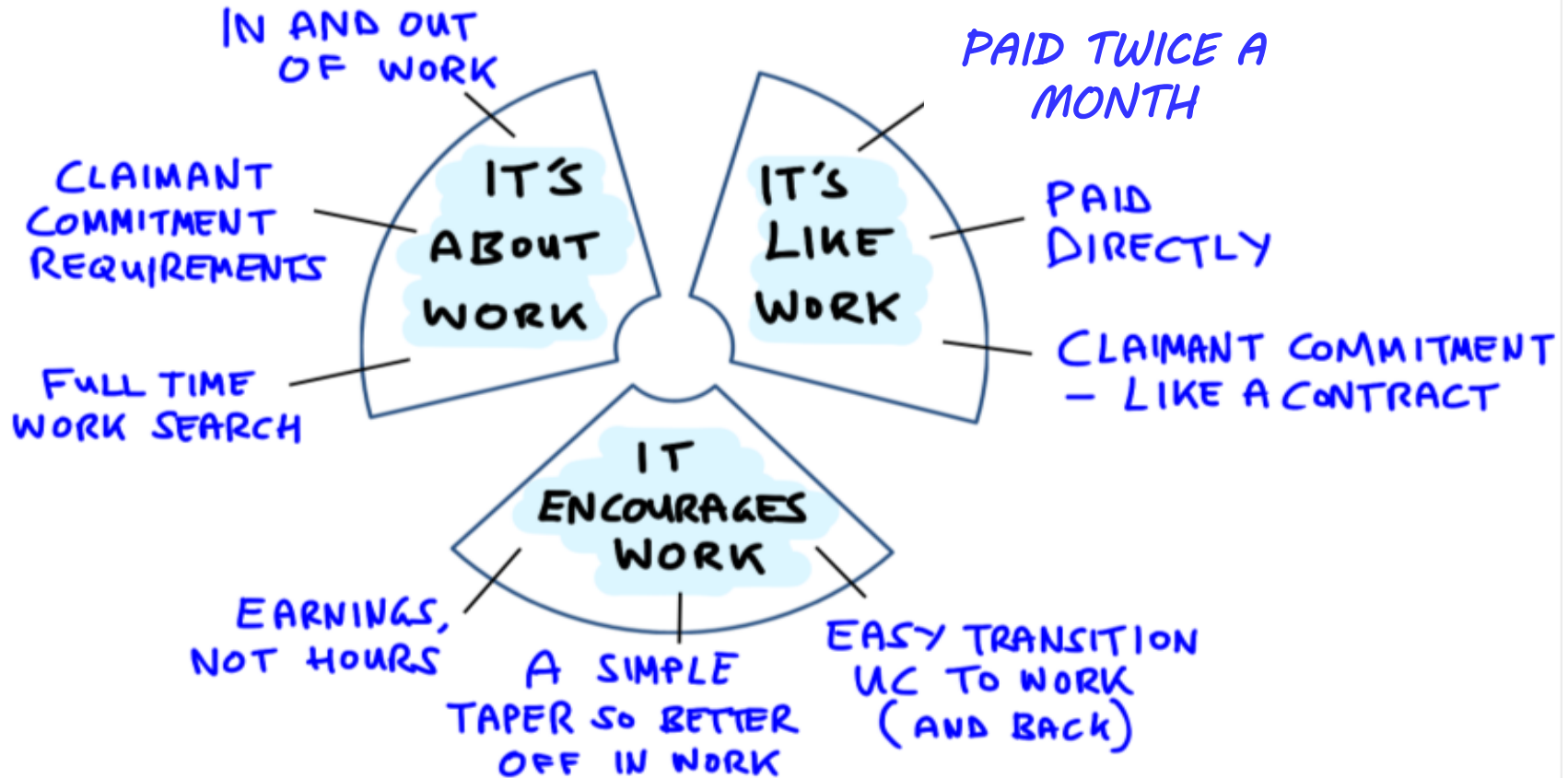
## Universal Credit: Making a Difference by Making Work Pay

*Enabling those who can work to do so*

*Supporting those who cannot work*

*Challenging those who will not work*

# What is different about Universal Credit?



# **2. Introducing Universal Credit in Northern Ireland**

# Introducing Universal Credit in Northern Ireland



## New Claims

Universal Credit was introduced in Northern Ireland on 27 September 2017 on a phased geographical basis for new claims.

