



Minutes

Title of meeting:	Universal Credit Programme Board
Date:	27 th January 2022 15:00 – 17:00
Location:	Caxton House Room 6:24 Microsoft Teams
Attendees:	John McGlynn (Chair), Neil Couling (Change and Resilience DG & SRO for UC), Deb Walton (Director People and Capability), Simon McKinnon (Director General, Digital), Chris Drane (Director HM Treasury), Conrad McConnell (obo Paddy Rooney Deputy Secretary for Work and Inclusion DFC Northern Ireland), Myrtle Lloyd (DG HMRC), S40 (SPAD to Secretary of State), Sophie Ingram (obo Nick Joicey DG Finance), Stuart Ison (External Affairs, Strategic Design and Planning Director), Beverley Warmington (obo Karen Gosden DG Work & Health Services)
Presenters:	Will Garner (UC Product Director), Graeme Connor (Deputy Director Policy)
Apologies:	Ian Wright (UC Programme Director), Karen Gosden (DG Work & Health Services), Nick Joicey (DG Finance), Paddy Rooney (Deputy Secretary for Work & Inclusion DFC Northern Ireland), Angus Gray (Policy Director UC and Employment), S40 (IPA Representative), S40 (Local Authority)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed attendees to the first Programme Board of 2022, highlighting enthusiasm to work through challenges being faced and to commence and see progress in the Discovery Phase. The Chair acknowledged apologies and thanked deputies and members for their attendance.

Programme Board agreed December's Minutes.

The Change DG & UC SRO noted:

- Matters arising are covered in today's papers.
- UC Product Director to give an update on Discovery during paper 3.

Paper 1 – Programme Update – Change DG & UC SRO

The UC Programme Director sent his apologies and the Change DG & UC SRO deputised and walked members through Page 1 of the paper, highlighting the following key points:

- Noted his excitement that discovery has commenced.
- On the 27.01.22 Help to Claim (previously known as Future Support Offer) was announced, and Citizens Advice and the Minister for Welfare Delivery gave quotes for press release. Noted this is an important step for the programme.

Noted the amber rated key points:

- In regards Job Matching Pilot, noted that the commercials are sorted and interested companies are now on the government framework to allow them to bid for the work. Work is on hand but highlighted it is amber to ensure visibility into live. Release 192 on the 02.03.22 will deploy everything needed within the service to make this happen.
- Future support offer will go live on 01.04.22. Noted grants have been signed and work is ongoing to prepare for this. Highlighted the same provider will be providing the new service as before.
- Regulations will be covered in later papers.
- Discovery phase started on 04.01.22 however due to the amount of work needed it is likely to remain amber for the lifetime of discovery.
- Noted Move to UC phase is amber/red and reminded members the need for 500k voluntary moves.

The Change DG & UC SRO Noted further key points:

- Release 188 was implemented on the 12.01.22.
- The Programme is looking to move from fortnightly to weekly release schedules. Noted weekly was trailed in 2018 however it wasn't successful, and the programme reverted to fortnightly.
 - Noted this change will not increase capacity but means releases are smaller and easier to manage.
 - The Chair sought clarification that the impact of this will be assessed with front-line staff
 - The Change DG & UC SRO noted collaboration is needed with Operations due to more regular changes this will cause JobCentres.
 - It is standard practise to do weekly releases, however the right decision was made in 2018 to pull back on this due to circumstances at the time.
 - UC Product Director noted that conversations have taken place and the impact to Operations will be discussed further at Work & Health Executive Team. Noted it may not be visible functionality that will be released weekly and this work towards the Programme's technical direction.
- The Change DG & UC SRO gave an update on the HMRC Renewal pack insert:
 - Issued thanks to HMRC DG for re-opening the renewal letter text. Noted that should any costs be attached to this that the Programme will pay.
 - Noted close to agreeing the insert which needs to happen by 04.02.22 to meet HMRC deployment timescales.
 - Noted that HMRC need to conduct checks and highlighted the deadline of 01.02.22 for the text from the Minister for Welfare Delivery.

The HMT Director asked for an update on where Move to UC has got to with Ministers and at what point this will become an obstacle resulting in a red RAG rating.

- The Change DG & UC SRO noted that it is not due to move to red at this moment in time but noted:
 - Agreement is needed with Ministers and across government on the products wanted to launch in which progress is being made. Noted Martin Lewis from ITV done a piece on how new and existing legacy claimants can be better off on Universal Credit and highlighted if we had this information then we could have used this outlet.
 - Highlighted the Programme will be working with Martin Lewis and that work is coming together with review points.
 - Emphasised the goal for 500k voluntary moved by 2024. Noted there is a lot of work to do, and the programme is keeping track of this dependency.

