

**Universal Credit: Future Telephony and Digital Support Offer 2022**

**Request for Information (RFI)**

**Date: 7th May 2021**

**Version: Final 1.0**

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**1. Introduction**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) wishes to give notice of a potential funding opportunity for organisations to deliver and provide support for citizens of England, Scotland and Wales to make a new claim to Universal Credit (UC) and thereby help them to move closer to or increase their employment.

We anticipate that any formal competition process may commence in early Summer 2021 in order to agree any new arrangement from 1st April 2022 (for an initial period of 1 year to 31st March 2022).

**Through this Request for Information (RFI) process we want to understand whether there are organisations who could currently, or would wish to, compete to provide support as set out in this document. We have asked some set questions below which we think will help us understand the appetite and readiness of existing or new organisations to act in this space.**

We invite feedback from all private and public organisations, including the Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise sector, to inform our strategy. This will help us to build our requirements and identify areas of innovation for supporting people to make a claim for UC. Feedback received will be used to develop any final Request for Proposal pack.

This market engagement exercise is also designed to ensure that any final Request for Proposal pack provides all potential organisations with a clear understanding of DWP requirements to help reduce the number of questions that may be raised during any competition process.

**Information supplied in response to this RFI, and any discussions throughout the duration of the market engagement process, will not be subject to formal evaluation or scoring as this is not a formal application.**

To maximise the benefits from the market engagement and best inform requirements, respondents are encouraged to participate and be as open and detailed in their responses as possible. **Depending on the response to this RFI, there may be further engagement exercises.**

**2. Departmental goals**

**Department for Work and Pensions**

DWP is responsible for welfare, pensions and child maintenance policy. As the UK’s biggest public service department it administers a range of working age, pension age, disability and ill-health benefits to over 20 million claimants and customers.

DWP priorities include:

* Running an effective welfare system that enables people to achieve financial independence by providing assistance aimed at supporting them into employment;
* Creating a fair and affordable welfare system which improves the life chances of citizens;
* Delivering outstanding services to our customers and claimants; and
* Delivering efficiently: transforming the way we deliver our services to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

The Department for Work and Pensions intends to provide funding to an organisation (or organisations) to assist those citizens in England, Scotland & Wales (**not** Northern Ireland) requiring additional support to make and maintain their UC claim up until their first correct UC payment.

**3. Partnership strategy**

DWP is seeking to provide funding for activities that deliver a consistent quality of outcomes, irrespective of location. This does not necessarily have to be through a single recipient: we are also seeking more information on how multiple organisations could work, including consortia, to provide support.

We are interested to hear from both:

* Smaller and/or specialist organisations that could demonstrably:
  + Offer specialist support (this could be on the basis of local reach, issue type, client type, etc.)
  + Co-ordinate with other providers to meet the requirements
* Organisations that could demonstrably:
  + Provide national coverage within their own organisation, and/or co-ordinate national coverage through other organisations

We welcome responses from consortia/groups with details of how they would co-ordinate in order to meet our requirements.

We are open to hearing about creative and innovative ideas organisations may have to support people to make a UC claim and help people engage with that support.

**4. General requirements**

Based on volumes previously seeking support, our planning assumption is that c250k people may seek support from the offer to make a UC claim in the 2022/23 year.It is anticipated that the funding referenced in this RFI will be used by organisations **to support people, through telephony and digital/webchat channels only**,with making, completing and maintaining a new UC claim. We are developing a separate face to face support approach based on those who need much more complex support so funding for face to face support is not part of this RFI.

The Telephony and Digital support could include, but may go beyond:

* Understand eligibility to Universal Credit;
* Support to submit a UC claim;
* Support with evidence requirements;
* Other support required between claim submission and first payment;
* Support understanding how Universal Credit works;
* Partner engagement and outreach into the local community; and
* Signpost/refer to more in depth support (i.e. debt advice, digital inclusion support and assistance).

The following provisional general requirements for the future service have been identified. We are interested in understanding whether and how interested organisations can:

* design and implement support based on claimant need at either national, local and/or community based level;
* support a person to make and complete a new claim to UC, including those moving to UC from an existing benefit via a change in circumstances;
* support a person to maintain a new claim to UC by themselves;
* encourage and promote self-service, whilst demonstrating that the most vulnerable and hardest to help claimants who may have more than one issue are fully supported (and referred effectively to other provision);
* target support to all people from different demographic-based claimant groups including employed/unemployed, those with a disability or health condition, claimants of different ages;
* deliver high quality support, such that there is consistent quality of outcomes irrespective of location;
* provide accessible support through **telephony and digital channels (including webchat)**;
* demonstrate effective partnership working, and the ability to co-ordinate, with a range of relevant expert organisations providing support and advice in relation to social welfare and bringing people closer to the labour market. This includes organisations providing support with drugs, alcohol, mental and physical health issues and debt advice as well as housing and social care;
* have a means of establishing a strong community reach, with the ability to efficiently and effectively reach people and track them through their support;
* provide qualitative and quantitative data and user research to continuously improve the user experience and report a clear set of outcomes to demonstrate benefits (financial and non-financial);
* demonstrate financial competence and provide regular and thorough financial reporting;
* comply with applicable laws and codes of conduct, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR); and
* clearly and regularly demonstrate value for money.

