



Minutes

Title of meeting:	Universal Credit Programme Board
Date:	15 th December 2021 11:30 – 12:30
Location:	MS Teams Meeting
Attendees:	John Mcglynn (Chair), Neil Couling (Change and Resilience DG & SRO for UC), Ian Wright (UC Programme Director), Sean Scanlon (obo Deb Walton Director People and Capability), Simon McKinnon (Director General, Digital), Chris Drane (Director HM Treasury), Paddy Rooney (Deputy Secretary for Work and Inclusion DFC Northern Ireland), Dave Brookes (Director, HMRC), S40 (SPAD to Secretary of State), Fran Beasley (Chief Executive LB Hillingdon), David Magee (IPA Representative), Nick Joicey (Director General Finance), Deb Boore (Director UC Programme), Stuart Ison (External Affairs, Strategic Design and Planning Director),
Presenters:	Ian Wright (UC Programme Director), Will Garner (Universal Credit Product Director),
Apologies:	Deb Walton (Director People and Capability), JP Marks (Director General Work and Health), Ani Vithlani (Cabinet Office, Operations Lead), Myrtle Lloyd (Director General, HMRC)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed attendees to the Programme Board, acknowledged apologies and thanked deputies for their attendance.

Programme Board cleared November's Minutes.

The Change DG & UC SRO gave an overview of matters arising and updates:

- The Move to UC Stakeholder Event went well and a Below the Line paper will be issued on this in January 2022.
- Conversations are ongoing with SSAC with regards regulations, progress is being made.
- Highlighted the Below the Line Communications paper which notes that Ministers have given a steer on communications, in which the programme is moving ahead as directed.

Paper 1 – Programme Update – UC Programme Director

The UC Programme Director walked members through the paper, highlighting the following key points:

- As agreed in November's Programme Board, the Programme's RAG rating is now amber-red.
- Conversations are ongoing with the Secretary of State's Office and work is ongoing to get the Move to UC plan published.
- Work progressing with HMRC to develop a Move to UC leaflet to be included in HMRC renewal packs.
- In regards the below the line communications paper, conversations with the Secretary of State and Ministers has resulted in considering alternative approaches, for example, not doing TV advertising.
- Discovery is on track to start on the 4th January 2022, however this will be considered in more detail in Paper 2.
- In regards the Future Support Offer, final work is being undertaken before the winner can be announced and to ensure everything is in place to replace the current contract.
- Conversations are starting with the Secretary of State in regards what happens post the Future Support Offer.

Noted amber milestones:

- SRS Contract Transfer has reduced from amber to green. Performance testing has been completed which has enabled this.
- Future Support Offer is amber due to tight timeframes, however, is expected to hit date.
- Job Match Pilot contracts are yet to be formally agreed for the three suppliers. This is expected to hit date.
- Noted the Change DG & UC SRO has done a good job discussing the regulations with SSAC, however still waiting on whether consultation is needed. Noted this could potentially cause delays.
- Noted the following, regarding Move to UC:
 - The need to get 500 thousand cases from the voluntary stage.
 - The issues around obtaining Java developers.

The UC Programme Director noted:

- Currently looking into building out the milestones around Move to UC. For example, discovery can start with the current levels of Java developers, however the decision to prioritise developers would need to be made in February 2022 if the Move to UC recruitment was not complete.

Programme Board Discussion:

- a) The Chair noted that the programme is stalling due to the absence of publishing the plan/gainer analysis and asked for an update.
 - The UC Programme Director highlighted that communications have taken place between the Secretary of State's Office and the Programme. Noted progress is being made and hope to be able to publish early January but there are no guarantees.
 - The External Affairs, Strategic Design and Planning Director noted that multiple versions of the plan had been sent to Ministers. Ministers last considered this 3 weeks ago and they did not feel content to proceed with publication. Noted a revised version will be sent to the Minister and the Secretary of State with a view to try publishing in January. Noted this is dependent on Secretary of State being content and No.10 grid slot discussions.
 - The Secretary of State's Special Advisor noted that the publication of case studies on analysis which was shared with stakeholders was helpful and enabled the programme to receive feedback. Noted that he does not feel we are far off publishing this. Noted discussions have taken place between the Permanent Secretary, Secretary of State and the Change DG & UC SRO. The outcome of these discussions has been that the Secretary of State wishes for quicker progress and has asked for a revised plan to reflect this in January.

