

Scrutiny and overview committee
22nd March 2016

Cllr Mark Watson

Welfare reform

The Gateway and Welfare directorate was created in April 2015 to enhance the life chances of every resident. Its whole family approach is used to provide a holistic tailored support package that joins up all support needs to empower and support families and individuals to achieve sustainable outcomes

During 2015/16, the service has responded to significant change as part of Government's welfare reforms and our priority has been to support residents through these changes and prevent crisis.

- As part of the national rollout of Universal Credit, the council was the second authority nationally selected to commence the phased rollout of digital implementation from June 2015
- Resident's total annual household income will be capped at £23k in October 2016. This will affect 980 residents, 356 of which were already impacted by the introduction of the benefit cap in 2013
- Government funding was reduced by £513k in 2015 with the removal local welfare provision and reduction of Discretionary Housing Payment funding

2015-16 our successes and achievements

- Local support offer developed for all residents impacted by Universal Credit
- Financial inclusion plan delivered with on-going commitment to supporting our residents to be financially stable
- Working across services in the People department, development of the Think Family panel to review the most expensive families in terms of combined cost to the council across a range of services
- Enablement and Welfare service established to support residents at risk of crisis in delivering the following outcomes:
 - 2542 residents supported to achieve positive outcomes
 - 229 moves to affordable homes
 - 23 B&B residents moved into affordable homes
 - 999 residents provided with budgeting support and debt advice
 - 21% of caseload received employment support with 26% now in work

2016-17 challenges ahead

- Universal Credit
 - It is forecast that by March 2017, 11,280 households that would previously have claimed Housing Benefit from the council will have claimed Universal Credit
 - With the expansion of the rollout, support residents through the transition and mitigate risks that our residents and the council face
- Welfare reform
 - Implement benefit cap in October supporting residents to manage the financial loss through budgeting support, income maximisation including employment support and support in finding affordable homes
- Financial inclusion
 - Embed the principles of our financial inclusion plan across the council to continue supporting our residents in becoming financially stable and evolve this support in the face of further financial challenges ahead

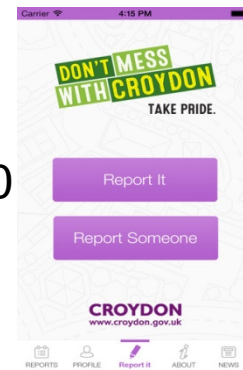
Digital Inclusion



- In 2013, 36 million adults (73%) in Britain access the internet everyday.
- It is estimated that households offline are missing out on savings of £560 per year.
- 81% of people over 55 say being online makes them feel part of modern society and less lonely.
- Latest survey shows 23,000 local residents in Croydon without basic digital skills

Achievements so far

- Over 140,000 residents signed up for MyAccount of which over 100,000 have agreed to be communicated through that tool.
- GO ON Croydon launch – first London Borough. Launched Nov 2015.
- 14 digital zones now open across Borough; including Access Croydon, Lloyds bank, Job centre plus and age UK – further zones opening in coming months.
- 6 deep dive projects investigating approaches for digital technology to support various customer groups.
- Number of community facilities in progress and commitments across borough for remainder of year.



Achievements cont.

- Over 400 LBC staff have indicated interest in being digital champion, 40 trained and another 20 to progress initially, **325 pledges from staff to directly assist someone in the community with digital skills.**
- Digital and enabling project delivered further £1.2m savings in 15/16 with further efficiencies underway for 2016/17 – including further on-line services for parking and internal automation.
- Re-launched local Credit Union – Croydon Plus – providing online banking, savings and loan facilities for local residents.
- Launched on-line Get-Involved service to provide residents input and feedback into services and community priorities.

Priorities



- Supporting partners and community to further progress digital skills training for all the community.
- Investment partners for Wifi and broadband provision – part of Growth Zone.
- Utilising council and partner assets to provide access.
- Further development of councils offer for on-line services, engagement and communication to deliver and shape services.