## Natural Migration

Some current benefit claimants will naturally migrate to Universal Credit where their circumstances have changed, this is called Natural Migration. Natural Migration will happen from September 2017 through until March 2023.

## Managed Migration

Current benefit claimants will transfer to Universal Credit between July 2019 and March 2023. Claimants will be advised what they need to do and when.



# Universal Credit Roll-out Schedule



Date	Office(s)
07 Feb 2018	Foyle and Armagh (Newry Service Centre)
21 Feb 2018	Omagh and Enniskillen
07 Mar 2018	Dungannon and Portadown
16 May 2018	Downpatrick and Newry
30 May 2018	Lurgan, Newcastle and Kilkeel
13 June 2018	Falls and Shankill (Belfast Service Centre)
27 June 2018	Andersonstown and Banbridge
05 Sept 2018	Hollywood Road and Ballynahinch
19 Sept 2018	Newtownabbey and Newtownards
03 Oct 2018	Carrickfergus and Shaftesbury Square
17 Oct 2018	Knockbreda and Bangor
31 Oct 2018	Lisburn and Larne
14 Nov 2018	North Belfast and Cookstown
05 Dec 2018	Ballymena and Antrim

# NI Flexibilities



- **Twice a Month Payment** - Twice a month payments of Universal Credit will be available to all households as the default payment option.
  
- **Direct Payment to Landlord** - In Northern Ireland the Housing Element of Universal Credit will be paid directly to landlords as the default option for rented properties.

# Changes to Universal Credit



Following the Autumn Budget statement, the Chancellor announced a £1.5bn package to address concerns about Universal Credit.

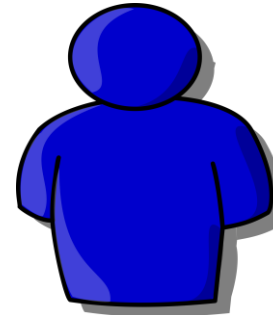
This includes;

- Abolition of 7 day waiting period (Waiting Days) (February 2018);
- Advances increased from up to 50% to up to 100% of the estimated Universal Credit entitlement will be available to claimants with an extended repayment period of up to 12 months (January 2018); and
- Those moving from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit will be paid an additional two weeks of their Housing Benefit award (April 2018).

# Who can apply?



- Job Seekers Allowance<sup>1</sup>
- Employment Support Allowance<sup>2</sup>
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credits
- Child Tax Credits
- Housing Benefit



Universal Credit

The service will initially be available to claimants making a new claim, or for certain changes in circumstances.

# Change of Circumstances that mean a move to Universal Credit



## Natural Migration Triggers

Move from out of work to in work	Move from in work to out of work	Move out of work to sick
Move from sick to in work (or permitted work becomes permanent)	Move from in work to sick (reduction in hours due to sickness)	Claimants separate
Income Support Lone Parent child reaches 5/permanently leaves the household	Household becomes responsible for a child for the first time	Move from sick to out of work