- b) The UC Programme Director noted concerns, stating that is unlikely that a plan can be created that can give quicker delivery given past experience. Noted that there is no contingency in the existing plan and the Programme is heavily dependant on 500k voluntary cases.
- c) The Change DG & UC SRO:
 - Noted that post discovery, the programme will know and understand the limiting factors and rate the work can be done.
 - Noted that various events have happened since the original work in the October 2020 Programme Board. The voluntary phase was meant to run through 2021, however due to factors such as the pandemic, multiple lockdowns and priority changes in Government, this hasn't happened.
 - Highlighted that there is some distance to work through in regards the plan. However, he, the Permanent Secretary, Secretary of State and Special Advisor will work together to progress this.
 - Emphasised the need to plan on the basis of what is currently known and that the key is to start discovery to enable learning and understanding.
- d) The Special Advisor to the Secretary of State asked whether there were any figures for those who have already moved voluntarily, also to use this to determine how realistic is it to reach the 500k moves.
- e) The Change DG & UC SRO noted that:
 - Analysts have conducted analysis and have set up to track any progress on voluntarily when started.
 - Highlighted his excitement for the voluntary phase and noted he has multiple things he would like to do in this phase. Noted the wish for a licence to operate to try these ideas and make things happen.
 - Voluntary phase timelines have been stretched until 2024 but noted the vital importance of being able to publish a full document/plan to commence.

Paper 2 – Readiness to Start Discovery Phase 0.5 - Universal Credit Product Director

The Universal Credit Product Director noted that the paper briefly sets out what is needed to start discovery on the 4th January and the criteria of how the readiness for Move to UC is assessed. In addition:

People Criteria:

- Set out the ambition for two theme teams, plus a wrap-around team, to own different areas of the service for Move to UC.
- Noted that work can commence on the initial discovery goals without the full 54 members of staff.
- Noted this has an Amber RAG rating due to development capacity. Typically, theme teams have 5 developers, however due to the difficult market, most are operating with 3 or 4.
- Emphasised that Move to UC is the Department's priority and the wider UC backlog would be reprioritised to accommodate Move to UC in the event that additional developer capacity isn't onboarded on time. In early 2022, he will attend PDE to discuss prioritisation options and recommendations to fulfil the compliment of development needed for Move to UC.
- Noted there are 2 technical architects in the inception phase that will start along with the Technical Lead and so in a good place to undertake required technical analysis.
- For the initial inception there will be one large team of 33 people. At the appropriate point, the team will be split into three teams based in London and Manchester.
- Where possible and where restrictions allow, some of this work will be face to face to support the pace and high bandwidth communications needed from the outset.

Location Criteria:

- Conversations have taken place with Work & Health Services Executive Team regarding Location Criteria.
- Started narrowing down options of locations where test & learns could operate.

Goals:

- Noted that a paper will be brought to PDE in January 2022 around goals and framework for entry and exit criteria for discovery phases. This paper will cover a shortlist of locations and how the Programme can learn and move people safely and at scale.
- Noted the first part of Discovery is to:
 - Ensure enough is in place to enable the first person to move to UC.
 - Optimise for learning with different demographics and cohorts.
 - Iteratively learn and scale.

Regulation Changes:

- Move to UC work is governed by certain regulations set out in law.
- Based on previous work in Harrogate, there are some regulation changes required.
- Highlighted that based on current advice, these regulation changes do not need to be in place to start to move people, however in order to move people at scale the regulation would need changing.
- Draft regulations have been presented to the Social Security Advisory Committee who are considering the need to publicly consult.

