

To: UC Programme Board Members From: **S40** Stuart Ison

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cc: **S40** **S40**

UC Communications Strategy 2021-22

Issue: This paper provides an update on Universal Credit campaign recommendations for 2022 following recent Ministerial steers.

Recommendations/Decisions required:

1. UC Programme Board to note the new steer from Ministers and the revised shape of the campaign.

Introduction

1. Over the last few months, we have been developing a campaign to reposition Universal Credit in the minds of legacy benefit claimants.
2. The over-arching approach for the campaign, including TV advertising, was agreed by the Secretary of State following a submission on 5 August 2021. Following this agreement, we briefed an advertising agency and you asked the new Minister for Welfare Delivery to work with us on the campaign development.
3. Through a series of meetings with the Minister it became clear that his focus was on a more targeted and direct messaging approach. In addition, work undertaken by analysts following changes to the UC taper rate announced in the Budget, showed around 74% of Tax Credit claimants could be better off on Universal Credit.
4. As the original campaign was not designed to underpin a more direct approach, Ministers did not support the proposed TV advert. They asked for the campaign to be refocused to specifically target Tax Credit claimants, and with more specific taper and UC work incentive messages, as well as additional polling to improve our claimant insight.
5. In light of the change in direction we have amended our communications advice to provide a more targeted approach and ensure best value for

money. This paper outlines a revised approach in response to this change and comprises new research commissions and campaign plans.

Summary

Campaign Plans

6. We have developed campaign plans to respond to the new brief set out by the Secretary of State in our meeting on 1st December to target tax credit claimants who stand to gain the most from the UC taper rate change.
7. The plan builds on the UC campaign that launched in early November which is performing strongly. The existing campaign is cutting through to our target audiences and provides a good platform to build on for the next phase:
 - Since launch on 2 December our ads have been viewed 15,206,340 times and led to **112,000 consented sessions** to the Understanding Universal Credit website. This is a **62% increase** on sessions compared to the previous month. The campaign has also driven over 1600 clicks to benefit calculators
 - **63%** of these sessions have come from paid search and the top keywords on search are currently "**am I eligible for universal credit**", "**apply for Universal Credit**" and "**sign into Universal Credit**" showing that people are actively considering whether UC could be for them
 - On Twitter, we are working with the ITV show This Morning to run pre-roll advertising. This has led to over 1.5m impressions, which boosts both awareness and credibility.

New Campaign Messages

8. We have developed new taper and childcare campaign messages that are tailored for the Tax Credit audience:
 - Universal Credit could top up your wages to help you be better off in work
 - Could you be better off in work?
 - Universal Credit could pay up to 85% of your childcare costs when you're working
 - Could you get help with your childcare costs while you're working?
 - Find out what Universal Credit could mean for you

- Find out if you could be better off on UC (Tax Credits Direct Mail).

Research: Focus Groups and Quantitative Polling

9. To inform this refocusing, and as agreed with Secretary of State, we have briefed two further rounds of qualitative research with Ipsos Mori as a foundation for the updated UC campaign brief.
10. The research will take a similar approach to the legacy claimant barrier research conducted in June this year, but with a greater focus on Tax Credits claimants. It will cover:
 - a. current views towards moving to UC
 - b. knowledge of taper and work allowance increases
 - c. stimulus that communicates UC wage top-ups (taper), work allowances and childcare support
 - d. changes in views to moving to UC voluntarily.
11. We will use the outputs from the research to inform recommendations for campaign messaging development.

Paid Campaign Channels

12. We plan to supplement the existing campaign with new channels and up-weighted targeted digital advertising, including:
 - Radio advertising to prompt recall and drive frequency of message
 - Paid media partnerships including case studies and claimant testimonials featured in Global Radio and News UK advertorial spots (including The Sun online, Talk Sport)
 - 'UC Helped me' case study online videos to act as proof points across a range of social platforms alongside and through paid media partnerships to guarantee audience reach
 - Additional targeted digital and social media advertising
 - Enhanced website with a focus on explaining the taper and work allowances for tax credit claimants.
13. In addition to targeted paid advertising we are working with HMRC to target Tax Credit claimants using targeted direct communications, including:
 - Direct communications to Tax Credit Claimants in their physical renewal pack (This leaflet is about to go into audience testing)

