



Title of meeting:	Universal Credit Programme Board
Date:	17 th May 2022, 15:00 – 17:00
Location:	Caxton House Room 6:24 Microsoft Teams
Attendees:	John McGlynn (Chair), Neil Couling (UC SRO), Ian Wright (UC Programme Director), Stuart Ison (External Affairs, Strategic Design & Planning Director), Paul Francis (OBO Simon McKinnon, (Digital DG), Paddy Rooney (Deputy Secretary for Work and Health DFC Northern Ireland), Graeme Connor (Deputy Director Policy obo Angus Gray), Ed Winfield (SPAD to the Secretary of State), Chris Drane (HMT Director), Will Garner (UC Product Director), Louise Mayhew (obo Deb Walton ,Deputy Director People Capability & Place), Sophie Ingram (obo Nick Joicey, Finance DG), Myrtle Lloyd (HMRC DG), [REDACTED] (Local Authority), David Magee (Cabinet Office, Operations Lead), Beverly Warmington (Director of Disability Services and Decision Making)
Observers:	[REDACTED] (Head of the Director General, Change and Resilience Private Office)
Presenters:	Stuart Ison (External Affairs, Strategic Design & Planning Director) Ian Wright (UC Programme Director)
Apologies:	Deb Walton (Director People Capability & Place), Karen Gosden (Work & Health Services DG), Angus Gray (Policy Director), Nick Joicey (Finance DG), Simon McKinnon (Digital DG).

The Chair opened the meeting, welcomed attendees to the Board and ran through the agenda.

The following amendments requested for the 26th April 2022 UCPB Outputs.

- Page 2 – SPAD to the SoS’s comments made around triage exclusions to be brought forward.
- Page 4 - Noted that Ministers would want to agree the notice.
- Page 5 – Noted that The Chair & Board are content to progress and to start sending Migration Notices from 9 May.

AP01: Secretariat to make the requested amendments to the April 2022 Outputs and share the updated version at June’s UCPB.

The following updates given regarding action points:

- 1502 AP02 & 2604 AP01 - Closed
- 2604 AP02 – TCR paper to be shared with UCPB in June.
- 2604 AP03 – Internal conversations ongoing in Local Government and a Rep will be identified as soon as possible. Action remains open.

Matters Arising:

- Noted the Select Committee is undertaking an enquiry with the first hearing on the morning of the 18/05/22. Noted the point raised is whether there will be a guarantee that claimants won't have their money stopped at 3 months.
 - Noted conversations are ongoing between the UC SRO and Secretary of State (SoS) to agree wording around this.
 - The SoS has been in discussion with the Disability Benefits Consortium to explain the importance that people engage with the process.

Paper 1 – Programme Dashboard – UC Programme Director

The Presenter introduced the paper, highlighting the following key points:

- Programme remains amber/red.
- Noted that following the publication, the stakeholder event took place on the 04/05 and seemed to go well. A letter was sent to the SoS from a number of key stakeholders which was disappointing, however highlighted this letter was not as a result of the briefing. Noted this emphasised the level of external concern to be managed.
- The UC SRO noted
 - The importance of transparency, further noting plans to engage Select Committee with what the Programme is really doing, rather than statements they hear from other sources.
 - Conversations have been had with the key stakeholders to encourage them to engage with the Programme.
 - Emphasised that switching benefits off is not a success criteria and that the Programme does not want this at the expense of claimants not receiving their benefits.
- Migration letters started to be sent in Bolton and Medway from the 9th May as planned.
- Estimated revised transitional protection regulation dates are reflected in the milestones. Noted these won't be secure until the SSAC report is received. Highlighted that the longer it takes to get the regulations the longer it will take to test all groups of claimants, particularly the complex area of couples, potentially risking delays to the plan.
- Work ongoing around the next help to claim procurement for next year with a marketing engagement event later in the week to start discussions with potential suppliers.
- The MtUC risk on page 2 of the paper has been amended to reflect feedback that the SoS feels the biggest risk is that claimants don't engage.
- Product Developer vacancies will impact what can be done in P12, further noting that developers will be moved to MtUC as a priority if required.
- Although early in the financial year, already the forecast has been reduced by £12.1m due primarily to savings from HMRC as a result of the latest set of volume forecasts.