# **3. What does Universal Credit mean for the claimant?**

# UC Video

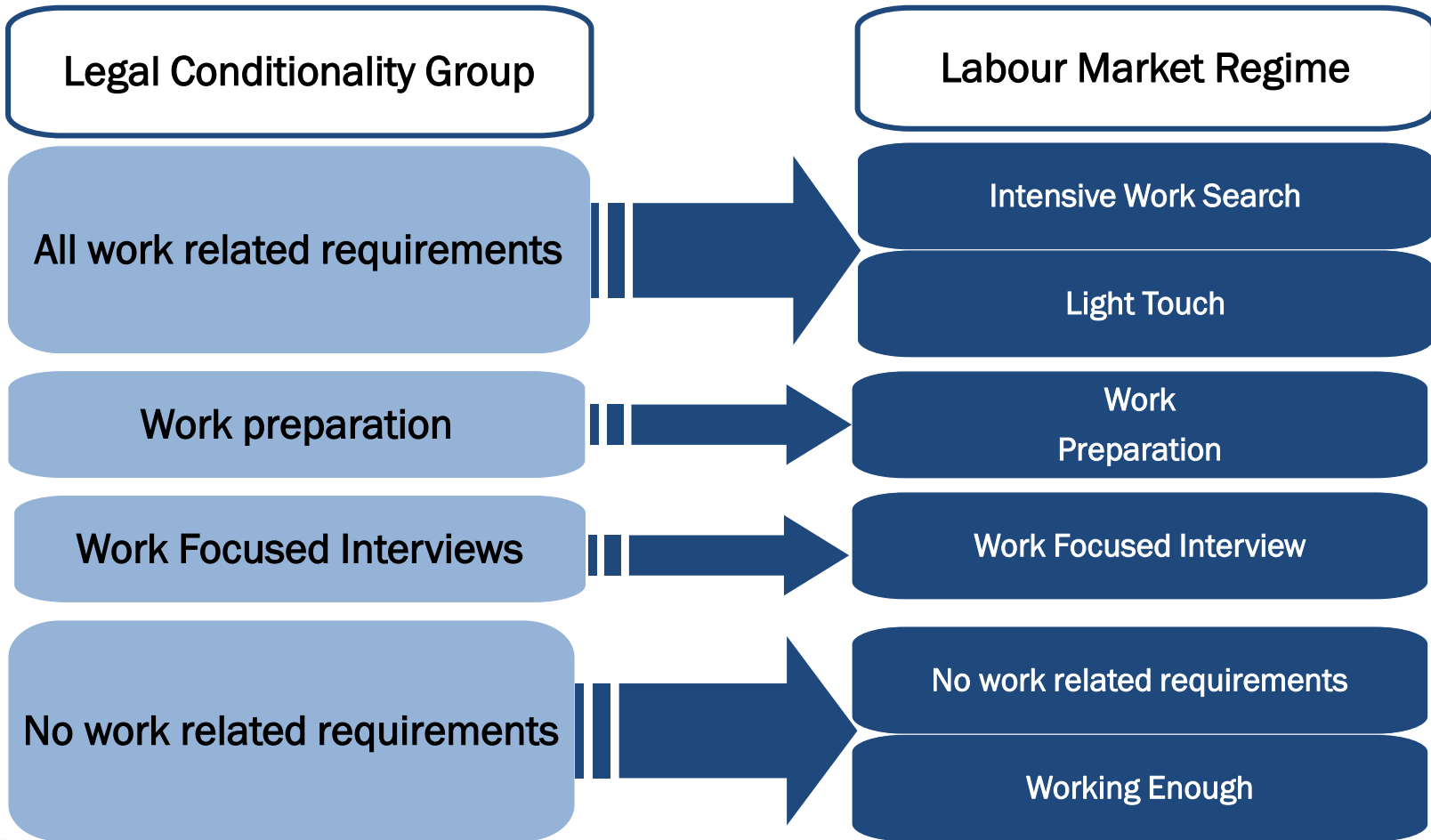
## It's about encouraging personal responsibility

- Universal Credit promotes personal responsibility to actively seek work and increase earnings, while continuing to provide support for those who need it most.
- Universal Credit is designed to raise expectations of claimants about what they can do to find work and to increase their earnings.





# Labour Market Regimes



# The Commitment



- The Commitment will be agreed between the Work Coach and the claimant; it will be tailored to the claimant's individual circumstances
- Claimants will be required to fulfil the conditions of their Commitment in return for Universal Credit
- The Commitment outlines what activities the claimant is expected to complete in return for receiving Universal Credit
- The Commitment will clearly outline the consequences of not completing these activities



## Digital Service

- Claimants will have to apply and maintain Universal Credit claims independently online via [nidirect.gov.uk](http://nidirect.gov.uk)
- Universal Credit staff will enable, support and educate claimants to self-serve
- Assisted Digital support will be offered to claimants who cannot independently make or maintain a claim online

**nidirect**  
government services

# Universal Credit Assisted Digital Offer



Support from family and friends



Telephone support when using  
online channel



Coaching and  
support by the  
First Contact  
Team or Work  
Coach in the  
Digital Zone

