



Minutes

Meeting:	Universal Credit Programme Board
Date:	19 th January 2023
Location:	Microsoft Teams & Caxton House
Attendees:	John McGlynn (Chair), Neil Couling (SRO), Ian Wright (UC Programme Director), Stuart Ison (External Affairs, Strategic Design and Planning Director), Sophie Ingram OBO Catherine Vaughan (Finance Director), Simon McKinnon (Digital DG), Myrtle Lloyd (HMRC DG), Beth Timson (HMT Director), Helen Pickles (Director PC&P), Paddy Rooney (Work and Health DFC NI), [REDACTED] OBO David Magee (Cabinet Office Operations), Mari Roberts-Wood (District Council Chief Executive for Reigate & Banstead), Lesley Woodruff (MtUC Operation Director), [REDACTED] (HMRC Director), Will Garner (Product Director)
Presenters:	Ian Wright (UC Programme Director), Lesley Woodruff (MtUC Operations Director), Stuart Ison (External Affairs, Strategic Design and Planning Director)
Apologies:	Barbara Bradley (Work & Health DG), Catherine Vaughan (Finance DG), David Magee (Cabinet Office Operations)

Welcome, Minutes & Matters Arising

The Chair welcomed attendees to the Board. The minutes from the previous meeting were cleared.

Paper 1 – Programme Director and Move to UC Update – UC Programme Director

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

- The proposal to change the Programme risk rating to amber. More information will be provided in paper 4 on the agenda.
- The readiness criteria for scaling are amber but on track for April.
- Good progress noted with the implementation approach.
- The funding drawdown has been agreed with Treasury, with acceptable conditions.
- Noted the findings from the first Discovery ETS cohort were published and a stakeholder meeting was held last Friday.
- Help to Claim for next year has been approved by Investment Committee and awaiting Treasury's approval.
 - Once Treasury's approval is received for Year 5, the RAG rating will move to green.
- Ongoing development work around Help to Claim (year 6 onwards) and the proposals will be brought to future Programme Board.
- 1000 claimants will be sent migration notices per month over the next 3 months.
- The last two HMRC releases to enable automation were delivered on time.
- The migration notice has been updated based on insights from Tax Credit claimants.
- Highlighted the Implementation Control Centre has been established.
- The Bristol Service Centre is carrying out consolidated learning and will go live next week.

- Highlighted the Minister of Employment is visiting the Bolton centre this week.
- Discovery work on non-Tax Credit claimants will hopefully restart earlier than planned, however this is dependent on how scaling goes.
- Good progress made within TCR project on recruitment and MVP but amber due to scale. It is noted there is confidence to go 930 FTE by end of March
- Highlighted Operations' conflicting priorities.
- The next HMRC IT release is on track.
- Should there be agreement to move the Programme risk rating to amber, the MtUC ratings will move from amber/red to amber.
- Noted the positivity around where the Programme stands.

Board Discussion:

- The Board discussed and noted the five sets of readiness criteria used to measure the scaling progress. It is noted the Programme Board will be updated on the rollout on a quarterly basis.
- The SRO touched on the condition Treasury may have around the lighter touch review of readiness in April.
 - Emphasis on not overloading the team at the critical time of scaling was highlighted.
 - The Treasury representative will reflect and work alongside IPA and the PMO.
- The Board noted the mixture of stakeholders (representatives from welfare rights groups, disability, landlord and academics) were involved in last week's stakeholder event.
 - The event was well received, and stakeholders were appreciative of the transparency within the Publication.
 - Interaction with the groups occurs monthly.
- The Chair questioned if the user journey has been simplified.
 - Noted the journey is the same.
 - Highlighted the challenge in scaling is the operation and the user experience (managing the interaction and making a claim to UC).
- The Chair queried about the TCR 2000 FTE agents' milestone in the 2023 plan.
 - Noted TCR original timeline is July 2024 and will be corrected on the plan.
 - Highlighted TCR project is hoping to be able to bring this forward to September 2023 if Department agreement is achieved.
 - Noted the nervousness around de-stabilising DWP service delivery if TCR recruitment targets internal recruits.
 - The SRO emphasised no decision has been taken yet and will go through governance first.
 - Highlighted resources may be pulled from the most junior grade which may impact on the wider department.

The presenter walked attendees through the rest of the paper, highlighting the additional points:

- Finances are stable with unit costs below the forecast.
- Highlighted the issue around the political steer to deal with economic inactivity and redirecting resources if this was prioritised.
- Net positive impact in terms of recruitment in the Digital department.

Board Discussion:

- The Chair emphasised the good progress made in Digital, however understood the long-term issue in recruitment around Java Engineers.
- The Digital Director emphasised the ongoing work with PC&P to encourage retention and recruitment in IT.

- A current analysis of options available to reward Java Engineers and other roles is taking place.
- Highlighted all programmes using Java resources are facing similar challenges.
- Recruitment of Java engineers is still a high risk.
- Highlighted there are 200 people on the apprenticeship programme who will start moving into junior roles soon.
- Work in progress to retain and recruit more people and build capability.

