

Limehouse Project (LHP)

Digital Support Advice Sessions

BACKGROUND

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, LHP's advice service was primarily accessed through face-to-face interactions. During the COVID-19 lockdown, we adapted by establishing a telephone advice line and offering digital support via WhatsApp and Zoom.

Post-lockdown, LHP has seen a significant increase in demand for face-to-face digital support, particularly for accessing and managing Universal Credit (UC). The current mandatory migration to Universal Credit during 2024 has further increase the (already acute) demand for our advice provision.

Many of our clients are often digitally excluded and lack the necessary skills to understand and/or successfully navigate Universal Credit processes and requirements. Many have limited English skills, and struggle with literacy and numeracy. Many clients do not have an email account, which consumes a considerable amount of advisers' time before addressing the clients' advice needs.

To address this, the LHP Advice Service introduced weekly drop-in digital support sessions. These sessions assist clients in creating email accounts, accessing UC, and managing online benefits accounts, learn how to report changes, add notes to their journals, and view payments to manage their Universal Credit claims on their own devices, such as smartphones and tablets. Using their own devices helps clients become more familiar and learn faster.

The goal of these digital support sessions is to educate clients, enabling them to create and manage online accounts independently. This initiative helps clients become more prepared for their actual advice sessions with the advisers.

AT A GLANCE

- There has been an increase in demand for face-to-face digital support since the pandemic due to the shift to online provision.
- LHP have setup weekly drop-in digital support sessions to address this challenge.
- The sessions support clients to develop basic digital skills necessary for managing their online benefits.
- The initiative ultimately empowers clients, making them more self-sufficient in managing their Universal Credit accounts and other online services, while also improving the efficiency of the LHP Advice Service.
- Supporting clients with digital literacy allows them to be better prepared for social welfare legal advice appointments and enables advisors to focus on the clients specific needs rather than digital support.

"The digital advice support initiative ultimately empowers clients, making them more self-sufficient in managing their UC accounts and other online services, while also improving the efficiency of the LHP Advice Service."

Case study contact

Limehouse Project – Advice Service
<https://limehouseproject.org.uk/our-advice-services/>

About this document

This case study has been developed by [Bromley by Bow Insights](#) and [Transformation Partners in Health and Care](#) who are working together to support the integration of social welfare advice into the health and social care system.

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HOW IT WORKS

The weekly drop-in digital support sessions at LHP are designed to assist clients in developing basic digital skills necessary for managing their Universal Credit (UC) accounts and other online benefits.

Here's how the process works:

1. **Weekly Drop in Session:** digital support sessions delivered on every Friday morning.
2. **Using Personal Devices** - helps them become familiar with their own technology, making it easier to replicate the skills learned at home. For clients who do not have access to devices, we provide some during the drop-in sessions.
3. **Creating Online Accounts:** such as email accounts which is a must for accessing UC
4. **Accessing Universal Credit:** Advisers guide clients to access and manage their UC accounts online.
5. **Skill Development:** The sessions focus on teaching clients how to perform these tasks independently.
6. **Follow-up support for clients:** Clients who need additional assistance can book follow-up sessions.
7. **Efficiency for Advisers:** Equipping clients with basic digital skills allows advisers to focus on the specific advice needs of clients
8. **Breaks (For Advisers):** Advisers should have short breaks scheduled
9. **Follow-Up/Referrals (for advisors):** After the last client session, advisers have dedicated time for follow up work (e.g. 2pm - 5pm).

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KEY FACTORS TO SUCCESS

- Effective communication about the benefits and availability of these sessions and tailoring sessions to meet the specific needs and skill levels of each client.
- Training advisers to effectively teach digital skills and provide clear, patient guidance and keeping up with changes in digital platforms and benefits systems to provide up-to-date guidance.
- Regularly collecting and analysing feedback from clients to improve the support sessions and providing follow-up sessions to reinforce learning and address ongoing needs.
- Promoting the digital support sessions through various channels to reach a wider audience.
- Ensuring advisers have access to the necessary resources and tools to support clients effectively.
- Creating a welcoming and non-judgmental atmosphere where clients feel comfortable seeking help.

IMPACT

1. Improved confidence with digital skills

Completing online claim forms, and managing their Universal Credit claims online account features, such as reporting changes, adding notes to their journal, and viewing payments to manage their Universal Credit claims effectively and independently

2. Increased Client Self-Sufficiency

Clients gain essential digital skills, enabling them to independently manage their Universal Credit accounts and other online services. This reduces their reliance on advisers for basic tasks, fostering greater confidence and self-independence.

3. Enhanced Efficiency for Advisers

By addressing clients' digital skill gaps in dedicated sessions, advisers can focus on more complex issues during actual advice appointments. This streamlines the advice process and allows advisers to provide more targeted and effective support.

4. Improved Client Preparedness

Clients are better prepared for their advice sessions with an initial understanding of digital tools and platforms. This preparation results in more productive and focused advice sessions, leading to quicker resolutions and more satisfactory outcomes for clients.

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