**5. General information about this RFI**

* This RFI is issued solely **for information and planning purposes**. It is not to be construed as a commitment by DWP to start a competition, solicit applications or ultimately award any funding. Responses will not be considered as proposals nor will any award be made as a result of your responses to this RFI.
* All information contained in the RFI is preliminary and subject to modification and is in no way binding on DWP. DWP makes no warranty or representation as to the accuracy or completeness or otherwise of this RFI and accepts no liability whatsoever and however arising from the use of this RFI or any omissions from or deficiencies in this RFI.
* Nothing contained in this RFI or any other communication between DWP or its representatives and any recipient of this RFI shall constitute an agreement or representation between DWP and that recipient. DWP shall not be committed to any course of action as a result of communicating with any party in connection with this RFI. DWP may use the information included in your response for any reasonable purpose connected with this RFI.
* Responders to this RFI are solely responsible for all costs and expenses associated with responding to this RFI.
* Subject to any disclosure obligation required by law (including, for the avoidance of doubt, the Freedom of Information Act 2000), DWP will treat the answers you give to the following questions as confidential (excluding any information already in the public domain) and will not disclose your answers to any third party outside government, other than to its advisers and consultants who are also bound by the same confidentiality rules.

**6. Request for Information (RFI) questions**

**Guidance for completion**

This RFI document forms part of the market engagement activity to identify a future support provision (by telephony and digital) to help people make a claim to Universal Credit.

Please note the deadline for completing and returning this RFI document is 21st May 2021

**Responses to this document, and all other communications, queries and questions relating to this market engagement stage, must be sent via the email address: UCfuture.support@dwp.gov.uk**

Information supplied in response to this RFI, and any discussions throughout the duration of the market engagement process, will not be subject to formal evaluation or scoring. To maximise the benefits from the market engagement and best inform the funding process, recipients are encouraged to participate and be as open and detailed in their responses as possible. This is not a shortlisting process and will not prejudice any future competitive exercise.

**This is NOT a formal application form for funding from DWP.** DWP will use this information to consider whether there are organisations willing and able to compete for a support offer and to determine external views of the components and costs of such an offer. This will inform a decision on next steps.

DWP may issue a further RFI document or undertake further engagement to support the development of any funding proposal.

**Organisations are asked to respond to the questions below, not exceeding 500 words for each response.**

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| **Organisation name:** |  |
| **Organisation full address, including postcode:** |  |
| **Organisation type:** |  |
| **Charity registration number (if applicable):** |  |
| **Company number (if applicable):** |  |

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| **1 - Briefly describe your organisation’s regular work.**  *Include information on structure, history, vision, relevant experience, staff numbers and how you normally manage funding.* |
| **Response:** |

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| **2 - What geographic area do you currently cover in providing your services? Please list the specific postcode sector(s) (e.g. SW1 2)\***  ***\*or state “England, Scotland, Wales or GB wide” if appropriate*** |
| **Response:** |
| **3 - What geographic area could you cover to deliver telephony and digital support, either alone or in partnership with other organisation(s)? Please list the specific postcode sector(s) (e.g. SW1 2)\***  ***\*or state “England, Scotland, Wales or GB wide” if appropriate*** |
| **Response:** |

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| **4 - Would your organisation be capable of meeting all the general requirements listed in section 4 above or would you propose to bid as part of an ‘umbrella’ co-ordinating organisation or as a consortium? (list any organisations you would partner with to bid).**  (insert ) | |
| **Yes, our organisation could meet all of the general requirements without partnering.** |  |
| **No, we would bid as part of an ‘umbrella’ organisation or as a consortium** |  |
| **If “No”, which organisations would you bid with?** |  |

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| **5 - Describe how you are currently equipped to support people to make, complete and maintain their Universal Credit new claim. If you are not currently equipped, please describe how you would meet this requirement.** |
| **Response:** |

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| **6 - Describe how your delivery model would meet the General Requirements in paragraph 4 above.** |
| **Response:** |

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| **7 – If relevant, describe how partnership working with other organisations may enable you to fulfil all the requirements?** |
| **Response:** |

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| **8 - Describe how you would market/publicise your telephony and digital support to potential UC claimants and how you would ensure people are served on the right channel according to their needs?** |
| **Response:** |

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| **9 - Describe your organisation’s experience of tailoring services to customers. Where this includes working with UC and/or wider welfare benefits or vulnerable or disadvantaged customers please elaborate.** |
| **Response:** |

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| **10 - What infrastructure and capabilities does your organisation currently have to provide telephony and digital support?** |
| **Response:** |
| 1. **If you do not currently have these particular channel infrastructures and capabilities:**  * **How could you gain these?** * **How long would it take?** |
| **Response:** |

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| **11 - What operating hours could you offer in delivering such a Telephony/Digital service?** |
| **Response:** |

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| **12 - Describe how you would monitor, track and evaluate performance and manage risk.** |
| **Response:** |

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| **13 - Explain how you would measure your telephony and digital support delivery for value for money and wider impacts on society and how you would report on these aspects.** |
| **Response:** |

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| **14 - Any new service would need to be ready to deliver by 1 April 2022. What challenges do you envisage to be able to meet this timescale?** |
| **Response:** |

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| **15 - How much funding do you estimate that you would need to:**   1. **set up and implement the telephony and digital support across England, Wales and Scotland?** 2. **deliver the telephony and digital support across England, Wales and Scotland?** |
| **Response:** |

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| **16 - Please provide any additional information which you feel might be of value, including;**   1. **which aspects of this proposal appeals to you and why?** 2. **which aspects are less appealing and why?** 3. **what factors would discourage you from bidding for funding?** |
| **Response:** |

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| **Name of authorised representative:** |  |
| **Position in organisation:** |  |
| **Date:** |  |

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this Request for Information document.**