

To: UC Programme Board**From: JP Marks
Work and Health Services
Director General**

Universal Credit Operations Update

Payment Timeliness for subsequent Assessment Periods remains steady at 95% but in the first Assessment Period has dipped to 82%. This is due to a downturn in child verification (CBOL) performance affected by a change in the build and fewer working days due to Easter bank holidays, however it is up 5% compared to Easter last year. Support from the Severe Disability Premium team and overtime will focus work on CBOL to recover performance.

Unit Cost and Caseloading The March actual headline unit cost is £417 (Feb £426). The target unit cost (*including contingency*) for Mar-19 was £450 (Feb-19 was £475) actuals are 7% below that level. The reduction is mainly driven by the caseload growing more quickly than the total costs. This cost reduction trend is expected to continue in 2019/20 driven by higher caseload growth.

Service Centre Caseload (claims) per Case Manager increased slightly to 400 (previously 397 – Jan 19) exceeding the 308 February target. Jobcentre Caseload (claimants) per Work Coach increased to 207 (previously 206 – Jan 19) the highest level to date, although below the February target of 261, which rises to 290 in March 19.

Testing Contingency response plans remains a top priority and we are monitoring the ‘Easter effect’ as a proxy for impacts on Case Management and resultant payment timeliness when capacity is limited. This is in conjunction with a Jobcentre diary capacity exercise to prioritise new claims activity which we hope to conclude by the end of May. A dashboard of economic and operational indicators is monitored weekly.

PCS Union We have a further meeting as part of regular monthly engagement with PCS Trade Union, and we plan to take TU colleagues through our planning for 19/20 in a separate meeting. Despite a number of ‘car park meetings’ in some specific Service Centres, we have not yet received any further notifications of intention to ballot and Walsall and Wolverhampton’s mandate remains live with no further action planned by PCS in these sites that we are aware of.

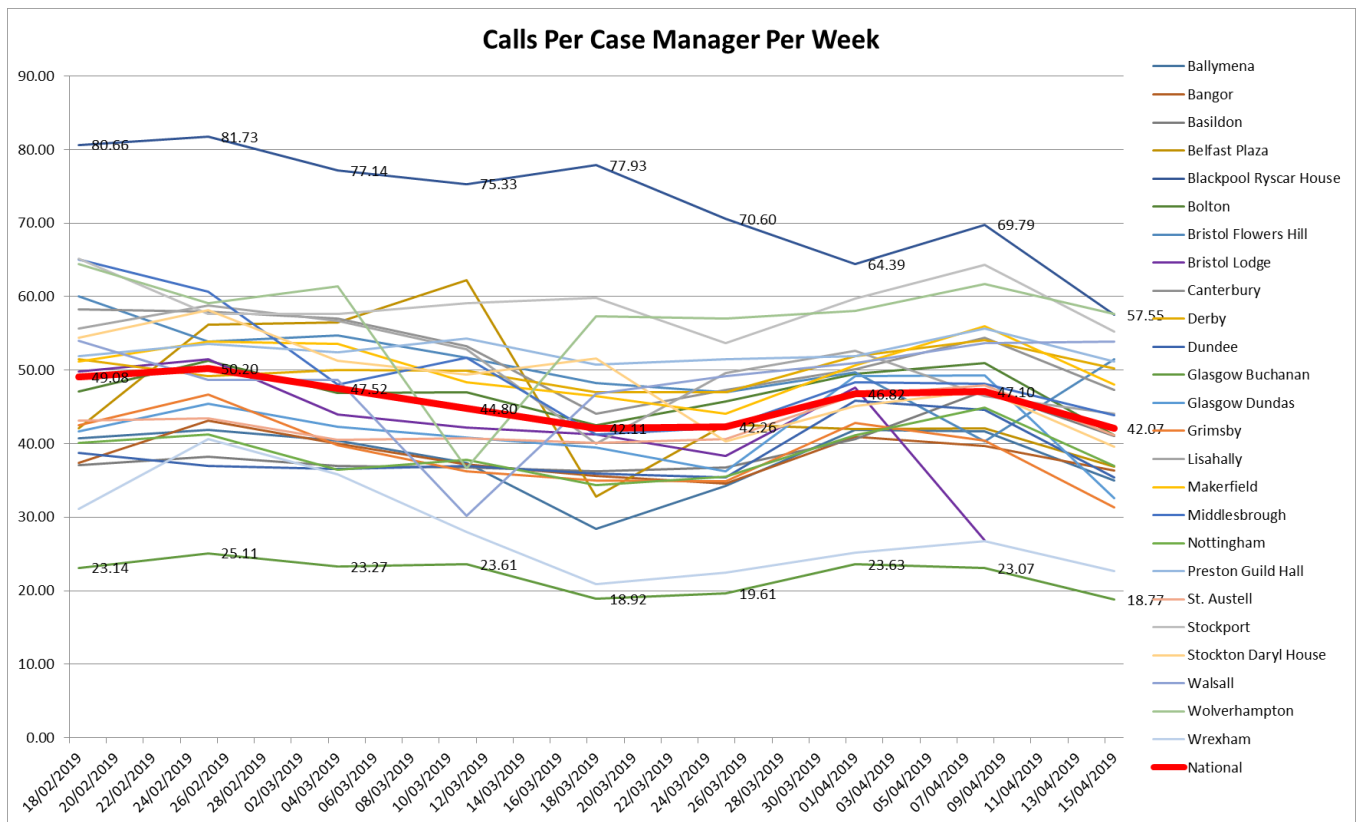
People Priorities To reflect the organisational changes made by bringing all delivery for Work and Health together in one group, we are finalising four key people priorities to support our objectives:

1. **Resourcing** – ensuring we get the right balance of caseload, customer service and performance from our resources, prioritising Service Centre delivery and contributing to reducing the funding gap for 19/20
2. **Capability** – focusing on raising professional capability, ensuring the necessary training for our people to deliver the right customer outcomes and service and improve the capability of our leaders and managers by ensuring 3,300 of our managers and leaders will undertake Leadership Essentials in 19/20
3. **Wellbeing and Inclusion** – we focus in 19/20 on supporting our people with more Mental Health training, developing resilience and ensuring people are treated fairly. We will manage attendance with the individual in mind supporting better health at work.
4. **Team Based Performance** – already a success in pilot areas and in a continual culture of One Service, we will build on team working for 19/20 introducing team based performance. UC North, Working Age Legacy and Disability Services will trail-blaze from April, with UC Scotland, South and Central England and Wales coming on stream from October.

Telephony

- National telephony performance for April 2018 to March 2019 for calls answered was 85%, with an average speed of answer of 5 minutes 27 seconds

- In March 2019, 92.5% of calls in integrated telephony were answered, with an average speed of answer of 1 minute 2 seconds
- The National Average Calls per Case Manager currently stands at 42.07 per case manager per week.



Labour Market Operational Steering Group are developing a roadmap to focus on delivering outcomes on our key priority groups. We are also developing a narrative and visual to demonstrate the transformation of the labour market interventions service offer e.g.; Digital Plus, Core Regime, testing Work Coaches in Service Centres, testing flexible interventions through group work search reviews and developing a small scale segmentation trial.

Mentoring Circles Ten Mentoring Circles have been delivered during April, supported by high profile employers; Fujitsu, Plymouth Council, Gwent Police. Throughout May there is planned expansion of Mentoring Circles across all geographies focusing on ethnic minority groups and young people.

Digital Plus We are collating insight from the learning phase in the 26 sites. Implementing the comparator / control group within these sites in May.

