

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

Universal Credit Operations Update

Payment Timeliness in the First Assessment Period is at 87.1%, the ninth successive week of increases and highest since 18 February 2019. Week commencing 17 June, 22 of the 25 Service Centres are above 85%. Subsequent assessment period payment timeliness is at 95%. The claims to pay is now just over 35k.

Unit Cost and Caseloading Total unit cost per Caseload (Claims) went down by 2% to £417. We anticipate that the unit cost will continue its downward trend in 2019/20. The caseloading ratio has continued to improve, with increased efficiency across mature Service Centres reaching its highest level.

As caseloads continue to increase, we are reviewing this risk and work on balancing workload and productivity continues. A trial to test balancing workload effort rather than caseloads is commencing in Stockport and Derby Service Centres, and we are developing this insight to inform longer term planning.

PCS Union There has been no further industrial action since the two-day action on 28 & 29 May in Walsall and Wolverhampton Service Centres under their live mandate, and no further notice of intent has been served by PCS. There has been some 'car park meetings' in Stockport and Canterbury Service Centres in which PCS have tested the appetite to strike, which we are closely monitoring and continuing with our regular engagement with the Trade Union.

Securing Advances A plan is now in place with agreed short, medium and long term actions. We continue to conduct significant volumes of Interviews Under Caution, and have submitted a range of test cases to the Crown Prosecution Service. Testing to inform future design changes starts imminently with design changes agreed as a priority for Phase 8 (September to April).

Telephony

- For July 2018 to June 2019, UC telephony performance for calls answered was 87%, with an average speed of answer of 4 minutes 17 seconds;
- In June 2019, 95% of calls within integrated telephony were answered with an average speed of answer of 59 seconds;
- A new calculation has recently been agreed for the Calls per Case Manager per Month metric that takes into account part-time workers. However, this has not yet been applied to June's data. For week commencing 17 June average Calls per Case Manager was 59.5.

The **Labour Market Operational Group** (LMOG) has developed a roadmap that focuses on our eight key priorities for driving improvements in labour market outcomes. The plan sets out the specific activities that will support those groups with lower employment rates (young people, BAME customers, customers with health conditions, and women and single parents), link into our wider labour market campaign approach. In addition, the group is supporting the delivery of an efficient and effective interventions offer to ensure we see the customers we need to on a regular basis whilst testing more flexible intervention models, including group work search reviews and greater use of digital interventions (through our 26 digital plus sites). Wrapped around all of this will be the development and launch of new labour market outcome measures.

The Labour Market Campaign Year 2 activity is progressing well. The campaign discussion group has now exceeded 1000+ members and continues to be a resource for sharing comments and information. All eight priority areas identified by LMOG now have their own dedicated areas on the campaign intranet site and are updated on a regular basis with Your Stories, best practices and information.

The Orientation Group have made good progress on a key strand to simplify information on GOV.UK about how to contact us. Programme colleagues are leading on delivery of this work to prioritise this change. The new approach will mean the replacement of all entries of UC phone numbers on GOV.UK with a link to one page with all details on how to contact us. This will be easier for us to keep information up to date and it should help reduce erroneous calls to incorrect numbers.

Following a meeting with the Minister for Family Support, Housing and Child Maintenance regarding Work Experience opportunities in Local Authorities for disadvantaged groups we are now working through a number of onward actions and will report back on progress made.

Childcare To support the introduction of the new Flexible Support Fund (FSF) Childcare account codes, an All Staff Call was held on 19 June to inform Service Delivery colleagues about the changes to the codes and how the new codes will help to inform the department about childcare expenditure.

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%. The unemployment rate is 3.8%, the lowest rate since the 1970's
- Female employment is at a record high – 72.0% - a record high
- The ethnic minority employment rate is 66.5% – a record high (up 4.7% since 2015)
- The disability employment rate is 51.7%

Decision Making The momentum of driving down outstanding Habitual Residency Test decision volumes has been maintained, with the outstanding now at 15K. This is down from 23K on the last update. Trajectories suggest this will be continued and resource rebalancing is now being considered to support reducing outstanding Work Capability Assessment decisions. Payment blocker decisions are in the best position they have been in over 3 months. Overall decision making is now at 7.6 days compared to 9.6 on the previous update.

Work on clearing the sanction decision arrears has begun and the volumes at 3 months plus were down to 1.2K this week. Work will then begin on the cases prior to 3 months with steady state expected in August 2019. Mandatory Reconsideration outstanding work will be cleared this week

Health An update was provided at the Work & Health Executive Team (W&H ET) meeting on 05 June focussed on the findings and recommendations from the four trials to test alternative arrangements for Work Capability Assessment referrals. Following approval by W&H ET, we are working through the governance steps required to roll out placing the Work Coach at the heart of the referral process to ensure customers feel supported throughout, that referrals are on time and to improve overall quality.

UC complaints as a percentage of the caseload are 0.05% in May which is up from 0.04% in April.

Achieving 95% payment accuracy The payment accuracy Caseload Growth 3 Month Rolling Average is at 91% (May measured at 89%). We understand the issues leading to this slight dip and work continues to address root cause and drive improvement, including plans to make better use of localised accuracy data to tackle variation.

Landlords - As of June 2019, there are 754 landlords on the portal (including 16 Northern Ireland landlords). July will see another 10 landlords enrolled and conclude bulk roll-out plans; following which we move to small-scale, quarterly releases to ensure any new landlords are given the opportunity to enrol.

ID Verification - GOV.UK Verify performance has improved slightly in recent months. 58.6% of claimants who made a Universal Credit Full Service declaration in May 2019 attempted to verify their ID via GOV.UK Verify, with 43% of those attempting it doing so successfully.