The Chair queried the role of 3rd parties in terms of helping deliver the voluntary figures. The Change DG & UC SRO noted:

- He sees a role for 3rd parties. Noted he had a conversation with the Secretary of State and offered an opportunity to utilise unused Citizens Advice staff following the revised Help to Claim model, however this was not adopted. Noted plans to go back to the Secretary of State later in the year to discuss how trusted partners can be used to support Move to UC.
- Work has been ongoing with trusted partners to test leaflets with claimants. This shows that trusted 3rd parties could be an influencer to encourage claimants to move to UC. Noted a way to commercialise an approach to do this is needed.

- The External Affairs, Strategic Design and Planning Director is working with external stakeholders on this. The Chair highlighted the importance of getting 3rd parties on board in some capacity to help extend DWP's reach to the most vulnerable people to encourage them to move.

The Change DG & UC SRO walked members through the 2nd Page, highlighting:

- Latest stats continue to move in the right direction:
 - Moved down for intensive work search which was subject to the Secretary of State's Ways to Work announcement on 27.01.22.
 - Caseload numbers continue to grow as natural migration continues to move legacy claimants to UC.
 - Unit cost figures are reducing as covid unwinds and staff are being deployed out of training. Highlighted the programme is below where was needed for unit costs for the permanent business case. Noted there are no concerns, and that work is needed in terms of incorporating longer term forecasts into these assessments which will result in re-basing these figures. Highlighted when this happens it will be brought to Programme Board's attention.
 - Payment timeliness continues to remain strong and was at 94% in November 2021.
 - Noted stats for full payment, on time, over all assessment periods and all claimants is 96.8%.

Programme Board Discussion in regard resourcing:

- The Change DG & UC SRO noted:
 - The programme has enough engineering roles to meet current immediate concerns. Onboarded 3 Java developers, however lost 2 to turnover and highlighted the vicious market for developers.
 - It is likely there will be prioritisation choices needed within the programme in February, however, move to UC, Fraud & Error or anything legislative is a priority and will be prioritised accordingly, emphasising that this will not come at cost to Move to UC.
- The Digital DG highlighted:
 - It is possible to prioritise Java resources across programmes, not just within specific programme. Noted that Digital group would re-prioritise should Move to UC be the Departments Priority.
 - It is not felt that the ability to obtain Java Developers is going to get easier in the current climate. Work is underway to make DWP's proposition more attractive but will require approval for higher rates, however this cost is less significant than non-delivery.
 - The Digital allowance has been maximised and new geographical markets have been opened. New commercial frameworks are opening on 01.04.22 with 50 new suppliers.
- The Chair questioned what was learnt from exit interviews of those staff who left.
 - The Change DG & UC SRO noted feedback that:
 - Developers had spent a long time on UC and a change was wanted. Highlighted the programme had done very well to retain contractors for as long as it had.
 - Developers are getting better offers from competitors in the market.
- UC Product Director noted:
 - The programme is experiencing delayed attrition due to people not wanting to change jobs during a pandemic.
 - There is an internal government market and highlighted staff have been lost to other government departments.
 - Prioritisation decisions will be looked at mid-phase point at the end of February or slightly before if needed.
 - Noted User Research is also a hot market, and it is difficult to get people with a HCI background with these skills. Move to UC is staffed fully in this area.
- The Change DG & UC SRO emphasised that this will be managed and will not see Move to UC starve of the resources it needs. Noted this issue is a worldwide problem and DWP are global in its reach for developers, also that other government departments, for example, HMRC are experiencing the same issue.

The Chair highlighted that fear is a key feature of why legacy claimants are hesitant to move to UC, stating the importance of understanding how it will be overcome in terms of planned mitigated actions. The Chair asked of any other risks that could impact this:

- The Change DG & UC SRO noted:

- There is a more detailed risk report and risks are escalated to Programme Board if it is felt Programme Board can assist.
- Noted the Chair is right in pointing out fear and highlighted that Ministers engagement with SSAC will enable them to influence how the media portray UC.
- Noted both building individual confidence and public confidence are interconnected and highlighted the importance of independent voices and the work that UC Communications colleagues have done.
- The SPAD to the Secretary of State noted that following the Secretary of State's announcement of 'Ways to Work', one of the aspects of this is working more closely with employers to try and remove reluctance to engage with claimants. Noted that should we work with large household name companies this will boost confidence.

The Change DG & UC SRO noted that finances are fine, but the Programme is undershooting on finance forecast. This is caused by decisions such as the tv campaign that was due to commence this quarter which is now not going ahead. Noted total costs will get re-based when the new forecast for claimants is introduced and that a breakdown of finances can be provided if required.

