



# Minutes

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| <b>Title of meeting:</b> | Universal Credit Programme Board   |
| <b>Date:</b>             | 16 <sup>th</sup> April 2019, 15:00 to 17:00  |
| <b>Location:</b>         | London Caxton House, Room 6.24   |
| <b>Attendees:</b>        | Sir Robert Walmsley (Chair), Neil Couling (SRO for UC), Ian Wright (UC Programme Director), Shelagh Brown (UC Programme Manager, HMRC), Debbie Alder (Director General Human Resources), Lindsey Whyte (Director HM Treasury), JP Marks (Director General Work and Health), Pete Searle (Strategy Director, Working Age), Simon McKinnon (Director Digital), Steve Buckingham (Finance Director), Colum Boyle (Deputy Secretary for Work and Inclusion DFC Northern Ireland), Lizzy Clifton (Cabinet Office Operations Lead) s40 (Senior Advisor, LGA - Observer) s40 (Observer) |
| <b>Presenters:</b>       | Paul McKeown, Lara Sampson   |
| <b>Apologies:</b>        | Nick Joicey (Director General Finance), Susan Park (Operations Director General), Gareth Young (Cabinet Office Operations Lead), Angela Macdonald (Director General HMRC)  |

## 1. Welcome, Introductions and Actions

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and acknowledged apologies from Gareth Young, Nick Joicey and Angela Macdonald.

He welcomed Steve Buckingham who was attending on behalf of Nick Joicey and Lizzy Clifton attending on behalf of Gareth Young. Also Paul McKeown and Lara Sampson who were presenting papers, and s40 who was attending the meeting as an observer.

The minutes of the Programme Board of 21<sup>st</sup> March were approved without amendment.

### SRO Update

The SRO stated that significant effort is on-going in order to achieve the June deadline for UC regulations to be in force to enable the Move to UC Pilot to start as planned in July. He stressed that patience is required at this time. We are carrying on with the plan and if the regulations are not passed by the end of June we need to accept that there may be a risk some nugatory work would with hindsight look to have been undertaken. The Chair stated that we must try to minimise potentially nugatory financial commitments whilst we are waiting for the regulations to pass.

**Programme Update**

The UC Programme Director provided an update:

The status of the Programme remains Amber.

Live to Full Service transfers were completed by the end of March as planned. We are now concentrating on de-commissioning the Live Service systems and are on track to complete this in time for the milestone at the end of July.

The rollout of the Q-Flow Booking System was successfully completed on 28<sup>th</sup> March with no contingencies having to be put in place. Q-Flow is now live in all 675 sites.

The Help to Claim Service was launched successfully at the start of April, there were some minor problems encountered but these have now been resolved.

The UC Programme Director then updated on the current milestones including:

- GDPR – now Amber as tracking to the revised plan. Working closely with digital colleagues to ensure plan stays on track.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Authentication Service – this milestone will now turn Red as we will be unable to hit the May deadline. More work to interface with new systems is required and revised dates will be available at the next Programme Board meeting. De-commissioning work needs to be completed by September for the existing system.

There have been no changes to the Programme Board Risks and they are tracking as per the last Programme Board.

Finances for 18/19 have been stable over the last 6 months and the outturn is as expected. A £5m overspend has been agreed and this includes some unplanned costs of Help to Claim. The Programme will run out of current Treasury funding in May, and discussions are on-going around extending the funding to the next spending review.

Unit costs continue to track below forecast.

The percentage of claimants verifying identity using Gov.Verify has increased this month and we are investigating what has triggered this increase. It is possible that as we are no longer rolling out colleagues are able to spend more time with claimants helping them with verify or it may be due to 2 providers that were losing their contract. We shall continue to monitor the situation over the coming months.

Programme Board members:

- a) The Director HM Treasury asked if there was a contingency if the date for the UC Regulations was missed. The UC Programme Director felt that if regulations were delayed by around a month we could maintain the date of the current plan. However, if the delay is longer this may change the end date of the plan. The SRO for UC stated that unless we get regulations by the end of June we cannot start the pilot in July.
- b) Deputy Secretary for Work and Inclusion DFC Northern Ireland outlined a potential issue around the Northern Ireland flexibilities, which will not currently be automated in Phase 7. These included direct payments to landlords which is currently a

manual process. This may cause an issue around Christmas if no automation is available as the current live load would have doubled by then. The SRO for UC acknowledged this was a scaling issue and although there is no solution currently will look to take this issue back through formal programme governance.