Noted the following milestones:

- Amber – The risk of delivering Move to UC (MtUC) on time given the early stage of the discovery phase and hence limited learning to date.
- Amber – The recruitment and training of a large number of staff for Targeted Case Review project.
- Amber – Regulation dates are assumptions until the SSAC report is delivered.

Programme Board Discussion:

- Noted that Programme Delivery Executive will be looking at what is coming up in phase 12 and this will be coming to a future UCPB Meeting.
- Noted recent Government announcements around reducing Civil Servant numbers, and the external noise this creates may impact recruitment.
 - Noted that post the announcement, conversations have been had to reassure contractors and permanent DWP developers.
 - The larger issue is to attract developers into the Civil Service on a permanent basis, further noting that only 24% of the digital teams are Civil Servants.
- Noted confusion amongst some members with regards to the table on resources.
 - The Chair raised concerns around the recruitment and retention of developers based on the table.
 - The Digital Director highlighted software developer vacancies currently stand at 20 this month compared to 19 the previous month.
 - The UC SRO highlighted that MtUC and Fraud & Error are priorities and that the information shows the actual people who should be in the teams, further noting that MtUC teams are almost at full strength, however, this will impact other work in phase 12 as resources are allocated to MtUC.
 - Noted the need to provide a commentary on the paper to ensure a clear understanding that MtUC is currently not short of developers due to re-prioritisation of staff.
 - The Chair questioned the short, medium and long term strategies, further noting that apprentices will support longer term strategies.
 - Noted that the stabilisation of attrition of contractors has been achieved more recently. Conversations have been had with CDDO around revising the DDAT pay framework, further noting that Cabinet Office Ministers are due to discuss this on the 23rd May.
 - The Chair suggested exploring with CDDO whether the adopting the Digital Design and Technology Framework will increase the competitiveness of DWP's offer. Further queried whether considerations had been made following the Cabinet Office guidance on insourcing and procurement models.
 - Noted UC have historically used a blended approach of using Civil Servants and suppliers and that augmented blended teams is the preferred method due to the complicated services.
 - it was suggested:
 1. That the Digital Director again explore possibilities of bringing in "pre-cooked" resource and look into how to develop and deploy.
 2. To look what other government departments are doing within this space that have similar challenges.

AP02 – Paul Francis to look into alternative ways of filling the developer vacancies, including to look into learnings from OGDs who are experiencing similar issues. To return to a future UCPB to provide an update.

Paper 2 – Move to UC Update – UC Programme Director

The presenter walked attendees through the paper, highlighting the following key points:

- Migration letters were sent out as planned from 09/05/22. Noted that the version being used is the one that was amended by Ministers and so has not been through customer testing.
- Highlighted considerations are ongoing regarding testing the original customer tested letter against the new version.
- The telephone helpline went live on the 11/05/22 and to date had received 16 calls including:-
 - Claimants seeking information on how to make a claim.

- Claimants requesting further support on digital capability who were subsequently signposted to the Job Centre and/or Citizens Advice.
- Questions from Claimants about payments to Landlords and Alternative Payment Arrangements (Fortnightly payments).
- As of 17/05/22, 281 migration notices issued with 19 on the first day, 24 on the second day and growing. Noted two claims had been made, one claimant on ESA & Housing Benefit, and the other on Housing Benefit and Tax Credits.
- Noted that work is progressing well on plan and that as yet there are no known issues with claimants in distress.
- Focus is looking at current processes noting there had been data mismatches such as phone numbers and middle names.

Programme Board Discussion:

- Noted expectations were to reach 500 notices by the end of the week.
- The 2 claims made will be closely monitored to ensure they progress on the correct journey. Highlighted the first cases will use the transitional protection calculator with manual data inputs and noted the importance that the data is collated accurately In order to do this.
- Highlighted there are data mismatches across DWP legacy and OGD systems:
 - Regarding name mismatches, noted that some DWP systems accept middle names, some accept initials, and some do not require it, further explaining these mismatches.
 - Investigation is required regarding the mismatches of phone numbers.
- Emphasised the importance to only automate what needs to be.
- Noted that there was a temporary pause on updating CIS during the pandemic. Highlighted this has resulted in out-of-date information.
- Noted the programme are considering whether to use both migration notices simultaneously and test them against each other. Noted advice is to be sent to Ministers shortly.
- Noted that there has been some interest and questions in parliament, further noting that questions give the programme the opportunity to share the latest position.