No further questions.

Paper 2 – Update on Regulations – Deputy Director Policy

The Deputy Director Policy highlighted the complex procedure to get legislative changes in place and highlighted the key points:

Three recent successful regulations changes:

- The Taper work allowance change was completed in a very short timeframe and put in place between the budget announcement (27.10.21) and the coming into force date on 24.11.21.
- In December 2021, legislation was put in place to disregard payments received by victims of historical institutional abuse and payments from the Windrush Compensation Scheme. Regulations also provide that any future historical institutional schemes need to be approved by the Secretary of State before the disregard would apply. Thanks was given to the Minister for Welfare Delivery and HMT for their support on this.
- Students are generally not eligible for UC although existing disabled claimants are able to claim UC. As a result of the interaction between ESA and UC an unintended loophole was created that allowed students who would not usually be eligible for UC access to the benefit. As a result of a related legal case we quickly legislated to close this.

In progress Move to UC regulations that are currently being considered by the Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC):

- Highlighted regulations are in place from the Harrogate pilot, however noted areas of this need changing, for example:
 - Hardship payments to cover run-ons of DWP legacy benefits are no longer required as run-ons are now in place.
 - Removal of the limit of 10,000 for the number of migration notices that can be issued.
 - Couple Claims:
 - Issue around separated couples not being updated on legacy systems which would result in 1 partner receiving a letter informing them to make a UC claim. This would result in the other partner not receiving notification and potentially missing out on benefit which would require backdating.
 - If one partner made a UC claim it would terminate the legacy claim and the other partner might not be aware of this. Noted importance of introducing rules to pause legacy termination prior to a new UC claim.
 - Should a couple separate during the notification period the new partner will not be eligible for TP.

Programme Board Discussion:

- The SPAD to the Secretary of State noted the Secretary of State met the chair of SSAC earlier in the week to set out Move to UC plans and to ensure SSAC had appropriate means of scrutiny without causing delay. Noted the Secretary of State is due to write to the SSAC chair in regards next steps.
- The Change DG & UC SRO gave thanks to the Secretary of State, SPAD & Minister for this.
- The Change DG & UC SRO noted that the law creates a period in which legacy systems are closed and new systems have not started. This time was created to resolve any issues and identify anomalies, not to create entitlements. Noted the vital importance of treating all claimants the same.
- The Deputy Director Policy noted the possibility that more legislation changes could be identified as work progresses.
- The Change DG & UC SRO highlighted:
 - High volume anomalies have already been identified and noted the importance of keeping numbers small to ensure it remains containable and manageable.
 - It is likely issues will arise that require ministerial policy steer however he will advise Ministers to ensure velocity is not impacted.
- The Finance Director asked whether there is a date that can be used to profile when money will be spent once regulations have been made.
 - The Deputy Director Policy noted proposed date of 02.01.22 and plans are based on this.
- HMT Director queried:
 - whether there is a cross Whitehall process around regulations.
 - Deputy Director Policy noted these regulations are unique and noted that conversations have taken place with HMRC to understand the likelihood of separation and reporting of separation in the Tax credit space.
 - Whether there is any AME complications around this?
 - Deputy Director Policy expects no AME Implications as getting the regulations right would be in-line with what was modelled.
- The Change DG & UC SRO highlighted the changes being made are within the policy clearance received at HA in 2019. Noted that if the programme stepped outside the original managed migration regulations, they would be a need to go out for collective agreement, however this is not needed.

The Change DG & UC SRO emphasised that he does not want a caseload limit on discovery and noted that, to give confidence, the programme may test going to some scale in the discovery phase.

No further questions.

Paper 3 – Entry Criteria into Scaling Universal Credit Managed Migration – UC Product Director

The External Affairs, Strategic Design and Planning Director introduced the paper and re-emphasised the following two points:

- Importance of Integrating the entry criteria into the governance framework to make sure it is monitored and to ensure it is built into the way in which reporting is happening.
- Highlighted the link between discovery phase and voluntary phase and in particular the ongoing work with stakeholders. There will likely be occasions over discovery where challenge is encountered and work with trusted partners will be needed to work through solutions and test. Feedback loops need to be built into the discovery phase over the next 12 months.

The UC Product Director noted:

- The team are setting out the criteria for entering the scaling phase beyond discovery.
 - It is expected for these to be rated red currently with a goal for these to move to green. Noted this will be built into the monitoring framework of the programme.
 - Noted the name 'entry criteria to scaling' was deliberately chosen over 'exit criteria of discovery' to remove an artificial blocker to the programme.

