

Message From Rural CAB



As you may be aware the Universal Support Help to Claim service was up for recommissioning by the Department for Work and Pensions at the end of 2021. I am pleased to confirm that National Citizens Advice has been awarded funding by the DWP to continue to provide tailored, practical support to people making a Universal Credit claim, up until their first successful payment.

National Citizens Advice have informed us that from 1st April 2022 there will be 31 local Citizens Advice offices who will be district leads based in each Jobcentre Plus district. An additional number of offices will be funded to deliver across all digital channels, and these are geographically spread. The lead office for the East of England will be in Cambridge.

The current arrangements for providing the Help to Claim service will continue until 31st March 2022, so there will be no gap in support for the people, who come to us for help. People will still be able to access support through Freephone telephone, email and web chat.

Under the new arrangements there will be some changes to how clients can access our support as funding for the new service is for remote advice only. People will also be able to independently access online content about applying for Universal Credit and support via the National Citizens Advice public website. Currently Citizens Advice is in discussions with the DWP about face-to-face support for people that need it. We will update you about the outcomes of these conversations.

Unfortunately, as a result of the above changes, Citizens Advice Rural Cambs will suffer a significant loss of funding during a period when the demand for its services is expected to continue to increase. In response, it is proposed to restructure the organisation to reduce costs but at the same time continue the expansion of the Digital Contact Centre with a view to increasing its capacity by 20%

The new structure will continue to be led by Nick Blencowe, Chief Officer and Helen Spriggs, Deputy Chief Officer and although the total number of employees will broadly remain the same, some existing roles will disappear, while other roles will be created. These changes amount to a major investment in and commitment to, the future of Citizens Advice Rural Cambs

We will of course keep all of our partners and other local organisations updated about our services and how clients can continue to access advice and support through them.

In the meantime, thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Mealing'.

Michael Mealing

Chair

Citizens Advice Rural Cambs