Paper 3 – HMRC Tax Credit Update - External Affairs, Strategic Design & Planning Director

The Presenter gave an overview of the paper and highlighted the following:

- Highlighted the aim of the paper is to present updates around the feasibility of accelerating the movement of Tax Credit claimants to UC from a DWP/HMRC perspective. For examples, the possibility to make this the last Tax Credit year, but also anchoring a new process in the next Tax Credit renewals year.
- Highlighted the possible options and that work has been underway to identify how the Tax Credit claimants can be separated into cohorts.
- Highlighted significant challenges in making this the last year of Tax Credits, with the following risks:
 - Capacity & resourcing constraints particular in terms of the surge of claimants that DWP/HMRC would need to manage.
 - The timeline would result in an un-manageable wave of new claimants in the summer of 2023.
 - Reputational risk to the Department and programme.
- Emphasised the recommendation that the programme does not peruse the option of making this the last Tax Credit year for the reasons set out in the paper. Further noting the alternate options are not tenable due to the risks.

- Recommended that the programme investigates how to identify cohorts of claimants to fast track to UC during the next financial year.
- Having looked at the cohorts of customers, there may be the option of looking at working and child tax credit customers independently however more investigatory work is required.
- The Presenter sought the Boards approval to approach the second part of the feasibility work along the lines set out in the presentation.

Programme Board Discussion:

- The HMRC DG highlighted the good working relationship between DWP and HMRC and noted the feasibility work with Working and Child Tax Credits is worth exploring. Further expressing that following the PMs announcement around Civil Service Numbers reducing, it is important to understand the driver for this and how it compares with other HMRC work. Noted that decisions would need to be made as to where to place HMRC's already stretched resource.
- The SPAD to the SoS highlighted one of the key Government focuses at the moment is growing the economy and cost of living. Further noting that due to the gainer analysis and cliff edges built within Tax Credits (e.g. 16 hour rule), the SoS is keen for Tax Credit claimants to move to UC to support people into work and therefor help with the cost of living and growing the economy.
- The UC SRO noted:
 - The programme has given this a good look and that it is believed there is scope in this work.
 - It is unlikely to do managed migrations and Tax Credit renewals simultaneously due to the amount of work for both DWP and HMRC.
 - External recruitment controls or pressure to reduce headcount could impact the possibility of this work due to the large amounts of work required by both departments.
 - Emphasised the renewal process of moving claimants from Tax Credits to UC will not use the managed migration approach, instead there will be a point in which claimants are told they are not entitled to Tax Credits and must claim UC.
- The Northern Ireland representative noted that conversations are ongoing with the External Affairs, Strategic Design & Planning Director to ensure alignment with DWP.
- Discussions have been ongoing with analytical colleagues to look at spikes.
- Noted the importance to adapt the claim process and that all claimants don't move to UC at the same time.
- The HMRC DG noted a decision will be required by November, further noting that any tweaks to the system will have a lead time due to the older systems used in Tax Credits.
- The 100k limitation is an assumption.
- Highlighted that following this discussion and steer at the board, the SoS is to be updated on where we think we could go with this work and the difference between managed migration and this approach.
- Highlighted that the work will run into the first 3 months of 2025 as reflected in the paper.
- Emphasised the importance of the feasibility work due to the lack of discovery and big bang approach required.
- HMRC are aligned in the proposed way forward, however HMRC wouldn't be able to support the big bang approach themselves due to the time and resources needed.

The Board supports the further feasibility work as proposed.

AP03: The UC SRO to provide information to the SoS to update her on the Tax Credit Feasibility work.

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

AOB:

The Chair highlighted that voluntary moves are still being tracked and suggested that these are put into the monthly MtUC update each month as an annex.

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