- A further bespoke (UC-only) mailing to Tax Credit customers using HMRC data towards the end of the renewals window (tbc).
14. This approach is the most effective way to deliver against the specific audience-targeting requested by SoS and MfWD as part of the new brief. It will demonstrate the relative benefits of UC over Tax Credits and provide specific proof points relevant to the audiences.
 15. We are currently undertaking more detailed media planning, though we anticipate the costs for the additional campaign activity to be approximately £2 million. This is in addition to £203k of agency costs already committed for the development of the 'UC Works in Your World' TV-led campaign. This represents an underspend of c£3m against the original £6m UC campaign spend proposal.
 16. As the brief has changed to more specifically target those Tax Credit claimants most likely to move voluntarily to UC, we do not recommend the inclusion of TV in this phase of the campaign. TV advertising is more suited to brand-led communications and the longer-term challenge of winning the hearts and minds of legacy benefit claimants.
 17. We will of course keep this under review and do not rule out TV advertising for future phases when we need to tackle more hardened barriers to moving to UC. It is worth noting development of a TV advertising campaign will take 20 weeks from the initial brief.
 18. It is also worth noting that the view of the programme remains that it would have been preferable to launch the TV campaign as planned from March to help improve the standing of UC before beginning targeted campaigns.

Phases two and three 2022/23

19. We recommend extending the activity set out above to continue through the Tax Credit renewals period (April to July), subject to Cabinet Office and UC Programme spend approval for 2022/23.
20. Throughout this period, we will monitor the number of people who have voluntarily moved to UC. This alongside additional research with legacy claimants will inform further campaign recommendations.
21. It is important to remain agile and responsive to the current context. If for example we are seeing significant numbers moving, an extension to the current recommended approach may be most effective.
22. Alternatively, if the evidence shows that the attitudinal barriers identified in the previous legacy claimant research are preventing moves, we could revisit a more brand-focused approach, with the inclusion of TV advertising

from September 2022. A decision on this would need to be made in early April 2022.

23. We will also monitor development of the managed migration phase and the role that the campaign can play in supporting this. During 2023 we will also begin to introduce 'legacy benefits are ending' messages to nudge claimants to act.

Voluntary Move to UC Stakeholder Engagement

24. To support the voluntary phase for Move to UC, the UC Programme restarted stakeholder engagement events in March 2021. In August, proposals were endorsed by the Programme Delivery Executive (PDE) to increase our stakeholder engagement. These proposals aim to:

- raise awareness of the Move to UC report once published and secure stakeholders' support to encourage legacy benefit claimants to check their potential UC entitlement;
- work closely with stakeholders to gain their insight across a number of key priority areas, with a focus on Move to UC; and
- resume regular engagement with SRS landlords and Local Authorities to identify further opportunities to communicate with and support legacy benefit claimants in moving to UC.

25. Most recently, this engagement increased to deliver a series of events with a range of stakeholders, covering both subject specific topics in smaller groups, and a wider general event.

26. Through November, the programme delivered a number of stakeholder meetings with a particular focus on supporting the voluntary Move to UC activity, including:

- re-engagement with the with Social Rented Sector Landlords, including initiating a conversation about including information about UC within the Annual Rent Changes letters to legacy claimants. This was positively received, although landlords would welcome the opportunity to target those who will see an increase of entitlement on UC. Meetings will be held quarterly but we will introduce ad hoc meetings should there be a need to engage earlier;
- attending (LA) Practitioners Operational Group (POG) to discuss how LAs may support voluntary move to UC. We have also created a subgroup of POG members to look at options for interventions with legacy claimants moving forward. We will attend LAWSG & POG as they occur (bi-monthly) moving forwards. The sub-group is likely to meet on a monthly basis as we develop a voluntary approach;

- Health & Disability / Welfare, Children and Poverty / Research and Financial sub-groups. All three meetings in November were introductory and were welcomed by stakeholders. Meetings will continue in January on a monthly basis, to support ongoing discussions and feedback on both Voluntary and Managed Migration tracks; and
 - a stakeholder event on 25th November, with 70+ external organisations. Hosted by Neil Couling and introduced by the Minister for Welfare Delivery (MfWD).
27. At this latter stakeholder event, we presented a number of case studies on individuals who are likely to gain financially from a move to UC and showed stakeholders the latest estimates for the number of people we expect will receive a higher entitlement under UC. This analysis and the case studies reflected the changes to the taper rate and work allowances. On the back of the information presented, we then posed the question *“How does the material provided here help you engage with customers who may benefit from a voluntary move to UC?”* to support smaller group discussions.
28. The case studies were broadly well received and the breakout sessions considering the above question stimulated helpful discussions, with some new areas identified that we have proposed to Ministers to look into. This includes expanding the range of case studies we provide and looking at the use of other tools, e.g. a checklist, to support claimants in making an informed decision about whether or not to move to UC voluntarily. As expected, there were also some concerns raised about protections for claimants if they move voluntarily but end up receiving a lower award on UC which is something stakeholders have previously raised. We have provided MfWD a summary of the feedback and recommendations for next steps.
29. These cross-cutting stakeholder events will take place every 3-6 months. Meetings with Scottish and Welsh Government officials will commence in the new year.

Recommendation

30. UC Programme Board to note the new steer from Ministers and the revised shape of the campaign.