Childcare From the end of May we will be able to record and subsequently report on upfront childcare costs uniquely. We are currently finalising roll-out plans with Policy following a positive evaluation of the Childcare Late Reporting trial. Easements used within the pilot need to be adjusted slightly to ensure it is comprehensively compliant with the legislation. We will then proceed as soon as the guidance has been updated.

Latest Labour Market stats released this month show:

- More people are in work than ever before. The employment rate is at a record high – 76.1% and the unemployment (3.9%) is the lowest rate since 1975
- Female employment is at a record high – 71.8%
- The ethnic minority employment rate is 66.2 per cent – a record high
- The disability employment rate is 51.5%
- And regular wages growing at their joint fastest rate for over a decade.

UC complaints as a percentage of the caseload are 0.06% in March, which was the same as February.

Decision Making Overall UC DMA Head of Work is currently 11.3 days down from last month's 15.9. Habitual Residence Test /Prove You Can Apply, is 4 days ahead of the Assessment Period and 6 days ahead for other payment blockers.

Recovery plan currently in place to clear backlog of Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) caseload with the planned trajectory being tracked to ensure by end of May 2019 we are clearing MR's within the assessment period they are created.

We are impacting lessons learned as result of Press articles, Parliamentary Questions, MP enquiries and customer complaints with a view to ensuring staff guidance remains current and robust, to protect the most vulnerable in society.

Achieving 95% payment accuracy The March payment accuracy Caseload Growth Measure is 94%, and three Month Rolling Average remains unchanged at 94%.

Health The four trials testing alternative arrangements for improving the speed of Work Capability Assessment (WCA) referrals are due to finish early May with evaluation to follow and inform next steps. Early findings from the trial in Devon looking at safeguards for customers moving from ESA to UC show the trial is going well. The Change will go through relevant governance for national roll out consideration.

A baseline for the Health Model Offices has been developed and is being issued to the 11 sites involved. We will work with the sites to ensure they are delivering the baseline offer before undertaking any test and learn activity.

Autism Awareness Week was a great success with over 500 lines dialling into the Your Call. The products developed were well received and are now available on the Labour Market Campaign-Health Confident pages. A number of sites have provided good practice which is being developed into articles for inclusion on the Labour Market Campaign site.

Planning for Health Confident 2 is well underway, all venues have now been booked and a request for attendees has been sent to Area Directors with the events running from May to July. The events are aimed at Lead DEAs, Work Coach Team Leaders and SEO Health Leads.

Appointment Booking Having completed the transition of appointment booking to Q-Flow, we are now undertaking assurance visits in selected sites to review how well the new service is working.

UC Relationships and Orientation Team have begun to work with Strategic Communications colleagues on how we can maximise the use of an Employer Campaign site for the Get Ahead campaign. We are pooling our evidence base to ensure we build a communication strategy which helps to resolve the orientation issues that employers are facing.

Further to meetings held with representatives from Mind, Crisis and Shelter, we have undertaken an internal mapping exercise to RAG rate each Jobcentres relationships with those organisations at a local level. The results have been received and will form a baseline. The NEPT Account Managers will now work with regional leads to draw out what good looks like to help build a roadmap. We are also undertaking work to more fully understand the reasons if there are no local links.

A Partner Orientation Steering Group has been established to explore how best to improve our service offer for identifying organisations with no existing or limited links to DWP, who may struggle to access our services and extend our reach into these groups via self-serve wherever possible. Due to a lack of true clarity of the needs of external organisations, Universal Credit Analysis Division are helping us to build better understanding of the evidence base, via qualitative research/interviews with a range of partner organisations with their findings expected by the end of May.

Complex Needs Following success of the Customer Service Manager test events (delivered in partnership with Women's Aid), national roll out for England and Wales has commenced. We will continue to iterate and improve the events based on attendee feedback, reflecting specific requirements for Scotland to ensure it is aligned to devolution.

Claimants without bank accounts activity continues and a submission was sent to SoS outlining the Barclays approach. This will then be shared across the banking industry and hopefully see them following the same approach.