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- o The entry criteria will help the programme monitor readiness and learning needed to grow numbers.
- Highlighted key points regarding the themes of the entry criteria:
 - o End to end service maturity:
 - Involves Identifying who needs to move, contacting them, understanding how they respond to contact, calculation of correct awards, quality checks and that support is in place including third parties.
 - Additionally, it will involve items of interest to the Secretary of State, such as how to calculate TE, how to identify who needs to move and how contact is made.
 - Noted the current focus of the team's work is on building the basic end to end service for small numbers, and that the same framework and criteria will be used and augmented to assess readiness to move at scale.
- Noted the other themes look at the scale of Move to UC whilst also protecting the live service and operations. Noted the importance of understanding and managing any impact on payment timeliness as an example. This will give the Programme Board a well-rounded view of stability and readiness to increase volume.
- The Team have recently been in an inception phase and produced the end-to-end service journey framework and will be producing a backlog of tasks and experiments/ tests needed.
- The Team are currently focused on what needs to place to have the earliest testable service. This includes the ability to issue migration notices, contact claimants in scope, providing support and calculating TE.
- Emphasised the programme will learn most when moving people and the earliest this can safely happen the better.
- Noted the necessary collaboration in discovery is taking place. HMRC have team members embedded within the programme as do UC Transformation and Delivery representing operations.

The Chair queried when the end-to-end service will be ready to test:

- UC Product Director noted:
 - o It is expected that migration notices will be ready within approximately 8-10 weeks.
 - o In the overall programme plan it is expected in May 2022 but hopeful this can be brought forward if progress is maintained.

The chair noted the positivity around this work and highlighted the use of multi-disciplinary teams of experts, drawing on legacy experts and building the knowledge needed.

UC Product Director noted learnings from Harrogate:

- Work has taken place to look at the approach in Harrogate and identify changes needed because Harrogate was a pilot and there were limitations at the time.
- Noted in Harrogate, claimants in the Jobcentre were approached to partake in the move. Because of this there is limited learning on how people will respond to Migration notices.
- Noted that some people are willing and capable to self-serve, however understanding is needed on how to identify or predict who these will be. Highlighted that most claimants in Harrogate needed support during the migration and experiments were undertaken to identify what support was needed.
- Noted one experiment involved helping claimants plan their journey by providing a paper calendar which helped them plan the best time in the month to make the move to UC.
- Noted that assets from Harrogate such as a spreadsheet version of a transitional element calculator need to be revalidated in-line with regulation changes, but this means the team is not starting from scratch.

Programme Board Discussion:

- The Change DG & UC SRO noted that although public mood and opinions of UC has lifted, claimants' mood hasn't due to previous media the benefit has received.
- The SPAD to the Secretary of State noted:
 - o That although this has not yet been agreed, he understands that both the Secretary of State and Minister are keen to see the first theme deepened as work progresses as it is the most critical.
 - o The Secretary of State is keen to explore:

- The assumptions and questions around how data can help meet the criteria and how much value this will bring.
- How we can help and support claimants to move who will find this the most difficult. Understanding is needed around the process and what can be legally done to help these people in terms of new claims as opposed to a more managed move.

The Chair summarised the session and asked whether any additions need to be added at this stage, highlighting these will likely morph as discovery progresses. Noted that the features discussed fit well within the monitoring and control framework and queried whether there are other factors that need to be looked at for this framework.

The Change DG & UC SRO:

- Emphasised that as learning happens, we will discover things that need solving.
- These entry criteria are provisional and that final judgements will be made based on the learning.
- Re-emphasised the role of the Programme Board is to ensure the right tools are in place, legislation is in place, and it is not to present answers.

The Chair agreed with The Change DG & UC SRO's comments and further noted:

- The Board is here to help and assist delivery of the programme in the earliest possible timeframe.
- He is keen to get a sense of what needs to be done in 2022, and what would enable the programme to get to scaling as soon as possible. Further raising whether everything needs to be done and does everything need be rated green before scaling can start.

The Change DG & UC SRO noted that whilst the Programme is making good progress in discovery, there is a lot of work to be done by January 2023 in order to be able to go to scale. The Programme Board and Ministers should work on creating a climate for success and not try to direct the teams.

Decision: UC Programme Board agreed the entry criteria on a provisional basis and noted the SRO and Secretary of State may have further input.

AOB

The Chair highlighted the importance that members have the opportunity to look at the material issues on the programme and welcomed feedback as to what Board should be addressing, further inviting members to approach him or the Change DG & UC SRO with this information and feedback.

The Chair closed the meeting stating that there have been productive conversations and noted that Programme Board is behind the minimal viable product, expressing excitement to see how this progresses.

Date of Next Meeting: 15th February 2022

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S40

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