- c) The Chair was pleased to see a good mixture of ratings in the programme dashboard and felt comfortable with the dashboard because the mix of colours indicated realistic assessments of milestone achievability.
- d) The DG for HR was interested if anything could be learnt from the data around the increase in GOV.UK Verify for last month that we could use moving forward. The SRO for UC stated that this would be a Cabinet Office call as they hold the data sets, and we do not see the Verify data as a matter of course.
- e) The Finance Director was pleased with the stability of the programme financials.

### **3. Operations Update**

The DG for Work and Health provided an update:

Unit Costs are steady in operations currently and colleagues are happy with the key performance indicators this month.

Looking at some common causes of payment timeliness failure such as self-reporting self-employed earnings to see what can be done to improve the situation. Accuracy is improving steadily and is currently around 95%.

On the labour market front the latest figures show record levels of employment with a 76.1% of the working population in employment, female employment is at a record high of 71.8%, and the unemployment rate is at an all-time low (3.9%). There is also an improvement in the disability employment rate which has risen to 51.5%.

The Departmental position for Industrial Action remains live but we have been listening and communicating with TU colleagues, working with sites and leadership teams in sites we believe are at risk of future strike action in order to try and resolve any issues.

Some organisational changes have taken place in operations to bring together the delivery of Work and Health in one group. We are currently finalising four key priorities to support the objectives, these are;

- Resourcing – ensuring caseloads are balanced
- Capability – ensuring our people receive the necessary training to deliver the right customer outcomes
- Wellbeing and Inclusion – focus on supporting our people with more mental health training in 19/20.
- Team Based Performance – has already been piloted successfully in a continual One Service culture.

Programme Board members:

- a) The DG for HR stated that there were variances at the heart of the Industrial Action which included caseload, geographical areas and interaction between jobcentres and service centres regarding hand-offs.
- b) The Chair said he would like to understand more around the subtle differences in telephony data, and how telephony felt to staff. In particular given the reported average call length of 10 minutes and the average number of calls per staff member each week, why did the workload arising from calls seem such a significant issue? The DG for Work and Health said he would be happy to try and put some more detail in future operational updates. He said that we needed to get the capacity right by re-structuring teams to be able to take calls. The SRO for UC stated that we are transforming the organisation and this will take time.
- c) The Chair welcomed the great news on the labour market stats.

**Action 010419** – Provide data on average call length, average number of calls per staff member and the variation in these figures; an assessment of the workload that calls impose on staff members – Director General for Work and Health.

#### 4. UC Programme Baseline Plan

Paul McKeown provided an update:

Following the completion of national rollout of the UC Full Service the team have been working with Directors and Key Stakeholders to outline the longer term planning horizon to 2023.

The non-negotiables for Phase 7 had been discussed and agreed by the Programme Delivery Executive (PDE), these non-negotiables included current Ministerial policy commitments.

Work to scope out the UC pilot is underway in both the London and Leeds digital teams with work on-going to provide a core service offering. Improvements in ID verification and the introduction of a Dynamic Trust Platform (DTP) along with integration to existing HMRC systems will provide opportunities for further iteration and build on GOV.Verify.

Outlined the deliverables that have been planned for the year of consolidation including:

- Closure of Live Service and decommissioning Live Service Systems
- Expanding Service Centre Capacity
- Product Development Phase 7 outcomes
- Service integration, GDPR compliance and an identity verification solution
- Driving increased productivity
- Policy and Ministerial commitments including reducing deductions and increasing work allowances.

The “Move to UC” (formally known as Managed Migration) pilot will start in mid-July providing the regulations are passed, and will focus on the following Core Learning Objectives:

- Test our ability to be able to calculate, explain, pay and erode Transitional protection
- Test engagement and effective mobilisation to successfully claim UC at the right time
- Test the support mechanisms particularly identifying and supporting complex and vulnerable claimants through their journey.

Outlined the capacity challenges faced, and the Programme needing to deliver several Ministerial commitments which include those announced within the Autumn Budget 2018. The Programme needs to focus on consolidation to ensure technical scalability of the service now that volumes are increasing significantly.

Highlighted the baseline commitments in the plan from 2020 to 2023 these included:

- Dynamic Trust platform, which will continue iteration to remote ID improvements
- Transaction Risking, which will be enabled by the Dynamic Trust Platform
- Digital Plus Rollout
- Ministerial commitments agreed previously.

It is critical that stability is maintained within the Programme as we are also planning to start moving claimants from legacy benefits to UC via the Move to UC pilot from July 19.

