

To: UC Programme Board Members

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Paper Title: Universal Credit – Progress to Start Discovery

Issue: This paper describes the progress we have made towards being ready to start the Discovery with Controlled Volumes phase of moving people to UC. It provides updates on the Voluntary phase and preparation to start the Discovery phase, including the criteria to be used to select locations in which to test how to move people during the phase. The paper also outlines a key decision we need from Ministers, and the risks to the overall plan – notably the voluntary phase – if we are unable to secure Ministerial agreement to announce the Move to UC plan with the publication of the supporting analysis and then lead a public campaign through 2022.

Recommendations/Decisions required: Programme Board are asked to

- Recognise the need for multiple locations to be used to learn how to move people during the discovery phase, and agree that choice of locations in which to start testing and subsequently expand testing during the phase will be determined by the need to learn and defined by the location selection criteria.
- Agree and support the recommendation to Ministers of announcing the Move to UC plan and publishing accompanying analysis, and acknowledge the risks to the overall plan and timeline if this is not done very soon backed up by an ongoing public campaigning activity to support the voluntary activity.

Background / Introduction

1. As set out in the Programme Board paper in September, the Move to UC delivery plan, agreed with Ministers in March 2021, after independent scrutiny by Atkins, comprises four phases:
 - A. **Voluntary phase** – including a comprehensive media campaign, sustained work with stakeholders and partners and across various agencies both across and outside of Government to engage with legacy benefit claimants (in progress, will continue alongside phases below);
 - B. **Discovery with controlled volumes phase** – iterating our design and testing the process for moving people across at controlled volumes (beginning in January 2022, initially with design work);
 - C. **Scaling phase** – progressively adding further scale to the number of customers being migrated across to UC (beginning in 2023)
 - D. **Completion phase** – running migration at high volume (to complete by the end of 2024).

