

To: UC Programme Board Members

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Paper Title: UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION CAMPAIGNS

Issue: This paper provides a summary of communications proposals for the Universal Credit and Workforce Participation campaigns provided to the Minister for Employment on 17th February 2023. This comprised:

- Recommendations to address concerns around UC perceptions, including ‘cliff edges’,
- Bronze (£500k), silver (£1.175m) and gold options (£3.025m) options for the Move to UC campaign.

The Minister for Employment approved these recommendations and selected the gold option for the Move to UC campaign.

Recommendations/Decisions required:

- For Information / below the line paper.

Timing: Routine

Introduction

1. This paper provides a comprehensive package to tackle misconceptions of Universal Credit and includes campaign, PR, stakeholder and parliamentary engagement proposals, all of which have been jointly agreed by the Communications and UC Programme teams.
2. It also presents three options for the Move to UC campaign spend, highlighting the potential impact and risks for each.

PART A: Tackling perceptions of Universal Credit

3. To tackle misconceptions of UC, including addressing concerns around perceptions of cliff-edges preventing claimants from working more, we have developed a comprehensive multi-channel package of communications. Explained in more detail below, this includes:
 - i. **Advertising campaign** to raise awareness of **work incentives** to encourage UC claimants to start or progress in work.
 - ii. **Cross-government collaboration** with key departments to increase reach e.g. DBT to communicate to business audiences.

- iii. **PR myth busting** to debunk misconceptions head-on, e.g. the 16-hour cliff-edge.
- iv. **Stakeholder communications** to amplify messaging through **trusted voices** e.g. Citizens Advice.
- v. **Parliamentary handling** to explain the benefits of UC and address any misconceptions e.g. MP teach-ins and digital assets that can be shared.

Advertising campaign

1. We have extensively reviewed our research on perceptions of UC. Whilst our latest campaign tracking shows that only 19% of legacy claimants thought that there is a 16-hour limit to the number of hours you can work on UC (Isos Mori, July '22), we agree with the need to ensure that this does not present a barrier for people to take on work, and therefore propose further research to better understand how we can tackle the misconceptions around cliff-edges.
2. In addition to concerns around the cliff-edge, our research also demonstrates a lack of understanding of the taper rate. Of those legacy claimants polled, 61% disagreed with, or didn't have a view on the fact that with UC, you are better off for every hour that you work. Though the level of understanding of the taper is higher amongst UC claimants, there is more work to do to help explain how it works.
3. Conversely, evidence shows that campaigns to increase understanding of UC work incentives have been successful in increasing positivity about looking for work.
4. To address the concern around the 16-hour cliff-edge along with wider perceptions of UC, the Workforce Participation campaign has an important role to play by delivering positive and motivating work-related messages.
5. The campaign will target unemployed and in-work intensive work search groups and will:
 - i. **Prime:** raise awareness of work incentives, as research shows a positive correlation between awareness, positivity towards UC and more effective job search behaviour.
 - ii. **Motivate:** promote UC work incentives to encourage UC claimants to start or progress in work. This will include the work allowance, UC childcare and work coach support, with a particular focus on better off and taper messages.
 - iii. **Equip:** signpost to the Job Help website to enable claimants to self-serve and take action to find work or work more hours.
6. To further refine the approach, we are undertaking message testing with both in-work and out-of-work audiences.
7. The campaign will run in two phases:
 - i. **Phase 1 – May-Sept:** Building on Jan-Mar no and low-cost activity with a mixture of broadcast and bespoke partnership activity targeting inactive over 50s, in- and out-of-work audiences.
 - ii. **Phase 2 – October onwards (estimated):** Promoting new policy levers through branded and non-branded paid communications, with a focus on inactive groups.

8. We will also leverage our no and low-cost channels. For example, to help bolster work coach conversations, we will also explore options to raise awareness of work incentives through Jobcentre Plus channels, including posters and digital screens.

Cross-government collaboration

9. Extending the reach of our campaign to businesses and employers, we are working with DBT to provide information on UC as part of a new cross-government business hub.
10. We will use this platform for further myth-busting and to explain the benefits of UC, seeking out further opportunities for campaign amplification through other departments.

