# Universal Credit Pathfinder and national rollout

Universal Credit will go live in the Greater Manchester and Cheshire region in April 2013, six months before the national rollout, Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith has announced.

The way in which Universal Credit will be introduced from October 2013 has also been confirmed. It will begin in seven locations across the country in October 2013, and will then expand to all areas over the following months as Jobseeker’s Allowance is closed to new claims.

The full details of the announcement are available in the [DWP Newsroom](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/newsroom/press-releases/2012/may-2012/dwp057-12.shtml). Related articles will be published on the Universal Credit local authority pages on the DWP website ([www.dwp.gov.uk/ucla](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/ucla)) and in the next edition of HB Direct.

## Pathfinder

An early, controlled implementation of Universal Credit will take place in Jobcentres in Tameside, Oldham, Warrington and Wigan, with local authorities supporting Pathfinder claimants delivering some face to face services.

From April 2013 the majority of newly unemployed claimants who would formerly have claimed Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) and live in the Pathfinder area (as defined by post code) will be directed to claim Universal Credit.

It is estimated that there will be up to 1,500 new claims to Universal Credit per month in Pathfinder and throughout the initial Pathfinder period about 9,000 households will have claimed Universal Credit.

Pathfinder will help to further explore and define the role the local authorities may fulfil in delivering face to face services. These services could include:

* help for claimants to claim Universal Credit online
* financial advice
* help in complex cases that require face to face services
* general enquiries
* support for Pathfinder Operational Centre, and
* support for Universal Credit staff where Universal Credit entitlement includes complicated housing costs requiring technical expertise.

If a claimant in receipt of Universal Credit moves out of the Pathfinder area, they will continue to receive Universal Credit. The exception is if a Universal Credit claimant moves to Northern Ireland. Legislation to pay Universal Credit in Northern Ireland does not come into force until October 2013 so in these circumstances the claim to Universal Credit will be terminated and the claimant will claim JSA in Northern Ireland.

## Introduction of Universal Credit

Universal Credit will be introduced simultaneously across all seven Jobcentre Plus groups (Scotland, Wales, North West England, North East England, Central England, Southern England, London and Home Counties) in October 2013. It will begin in seven locations across Great Britain in October 2013, and will then expand to all areas over the following months as Jobseeker’s Allowance is closed to new claims.

DWP will continue to work with local authorities and HMRC on a precise timing schedule and further details are expected to be available over the next few months, including how existing benefit and credit claimants will move onto Universal Credit. This is over a year in advance of the national start of Universal Credit and will help all the departments involved – DWP, local authorities and HMRC –to plan for the changes they need to make.