Agent by  
Proxy\*  
  
(Telephony)



# Support for Claimants with Complex Needs



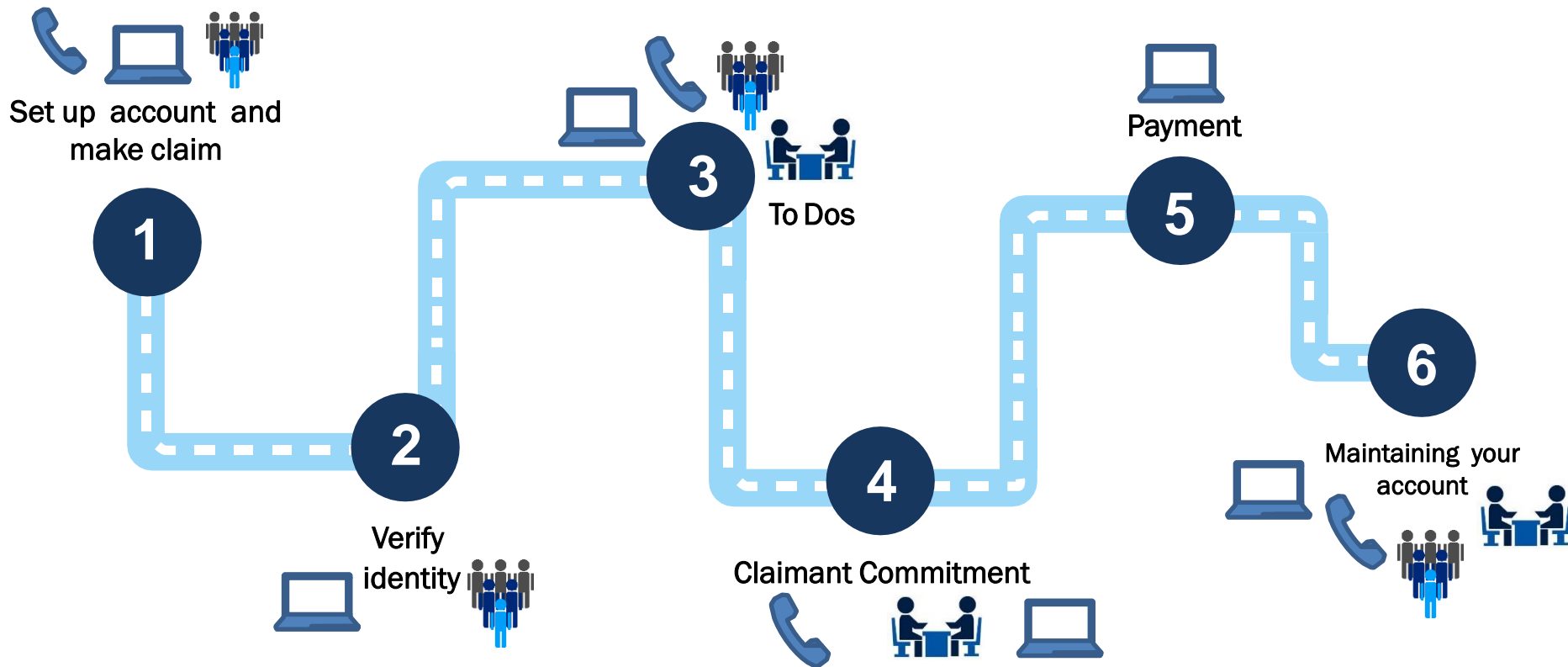
“An **individual** who is identified as having **complex needs** and requires additional support to enable them to access Universal Credit Services”.

