

## OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

UCPB160424 - Paper No. 5

**To: UC Programme Board Members****From: Sharmini Selvarajah  
Mark Cousen****Sponsor: Ian Wright****Author:****Date: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024****Paper Title: IPA Gate 4 Review February 2024 – Recommendations Update****Issue:**

*To provide Programme Board with an update on the two recommendations from the UC IPA Review in February 2024.*

**Recommendations/Decisions required:**

*Members are asked to note the status of the recommendations as described in this paper.*

**Timing:** *No timing issues*

**Introduction and Background**

1. The Infrastructure Projects Authority (IPA) undertook a Gate 4 review of the UC Programme between 26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024. The report was sent to Programme Board members for information in mid- March.
2. The report made two recommendations and this paper provides the latest update on the action being taken to implement them, and next steps.
3. **Recommendation 1**

**The Programme should investigate “the braking distance to stop.” Being clear about how long it would take to pause scaling safely, the issues that need to be considered and the leading indicators that would flag that such action is necessary would ensure that the Programme is prepared for such a difficult decision.**

Owner: Sharmini Selvarajah

Due date: 29th March 2024

Status: Implemented

Update:

To address this recommendation, we have reviewed the processes and mechanisms that would be involved in slowing or pausing scaling activity, and are satisfied that we fully understand ‘the braking distance to stop’. Our position is as follows:

- The UC Implementation Control Centre (ICC) monitors key indicators on an ongoing basis and acts as the ‘early warning system’ for issues arising. There are two main ways issues can be detected (1) via effective stakeholder engagement (ICC has representation from all

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impacted areas of the business to provide delivery assurance for MtUC), and (2) robust data monitoring via a range of metrics, including payment timeliness, trend analysis, telephony.

- If ICC deems an arising issue worthy of continued monitoring, it is captured on the ICC keep in view radar and discussions are held to agree how best to handle the issue.
- The controls which could be adopted include:
  - reducing the 'cap' (ie the agreed limit of migration notices which can be sent in a day or a month);
  - reducing the flow of migration notices; and in extreme circumstances,
  - ICC may recommend that issue of migration notices be stopped for a specified period of time. Such a decision would be escalated to UC Programme Delivery Executive (PDE).
- As of March 2024, circa 250k claimants have received a migration notice but have not yet made a claim to UC. Therefore, stopping the issue of migration notices will not immediately stop all Move to UC activity. Once a migration notice has been issued, the claim activity for that individual can't be stopped unless the claimant requests the migration to be cancelled or deferred.
- In the event of a pause, Operations would start to be alleviated of some pressure within the first month. However, it would take three to four months for the operational activity to fully reduce (albeit for some exceptional cases which require ongoing specialist handling).
- Any reduction in numbers, or pausing, would require quick communications and stakeholder management with existing teams and systems to readily undertake this activity.

4. We now consider this recommendation to be implemented.

## 5. Recommendation 2

### **The Programme should respond to the concerns of Local Authorities.**

Owner: Sharmini Selvarajah

Due date: 31st May 2024

Status: Open in delivery

#### Update:

DWP had already been working closely with local authorities:

- DWP's Local Authority Partnership, Engagement and Delivery (LA-PED) Team has been undertaking a series of planning exercises over the last 6-8 months with LA representatives. The latest took place with the DWP / LA Practitioner's Operational Group on 15 February. The meeting walked through the Move to UC process and draft guidance to illustrate the role LAs would play in the Housing Benefit to UC customer journey. This was followed up by a written consultation exercise which resulted in comments from only two members of the group.

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- The Stakeholder Engagement Team have also attended various meetings and conferences across the LA / Housing sector, to provide updates on Move to UC, including our latest plans and how we are supporting LAs and landlords. These include:
  - the Universal Credit Conference (for wider stakeholders) on 27 June 2023;
  - the Tackling Rent Arrears Conference on 04 July 2023;
  - the Housing Quality Network Conference on 18 October 2023;
  - the Scottish Housing Network on 31 January 2024.
- On 20 February, LA-PED wrote to 350 LAs, setting out how they could interrogate their own systems to determine the volumes of the different HB combinations, addressing one of the concerns previously raised by LAs. LA-PED provided contact details to address any questions they may have. To date there has been very little correspondence, which has mostly been limited to clarification of the benefits in scope for migration.

Since receiving the IPA report and recommendations, we have taken the following actions:

- We have put in place regular one-to-one meetings with any LAs who have raised concerns, including the two LAs that were interviewed by the IPA.
- On 15 March, DWP held an event with 500+ delegates across the LA community. This meeting was planned prior to the IPA review. We talked through the guidance that has been developed to support the LAs undertake Move to UC from April. The majority of the questions raised related to clarifications of the process and some specific questions relating to individual customers.
- On 20 March, Neil Couling wrote to all LA Chief Execs setting out the work undertaken by LA-PED to share regular updates and feedback from the event on 15 March. The letter also set out DWP's 'Enhanced Customer Support' which will be in place for households asked to migrate to UC from April, clarifying the support Housing Benefit customers who also receive Income Support or Employment and Support Allowance would receive.
- All LAs have now received the Move to UC guidance and DWP has set out how it will continue to engage with LAs, and the escalation routes available to address issues in real time. These routes are additional to our ongoing engagement.
- The guidance also sets out where LAs can direct claimants for support and the enhanced customer support offer.
- In addition, we have followed on from the guidance with a FAQ document which was issued on 3rd April.
- A vast number of LA landlords are also users of a digital interface known as the Landlord Portal. Given their contact information can be established, we are planning on providing regular mail drops to them on Move to UC.
- We are continuing to have regular, ongoing engagement with all our stakeholders across this sector, including those mentioned above and others such as the National Housing Federation of Arms-Length Management Organisations (ALMOs).

6. Although we consider this recommendation to be implemented, we have set the due date for the end of May in order to give time to ensure that the support structures and materials are bedded in and working for LAs.

**Next Steps**

7. When we consider both recommendations to be fully implemented, we will provide our evidence to the IPA for their view on closure. If closure is agreed, we will inform the UC Programme Delivery Executive and formally close the recommendations.

**Action required**

8. Programme Board members are asked to note the status of the IPA recommendations as set out in this paper. A full audit trail can be provided if required.