

To: UC Programme Board

From: JP Marks
UC Operations
Director General

Universal Credit Operations Update

Payment Timeliness in subsequent Assessment Periods remains steady at 95%. Payment Timeliness in the first Assessment period has been impacted by fewer working days in February, however the first AP is up compared to February last year from 83.7% to 85.7%.

February actual unit cost is £426. The target unit cost (*including contingency*) for Feb-19 was £475 (Jan-19 was £473) so actuals are 10% below that level – we need to be careful to keep this controlled.

Budget allocations have been agreed for 19-20. We start the year with more people than the budget covers and need to manage this “supply friction” down asap as we protect hot spots risks.

Contingency response plans are developed should there be a disruption to demand, this includes how we will protect payments and create capacity within Jobcentres to support new claims activity. Testing these assumptions and response scenarios over the next few weeks will help ensure our resilience and readiness to respond swiftly to indications of stress.

The **NAO ‘Supporting Disabled People Into Work’ report** was published on 28 March and DWP issued strong rebuttal lines in an attempt to balance media coverage.

PCS Union – While the Industrial Action mandate remains ‘live’ for our UC Service Centres in Walsall and Wolverhampton, we have been proactively listening and communicating with the Trade Union and working with sites and the leadership in offices that we believe are at risk of future strike action. Although we have had no further formal notification that PCS intend to ballot additional Service Centres, we know that union members in Canterbury, Makerfield, Blackpool, Stockport and Preston are actively being engaged by PCS in off-site ‘car park meetings’ and that notifications to ballot may follow.

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
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
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 Oct 19.

Telephony

- 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
- In the national tier this was 82.2% and 7 minutes 27 seconds
- During March, 52% of all UC calls were matched to integrated Case Managers, whilst 27% were outsourced

- Average calls per Case Manager continues to reduce and has been for the last 5 weeks. Latest data (w/c 18 March) average calls are 32.45 per Case Manager
- A trial has commenced in Stockport Service Centre where site level routing is being switched off to understand if telephony demand is smoothed across teams to enable more case management activity.

We are pushing key labour market activities to accelerate improvements. Key priorities include:

- Improving consistency of core contact and embedding the Front of House Model
- Focussing on women and lone parents into work by increasing take up of childcare
- And embedding the Youth Obligation offer to enable young people to realise their potential.

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.

Mentoring Circles has been expanded beyond the black and minority ethnic community to across the Jobcentre Plus network nationally for all youth claimants. This started in London and is rolling out across the country. The committed employers for London include Microsoft, Google, Barclays and NHS. From Q2 a minimum of two Mentoring Circles every month across every District will be delivered.

Childcare Evaluation of the childcare trial has indicated that we have prevented around 75% of late reporting and that this can now be determined by Work Coaches rather than Decision Makers and therefore firmly supports wider roll-out. This will ensure that we can facilitate faster payment for affected customers, ensure more of them receive the childcare they've paid but also provides an opportunity to educate customers about reporting in good time going forward. We anticipate an update to be made to guidance shortly and following this it will be rolled out to all colleagues.

Digital Plus Operational, OED and UC programme colleagues are working collaboratively to continue to embed Digital Plus in 26 sites, looking to optimise the journey before national roll out in 2019.

UC complaints as a percentage of the caseload are 0.06% in February compared to January's 0.05%.

Decision Making Overall UC DMA Head of Work is currently 15.9 days. We remain in a strong position with HRT/PYCA, working 11 days ahead of the Assessment Period and 10 days ahead for other payment blockers. We continue to clear weekly intakes of Mandatory Reconsiderations (MR) and currently have deployed 195 Decision Makers onto this priority area of work.

Since February, we have improved safeguards around sanctions by introducing better control measures and case conferencing with the site leader, ensuring requirements applied take into account circumstances and ability to comply.

Achieving 95% payment accuracy - The February payment accuracy Caseload Growth Measure is 97%, with the three Month Rolling Average at 94%.

Health Four trials are currently underway testing alternative arrangements, all looking at improving the speed of Work Capability Assessment (WCA) referrals, the results are due mid-April to inform next steps. We are also trialling an approach in Devon to ensure better safeguards in place for those transitioning from ESA with Limited Capability for Work or Limited Capability for Work – Related Activity.

We are developing 11 health model offices across the country (one in each Group) to build capability/capacity of each site to support customers with health conditions, test new labour market initiatives (via ESO funding) such as conditionality pilots and to monitor impact of this on work outcomes.

W/C 01 April was World Autism Awareness week, we will be raising awareness of Autism and the support we can give locally throughout the week including by a Your Call to all staff, quizzes and showing cases of best practice. We will also be promoting take up of the Autism Friendly Award by sites around the country.

We have set an ambition to have 20,000 employers signed up to Disability Confident by March 20, doubling the current number. Supporting policy colleagues to develop an approach to have 50% of all employees working for a Disability Confident employer by 2023.

We are launching further upskilling for Work Coaches through “Health Confident 2” to improve their confidence and capability to support customers with health conditions. From May 19 using a leader led approach to identify and spread local best practice and better upskill Work Coaches on specific conditions including mental health, learning disability and Autism.

Appointment Booking on 27 March we completed the transition to a new, embedded diary solution (Q-Flow) in all Jobcentres in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This improves the user experience for our Work Coaches and Telephony agents and provides a platform for us to further enhance the design, including a future self-service option.

Claimant Orientation Following updates to GOV.UK to remove references to closed Live Service and Legacy telephone lines, further work has begun aimed at refining GOV.UK content and the associated service offer on telephony for Severe Disability Premium calls. GOV.UK updates will also incorporate the Citizens Advice Help to Claim offer from April, and we have worked across the network to update a range of internal/external facing products to support.

We are in the early stages of work to review the content and service offer for employers on GOV.UK. This will help build a clearer understanding of why employers call us and how we can implement a fresher approach enabling more to self-serve.

Complex Needs toolkits now fully embedded within Job Centres/Service Centres, toolkits are now being rolled out to Working Age colleagues (April) and we are exploring options of extending into PIP.

The Prison Leavers Pilot Proof of Concept in England & Wales completed on the 31 March 2019. We have agreed a joint DWP / MoJ evaluation and a workshop is planned on 17 April to discuss findings and initial reports to inform options for UC governance approvals by the end May 2019.

UC Live Service The UCLS caseload is zero. Teams working on residual UCLS activities will be halved from next week to just two discreet teams based in Bolton and Wrexham.