UC Advance	Appointee	Discretionary Support	Signposting to Third Party provision
Easements to work related requirements		Biographical Test for claimants without ID	
Alternative Payment Arrangements		Exceptional Payment Methods	
Home Visit	Access to Recoverable Hardship Payments	Regular interventions with Work Coach	Interpreting Services

# 4. Customer Journey

# Universal Credit Claimant Journey

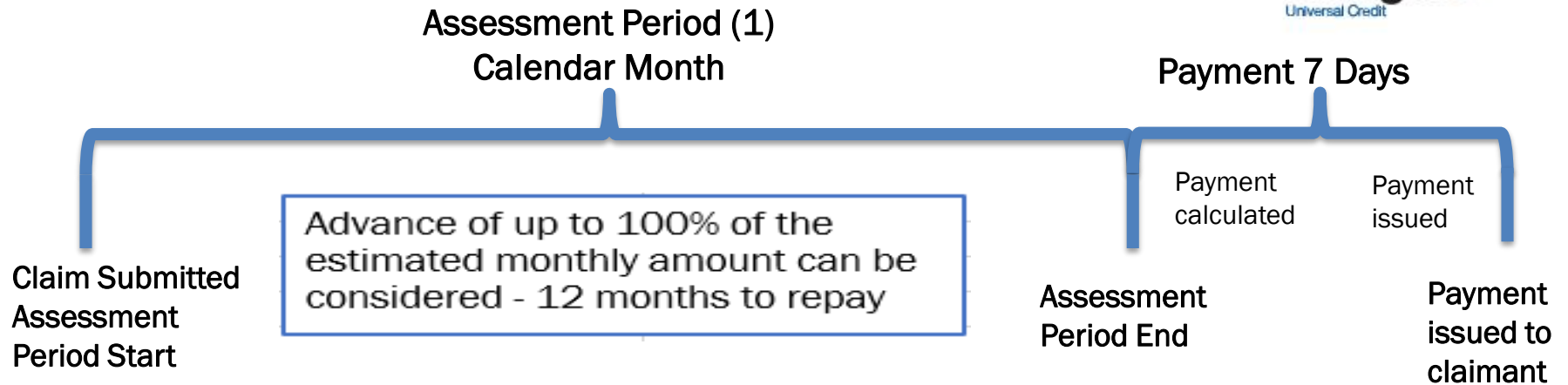
On-line    Service Centre    First Contact Team    Work Coach



Assisted Digital Offer



# Universal Credit – Payment Timeline



	Assessment Period 1	Assessment Period 2	Assessment Period 3	Assessment Period 4	Assessment Period 5
Paid Twice Monthly	Advance up to 100% of UC Award	£ 500 £ 500	£ 500 £ 500	£ 500 £ 500	£ 500 £ 500
	8th April to 7th May	8th May to 7th June	8th June to 7th July	8th July to 7th August	8th August to 7th Sept.



# 5. Housing

# Northern Ireland Housing Position



- The Northern Ireland default position is to pay the Housing Element of the Universal Credit award **directly to the Landlord**
- A claimant can opt out of the NI default arrangement, criteria applies
- Housing Element of Universal Credit does not include help towards rates
- Landlords can request direct payment of Housing Element, criteria applies



# Social Rental Sector



- Universal Credit additional amount for Housing Element will be the actual housing costs
- Service charges that are not covered by Universal Credit or charges for utilities, such as water or electricity are not included in the Housing Element
- Payment schedule file will be in same format as now