Paper 2 – IPA Review Update

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

- Noted the six recommendations from the IPA review report.
- The proposals towards the recommendations are as follows:
 - The first recommendation is accepted. More milestones will be added to the Programme dashboard, the HMRC IT deliverables will be accommodated and the plan will be reviewed closely.
 - The second recommendation is accepted, noting that the Autumn Statement announcement has shifted the focus to look primarily at Tax Credit cases.
 - The third recommendation is accepted and will be tested with Ministers. It is further noted the UCPB membership has been extended to welcome a Local Authority representative
 - The fourth recommendation is accepted, and the Programme Board will be updated regularly on progress.
 - Following the Autumn Statement, the media strategy plan is being reviewed. Noted the fifth recommendation is consistent to what is in place already and therefore is accepted.
 - Highlighted the narrative around benefit realisation will be expanded and reflect the latest business case position. The proposal of the sixth recommendation is therefore accepted.
- Presenter thanked the IPA and the team who helped towards the review. It is further noted the recommendations will be actively and carefully managed and the Programme Board will be updated on progress.

Board Discussion:

- The Board discussed and noted the engagement with Martin Lewis in the past.
- Highlighted that there is an active plan to support vulnerable residents in moving to UC

Decision01: The Board accepted the proposed IPA review recommendations based on the views expressed.

Paper 3 – MtUC Operations Model and Roll-out Strategy

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

- MtUC team in Bolton Service Centre is operating an end-to-end journey.
- MtUC teams in Bristol Service Centre goes live on Tuesday 24th Jan with 12 agents.
- A third MtUC site will be set up and live from May 23.
- Highlighted the high-level operating model will split into two parts: pre-claim and the post-claim activity. Looking to move to this model in May 23.
- Noted the pre-claim activity will operate on a national level in 2 - 4 dedicated MtUC sites.
- The post-claim activity will be delivered by dedicated new claims teams in each UC Service Centre.
- Currently the roll-out strategy is being finalised in terms of locations.

- Noted WHET is supportive and has endorsed the operating model being used.
- The rollout approach will be delivered at a district level and by the end of the summer, MtUC will be in all areas.
- Highlighted on slide 4, the current areas covered are Cornwall, Harrow and Northumberland.
- The recruitment risk is being managed and looking into freeing up existing caseworkers to enable scaling quickly and mitigate other risks.
 - Highlighted the quality of the migration notices will be managed.
 - New recruits will be paired alongside experienced agents.
- The volume profile has been agreed through PDE, as noted on slide 5.
- One of the next steps is to work closely with Area Directors' planning teams to understand the detailed roll-out schedule.

Board Discussion:

- The SRO emphasised the profile over the next 3 months is 1000 per month.
- The plan for scaling will not be delivered geographically, but early expansion will be influenced by district capacity.
- The Chair queried about dependencies in the development plan to deliver automation.
 - Noted there are two significant automations from HMRC to integrate in the current UC work, ready for scaling.
 - Completion dates are embedded and is monitored closely.
- Noted the operating model will be reviewed as volume increases.
 - The SRO noted the plan is driven by Operations and will anticipate changes in the future during implementation.
- The Chair highlighted the option of combining pre-claims and post-claims on a regional basis.
 - Noted the option was ruled out to allow claimants to integrate with the UC process at the earliest opportunity.
 - By operating at a district level, learning is kept in control and more likely to move to BAU if scaling goes well.
 - Highlighted the TP element to operate at scale is being tested.
- Highlighted the Implementation Control Centre is key to deal with issues and track progress.

Paper 4 – Programme Risk Rating – Proposed Change

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

- The RAG status in November 2021 was made amber/red due to the difficult political environment, concern about complex ESA cases and the lack of contingency in the plan.
- Noted since the Autumn Statement, ESA cases have been postponed and volume and complexity have been reduced as a result.
- Agreed the political environment is now more stable.
- Noted the most recent IPA review concluded an overall amber delivery confidence assessment.
- Treasury funding has been confirmed to the end of the calendar year.
- There is a contingency period planned with the time scheduled for Programme closure and handover.
- Implementation Control Centre is in place to deal with scaling issues and finding solutions to issues as they arise.
- Noted the recommendation to change the status to amber reflects the status of the current Programme.

Board Discussion:

- The Board queried why the proposed change is not amber/green instead.
 - Noted the issue remains within the Digital space with recruiting Java Developers.
 - Highlighted the inactivity agenda will impact on resources and on delivering MtUC.
 - There is pressure in Operations to delivery many priorities.
- The SRO reminded members of the difficulties faced back in 2021 and how the Programme has come through some of them.
- The Chair agreed it is a reasonable step to move to amber, highlighting the long-term planning and prioritisation is for the Department to manage.

Decision02: In advice to the SRO the Board recommended changing the UC Programme risk rating from amber/red to amber. The formal decision is the SRO's alone, on advice from the PB.

AOB

- The SRO highly recommended members read the below the line paper "Move to UC Data and Insights pack" and suggested to bring the paper to a future Programme Board meeting.
- NI representative highlighted similar plans are underway with testing and rollout in July.
 - Flagged the challenges in terms of recruitment, NI assembly or no agreed budgets.
 - The Programme status is amber but with challenging budgets, this may be moved to a red status.
 - The impact of not moving cases to UC and closing the Tax Credit system in NI has been discussed.
- The weekly release issue was investigated and tracked to a coding error that was not picked up during the testing phase. This has now been rectified.

Next Meeting: 21.02.23

Contact: [REDACTED] ([REDACTED])