

## Getting Universal Credit ready is sometimes about changing lives



**Nick Ball** As you all know Universal Credit is coming. In preparation for its roll out in Cornwall this May we set up a pilot project on one of our estates in Bodmin. The aim of this project (named UC – U Can) is to see what it takes to get all 160 tenants Universal Credit ready.

I recently visited the project to see first-hand the work being done by the project's specialist support workers, as well as meeting some of our tenants who will be affected by the change to Universal Credit.

It was really uplifting to see the impact that the project is having on tenants' lives. Our UC-U Can

Support Workers work in partnership with other organisations, to provide comprehensive training, advice and support. This could be anything from help to open a bank account or budgeting advice through to supporting tenants with family, support or health issues. When I spent a day with Neil, one of our UC-U Can Support Workers, I met several people who referred to him as having changed their life. Not many of us can say that about what we do on a daily basis.

One of our tenants, Sarah, has been working with our team to start her own business from home, selling vintage home décor and hair accessories. With three small children it's not been easy, but with the right support Sarah is now developing her business. She has also become a Digital Champion to help other tenants develop their digital skills.

This project is demonstrating to us how complex tenants' lives can be and that to get our tenants ready for this change they need time and support to tackle a range of issues -especially work, financial and health. The challenge we now face is how we work better with partner organisations to get all our tenants Universal Credit ready.

*Nick Ball is the Chair and Independent Board Member of Cornwall Housing Ltd. Cornwall Housing has 10,450 council tenants, 56 of their own homes, and also deliver other housing services for Cornwall Council, including Housing Options.*