# Private Rental Sector

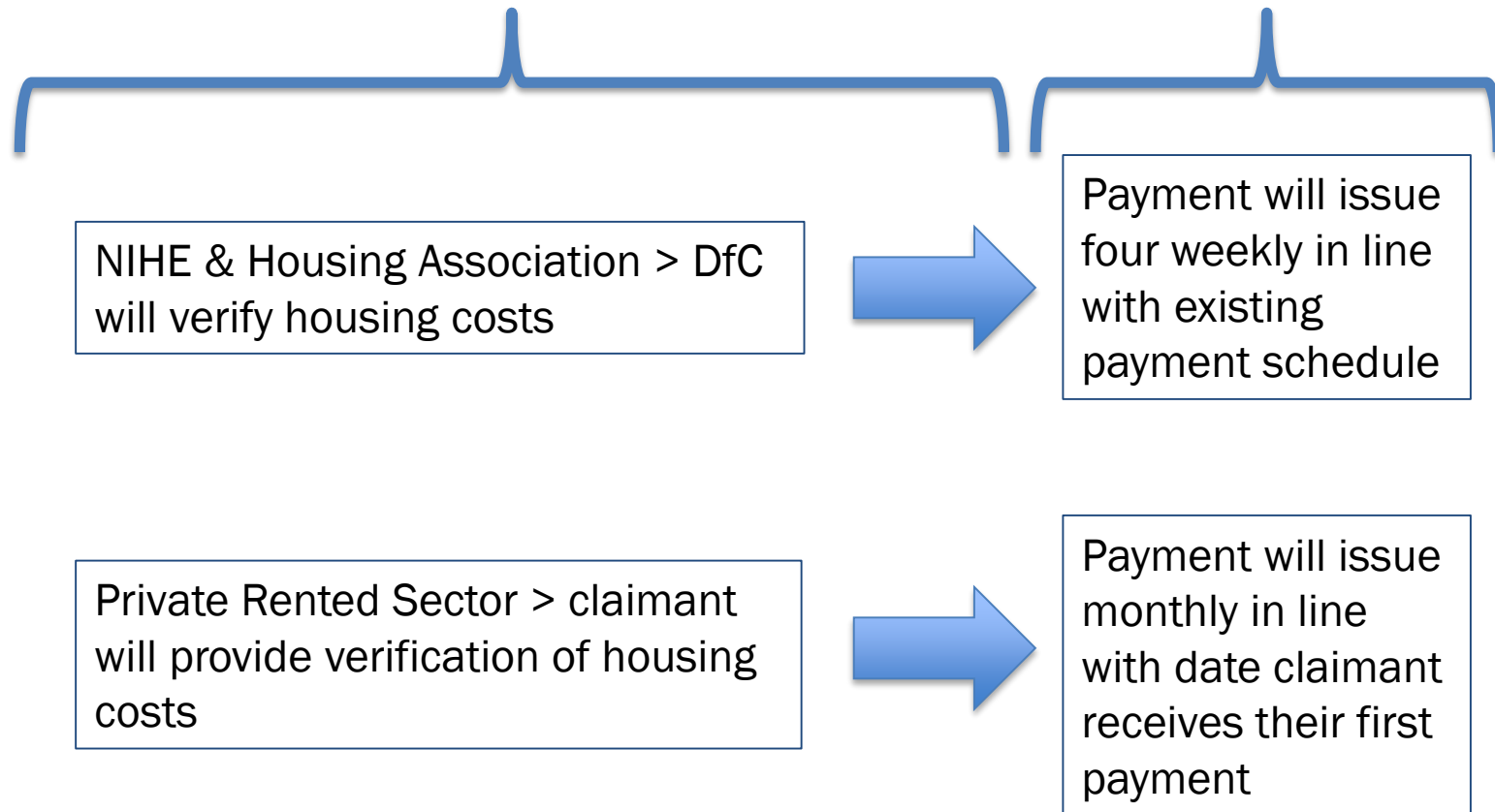


- Universal Credit Housing Element will either be the claimants actual housing costs or the Local Housing Allowance rate, whichever is lower
- Responsibility of claimant to pay landlord any shortfall between Housing Element and their rent
- The Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (NI) 2012 were introduced on the 25 February 2014 - requires all landlords who let properties, in NI, under a private tenancy to register under the scheme
- The Housing Element of Universal Credit will be paid directly to registered landlords

# Housing Element Payment Timeline

## Assessment Period

## Payment issues



# Supported Accommodation



Supported Accommodation costs are not included in Universal Credit Housing Element

Supported Accommodation is paid through Housing Benefit which is administered by NIHE

Housing Benefit is claimed online [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)