Programme Board members:

- a) The SRO for UC outlined the importance of this work as it will help to establish a baseline for the rest of the department and wider government regarding what we can and cannot do. We have made several knowledge based assumptions in the plan which may or may not be correct. The Chair agreed with this approach but felt milestones may have to be flexed in response to events within the overall timetable.
- b) The Director HM Treasury felt the presentation was helpful, and asked if anything would need to be revisited around the planning for a potential EU Exit, or did the team feel that the initial plans held good now. Paul McKeown felt that the plans were still good however we need to be able to revisit if necessary.
- c) The DG for HR also found the presentation helpful and felt that the interdependencies of the Programme may shift and if so do we have choices that can be made around dates. Paul McKeown felt that there would be choices to be made in that instance.

**Decision Point** – Programme Board agreed the UC Plan through to 2023, noting that milestones may need to be flexed to respond to events. The Board also noted the capacity constraints to delivery, the existing commitments and potentially future Ministerial and Policy proposals including Spending Review outcomes.

Programme Board agreed to support and maintain the agreed baseline position against pressures for new and additional requirements.

## 5. Move to Universal Credit Update

Lara Sampson provided an update:

The Move to Universal Credit (UC) Phase of the Programme is planned to start with a pilot on 17<sup>th</sup> July, providing regulations have been obtained by the end of June. However, the Programme recognise that we may be undertaking work that may be nugatory if the regulations are not passed.

The programme have changed the language to “Move to UC” from “Managed Migration” following stakeholder feedback.

Outlined the approach to the pilot which is being designed in conjunction with stakeholders. The team are focusing on a series of Problem Statements that have been developed following the first series of stakeholder workshops and continuing engagement with stakeholders directly into the design proposals. The Problem Statements have been grouped into themes including:

- Barriers experienced by people who are hard to reach
- Issues around the ability to act on behalf of claimants
- Issues for claimants accessing appropriate channels
- Risks of termination to benefits
- The needs of vulnerable people and those with complex needs

The pilot will test the approach based on information either we or other departments may hold on our customers. This approach will be called “Who Knows Me” and the idea is to work with partners who have an existing relationship with the customer. The theory being that we should be able to move claimants onto UC without having any break in benefit entitlement. We will work with colleagues from HMRC, Local Authorities and other trusted partners that deliver to or support our customers in any way in order to identify readiness to move. We will build up the design process and learn by doing, looking at what works and how we can make that affordable.

The pilot will start with claimants who are well known to DWP and who currently attend Jobcentres for face to face interventions. These interventions can be used as the trigger for learning how to move people onto UC. Three core pillars will be used as a test for moving people before extending the pilot to work with partners these are:

- We are able to calculate, explain, pay and erode Transitional Protection
- We are able to engage and persuade claimants to act
- We are able to support claimants through the process (including their first and subsequent payments)

Once sufficient confidence has been established in these pillars we will extend the approach, working with trusted partners to support or deliver the process.

The focus has been on getting the teams in Leeds, London and Harrogate to concentrate on the July pilot date and this has involved a significant amount of work from all teams with strong links now established across the 3 sites. We are confident that we have the mechanisms in place to introduce a Minimal Viable Product (MVP) by July. A positive

meeting with Senior Executives from Harrogate Borough Council has been held, and a further meeting will be facilitated with local landlords and groups.

The team will return to Programme Board in June with an update on the pilot.

Programme Board members:

- a) The DG for Digital asked what had been done regarding the participation of landlords in the pilot. Lara Sampson stated that landlords are playing a crucial role in the mapping of the process.
- b) The Finance Director asked if there may be some flexibility from Treasury colleagues when more is known about the pilot. The Director HM Treasury said that there was genuine value in piloting, but it creates challenges around what you can learn from the pilot and how you can develop this within budget.
- c) The DG for Health and Work felt that the paper had been well articulated, and agreed with the principle of smaller for longer. We will need the full year to test but felt that it will ultimately drive down the costs of UC.
- d) The Cabinet Office Operations Lead felt that success factors need to be clearly articulated. Lara Sampson said that a number of assumptions had been made, but we need to learn the characteristics as we move forward.
- e) The Chair felt there had been real progress made in this area and thanked Lara for the comprehensive paper.

**Decision** – Programme Board noted the progress made on Move to UC.

## 6. Hard Facts

The Chair stated the Hard Facts this month would remain as last month which were;

- a) Move to UC remains a challenge and we need to keep moving forward
- b) Pausing rollout to deal with a surge in demand is no longer an option, so resilience and contingency plans are key issues to keep in view.
- c) Channel Shift is a key challenge facing the Programme; we need to avoid telephony growth

**Date of next meeting Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 15.00-17.00 Caxton House Room 6.24**

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