PR activity

11. Alongside the workforce participation campaign, PR activity will work at improving perceptions of UC alongside tackling misconceptions head-on and providing top tips to support claimants moving from tax credits to UC. Underpinned by digital activity, press options include:
 - i. Working with consumer journalists to deliver **myth busting pieces**, reframing Universal Credit as not just an 'out-of-work benefit', helping to de-bunk the 'cliff-edge' myth.
 - ii. **Regional press releases or broadcast** to coincide with the geographical spread for the tax credits Migration Notice roll out plans. These releases/ broadcasts could include **case studies** from the specific areas who have benefitted from the move to UC.
 - iii. Pitching to broadcast for a Work Coach to appear on **Steph's Packed Lunch** or the **One Show** to talk about the benefits of moving to UC, using a case study as a real-world example.
 - iv. **An op-ed from the Minister** possibly to coincide with the 10-year anniversary of UC about the benefits of UC with messaging around Move to UC.
 - v. Engaging **Martin Lewis** to work with us on messaging around moving to UC – Money Saving Expert already has pieces about Move to UC and we could offer Ministerial comments for future pieces or see if we can meet with Martin's team to collaborate on some practical messaging so people on tax credits don't lose their benefit.

Stakeholder communications

12. In addition to national communications, we will tackle perceptions of UC by mobilising our stakeholder network, as described in the Learning from the Move to UC discovery phase sent to you on 9th February.
13. We will work with stakeholders who are trusted by citizens within the welfare advice sector and have influence over their sector to advocate for the campaign. Recognising the importance of supporting claimants with complex needs, we will also work with stakeholders from the health and disability sector. Key stakeholders will include:
 - *Rightsnet*
 - *Child Poverty Action Group*
 - *National Association of Welfare Rights Advisors*

- *Citizens Advice*
- *Policy in Practice*
- *Turn to Us*
- *Disability Benefits Consortium*
- *Mind*

14. To help support tax credits claimants to move to UC, our stakeholder engagement strategy will also focus on encouraging preparatory actions, such as:

- i. Check you understand your payments and the financial support available (run-ons, advances),*
- ii. Check your debt position before you claim,*
- iii. Check our 'how-to-claim' guide.*

Parliamentary Handling

Parliamentary engagement to date

15. On 25th April 2022, alongside the publication of our 'Completing the Move to Universal Credit' strategy document, the Secretary of State made a Written Statement to Parliament outlining our approach to moving the remaining legacy benefit claimants to Universal Credit (UC) and the plans to restart work on the managed migration process through a small-scale multi-location discovery from May.
16. Ahead of commencing managed migration discovery work in specific geographical areas, the Minister for Welfare Delivery held individual discussions with each MP in the area.

Parliamentary handling moving forwards

17. As we start to significantly increase the volume of migration notices being sent to tax credits claimants from April 2023, we believe this to be a good time to consider how we engage with MPs more widely given it will start to affect greater numbers of claimants across broader geographical areas. Whilst we are not receiving a great deal of media and parliamentary attention regarding Move to UC at present, we expect this to increase as we start to move greater numbers over to Universal Credit.
18. The aims of increasing Parliamentary engagement are three-fold:
- i. To inform MPs of our plans, to smooth the path for Move to UC;
 - ii. To provide guidance for MPs and their constituency offices to ensure they are well equipped to signpost claimants as necessary if they come to them seeking support; and
 - iii. To address ongoing misconceptions about Universal Credit; both the approach to Move to UC and UC in general.
19. To support the above aims, there are a number of options that you may wish to consider (none of which are mutually exclusive):

- i. Issuing a Dear Colleague letter ahead of scaling in April to notify all MPs of our plans at a high level (we would then recommend subsequent follow ups with specific MPs as we move into new areas, undertaken at a local level by District Managers);
 - ii. Develop a UC explainer product that can be shared digitally;
 - iii. Laying a Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament;
 - iv. Holding 'teach in' sessions with MPs (this is something that has worked well previously on UC as well as other areas such as PIP). We could look to hold these on a quarterly basis, subject to demand;
 - v. Writing to the Work and Pensions Select Committee (WPSC) and Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) to inform them of our scaling plans;
 - vi. Writing to your counterparts in the Welsh and Scottish Governments at the point we are commencing work in their respective areas.
20. Once we have moved greater numbers of tax credits claimants through 2023, we will review whether further parliamentary engagement is needed to update on progress. This would help to ensure we are being sufficiently transparent with Move to UC activity.