The Change DG & UC SRO noted that:

- The SSAC will reach an independent view which is hoped to be received by the week commencing 20/12/21.
- He has had conversations with SSAC regarding the Programme's approach.
- The Programme has contacted Ministers to advise what any implications could be, and to provide an update as their support will be required throughout the regulation process.
- DWP's lawyers have completed a good piece of work setting out what can and can't be done.
- Although work can start without the regulations in place, it is important that this sorted as soon as possible.
- An update on regulations will be brought to UC Programme Board in January.

The UC Product Director:

- Noted that funding is in place in terms of the Spending Review settlement.
- Highlighted that the governance of the Programme was reviewed by PDE.
- Expressed confidence for the discovery to start as planned on the 4th January based on the criteria mentioned.

Programme Board Discussion:

- a) The Finance Director General asked how the Board is to assess implications and outcomes of the discovery phase, also what should the Board be looking at in terms of understanding the success.
- b) UC Product Director noted:
 - That work will commence with small number which will grow over time. The purpose of this discovery is to learn how to move people safely at scale.
 - That that he will bring back to the Programme Board the progress of learnings, gaps still in place and to articulate how these gaps are narrowing for the Board's scrutiny. The quality of these gaps is important and will include things such as understanding how to best engage

with legacy claimants, how claimants will respond to different messaging, and what will encourage these claimants to make the move.

- Framework for entry criteria into other phases will be worked on that can assess the same criteria for the different phases of Move to UC. This will allow Programme Board or PDE to assess the criteria consistently at different thresholds for different phases of the programme.
 - Programme will regularly RAG rate and re-assess progress against the criteria and bring this to Programme Board.
- c) The Chair stated his view that Move to UC progress is not where it should be at the point in time, he highlighted the absence of the exit criteria for December 2022 not being in place as an example.
- d) The UC Programme Director disagreed, noting:
- Work has recently been underway to recruit the teams and get them up to speed.
 - The purpose now is to put in place what is needed to start the discovery phase.
 - By January 2022 it is expected to have the exit criteria for discovery which will be brought back to Programme Board.
 - Emphasised that the team have not had the bandwidth to do much on Move to UC given pandemic priorities.
- e) The Special Advisor to the Secretary of State asked whether the location criteria will be shared with Ministers and what specific data needs have been identified for Discovery
- f) UC Product Director noted:
- Location decisions will be narrowed down by Work & Health Services Executive Team and PDE and then shared with Ministers after.
 - Noted that the programme and HMRC have an understanding of legacy data.
 - There is no pre-requisite data requirement because the data has been accessed and used previously.

The Change DG & UC SRO summarised the conversation and noted:

- That not having brought the discovery exit criteria to Programme Board is not a limiting factor on pace, and the key aspect is to ensure people are mobilised around the task.
- Data is important but again is not a limiting factor and it isn't the key to making faster progress.
- The core need is to understand the motivations of those on legacy benefits and tax credits, and what would persuade claimants to move to UC who do not particularly want to. Once the motivations are understood, the plan can be crafted to get volume. Highlighted it is too early to know whether this plan will result in quicker or slower pace as he had often pointed out to Ministers.

The chair agreed with The Change DG & UC SROs comments and further noted:

- That there had been limited progress in Move to UC in 2021 on the voluntary phase with Ministers.
- Emphasised the need to work at pace when discovery begins in January 2022.

The Programme Board will do all it can to support development teams and asked members to reach out to The Change DG & UC SRO and Programme Director should any support be needed.

AOB

The Chair noted:

- This is the current Chief Executive LB Hillingdon's final Programme Board and gave his thanks.
- There has been limited progress made around Move to UC in 2021 and emphasized the need to work at pace when Discovery begins in January 2022.

Date of Next Meeting: 27th January 2022

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