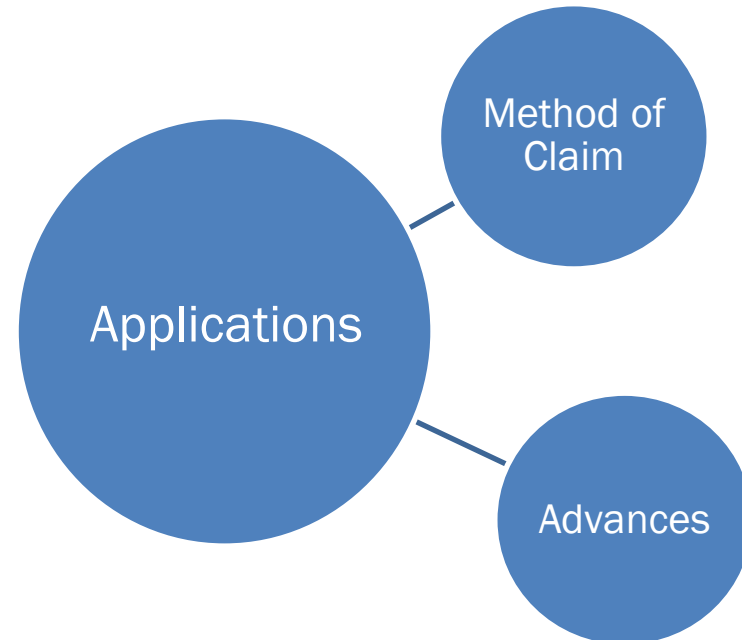
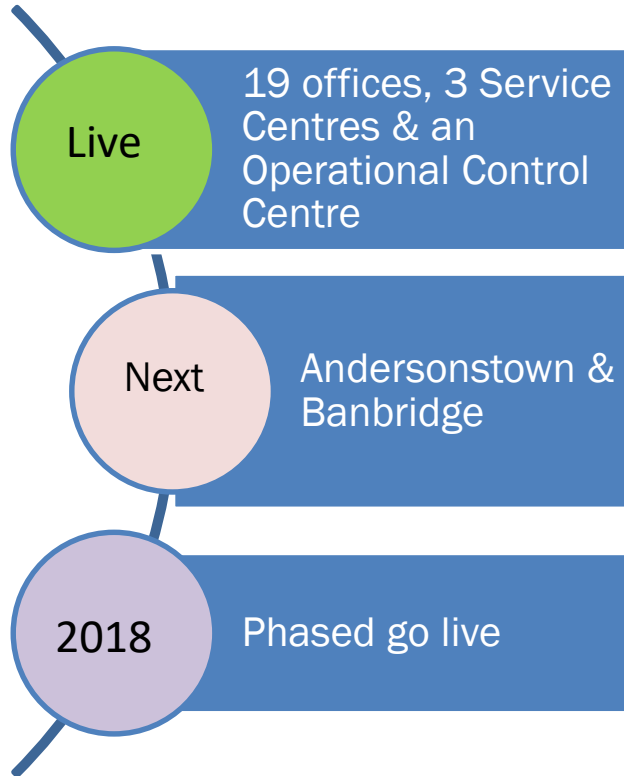
# The 'Big Picture'



# 6. Universal Credit – Feedback



# Progress to date



# **7. What does Universal Credit mean for the Advice Sector?**

# What does Universal Credit mean for the Advice Sector?



- Key stakeholders in the successful delivery of Universal Credit
- Support delivery of Universal Credit
- Demand for services will change; service may be delivered differently
- The Executive made a commitment to provide £8million funding over four years to provide additional independent advice services on Welfare Reform
- Advice Sector will receive training around Universal Credit and also digital up-skilling

# How can the Advice Sector help their clients prepare for Universal Credit



Promote the benefits of Universal Credit. Claimants keep more of what they earn and getting a job and/or increasing earnings is the best choice for individuals and families.



Encourage and support their clients to set-up an email account and know how to access it.



Encourage their clients to set-up a bank account.



Encourage and support their clients to improve their online skills

# What do I need to do to prepare?



- Avail of opportunities to improve my IT skills, and transfer of these skills to my clients



- Attend future Universal Credit awareness sessions



- Supporting information on nidirect including, interactive tools, information booklets and 'how to make a claim' guides

# 8. Next Steps

# Next Steps

- Continued engagement with regional and local Advice Sector
- Further event around 6 weeks before go-live
- Feedback – what do you need from us?

# Questions?

For information on all the Welfare Changes please visit  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/welfarechanges](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/welfarechanges)

If you have any questions please contact us at  
[universalcreditcommunications@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:universalcreditcommunications@communities-ni.gov.uk)