PART B: Targeted Move to UC advertising campaign

21. Qualitative research with tax credits claimants (Ipsos Mori, August 2022) shows high levels of inertia, with many claimants preferring to stay on tax credits than consider a move to UC. Learnings from the discovery phase also show that the most common barriers relate to concern about UC payments and a lack of knowledge and understanding of the claims process.
22. This evidence shows that rather than try to persuade tax credits customers to move, communications are needed to make clear that they have no choice if they want to continue receiving financial support.

Campaign spend options

23. We recently presented recommendations for a Move to UC campaign with a budget of £3.025m million (gold option) and received clear feedback from the Minister for Employment to revise down this cost given that tax credits customers will also receive direct communications from the Department.
24. We therefore set out two additional budget scenarios below based on spend levels of £500k (bronze) and £1.175m (silver), explaining how they compare with the original gold option. The expected impact, opportunities and risks for each option are presented in detail below and a break-down of each campaign budget is in **Annex C**.

Option 1: Bronze- £500k

25. In this scenario, the £500k budget would allow us to deliver three, three-week bursts of paid-for advertising through:

- social media,
- paid search.

26. This budget level would not allow for the inclusion of radio, the value of which is explained in more detail in the silver option.
27. The focus of this activity would therefore need to be on driving awareness and would **reach c. 41%** of people on a low-income, including tax credits claimants. The campaign would be delivered at a very low frequency, meaning that those who see the campaign would be likely to **only see it once or twice, as a maximum**.
28. The risk with this option is that with such a small reach and delivery through digital-only channels, which we know not everyone engages with, we may face criticism from media and in particular stakeholders if we do not demonstrably communicate the closure of tax credits and the need for people to apply for UC to continue to receive financial support.

Option 2: Silver- £1.175m

29. In this scenario, to increase the reach and frequency of the campaign, we would add radio to the channel mix. This option is based on the minimum spend needed to deliver a viable radio campaign.
30. Again, delivered through three, three-week bursts, radio would enhance levels of awareness as a mass reach driver, with social and search advertising used instead to harness interest driven from the awareness generated through radio:
- radio,
 - social media,
 - paid search.
31. This option would allow us to more than double the **reach to c. 85%** of people on a low income, including tax credits claimants. They would also have considerably more exposure to our messages, with an estimation that they would see the campaign **approximately thirteen times**.
32. For just over double the budget but significantly greater potential impact, this option represents the best value for money.

Option 3: Gold- 3.025m

33. This was the original budget for the campaign and since our initial proposal, further media planning has demonstrated that we could increase the reach of the campaign to **c. 97%** of people on a low income, including tax credits claimants, through adding the following channels to the silver option channel mix:
- digital audio,
 - print,
 - online video.

34. This budget would allow us to run an additional burst of advertising; resulting in four, three-week bursts. However, the expected increase in people seeing the campaign **only slightly increases from thirteen to fifteen times**.
35. When compared to the silver option, whilst this package would provide further profile to the campaign, the added impact is comparatively low.
36. However, it was made clear to the Minister for Employment that the UC Senior Responsible Owner favoured the gold option because in the testing, ignorance about UC in the tax credits caseload is widespread. He considers this investment worthwhile because anything that increases the response rate means the costs of administration in chasing cases and the risk of fall-out reduce. The value for money is strong and he is confident he could justify the expenditure on his budget at Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

Next Steps

37. The recommendations set out in this paper to address concerns around perceptions of UC were approved by the Minister for Employment on 21st February and work is underway to deliver this activity.
38. The Minister for Employment also confirmed that he would like to progress with the gold option for the Move to UC campaign, alongside the steers provided by the UC Senior Responsible Owner. Final approvals for the campaign are being sought from the Cabinet Office, as part of their standard Professional Assurance process. In the meantime, we have commissioned Ipsos Mori to deliver qualitative research to test campaign messaging and creative and are refining the campaign approach based on these findings.

Decision / Recommendation

- This paper is for information only.