

Thorne Trial Evaluation


Section 40

Thorne Trial : The Scope

The managed migration design team have designed an initial high level process, to migrate 3.95 million individuals from their current legacy benefits onto Universal Credit.

The process includes issuing a package of claimant communications – including an Orientation letter, Call To Action letter, an SMS text reminder and phone call reminder.

As the team are unable to test the communications and journey with legacy claimants without regulations, a small jobcentre who are due to begin the transfer of claimants from UC Live to Full Service was selected to carry out their transfer activity using the migrate design.

Carrying out this activity could provide some useful insights into the following:

How the communications are being received – do claimants understand what they need to do and when?

Were the communications given at the right time?

What kind of questions did the communications generate?

Did anyone make their claim at orientation stage – why?

What help did people need to make their online claim?

How many people did not make their claim within the month – what were the reasons for this?

Were SMS reminders effective in prompting people to make their claim.

The process

Transfer action was undertaken by Thorne jobcentre for claimants in work related activity regimes, and by Dundas Service centre for people in non- work related regimes.



All letters were issued clerically, and Transfers Management System (TMS) updated when the letters were issued and to notes box completed to record details of customer contact.

Timeline for communications was as follows:



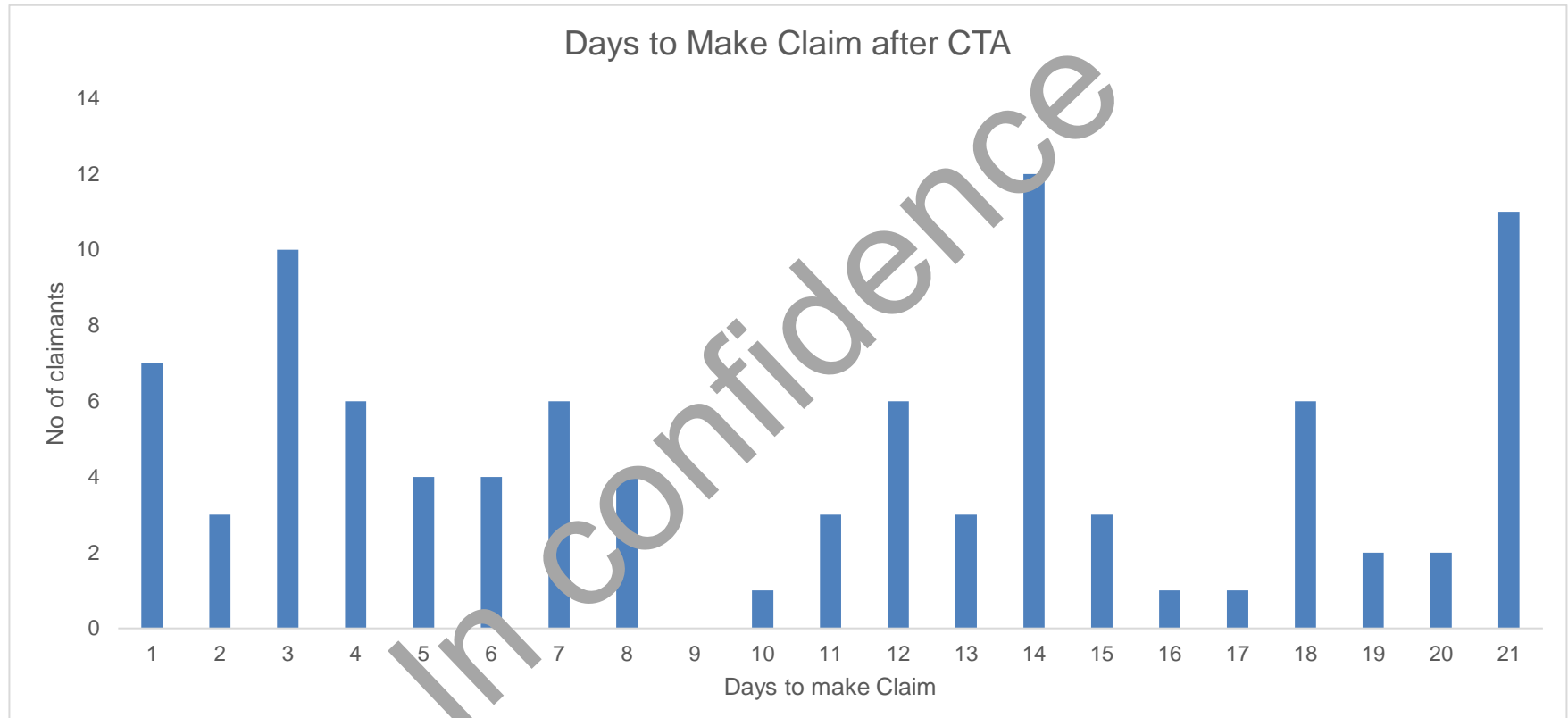
If no response is received from the claimant after all communication methods have been exhausted, the service centre will then begin suspension and termination action.

Headline numbers

Activity	Thorne JC - Work Related Activity Group 	Dundas Service Centre – Non Work Related Activity Group 
Number of Orientation letters sent –(suitable to transfer)	128	24
Claims made at Orientation stage	1	None
Contact made at Orientation stage	1	Non recorded
Number of incorrect addresses	5	2
Number of Call To Act (CTA) letters sent	128	24
Requests for digital support	10	2
Contacts made at CTA stage	10	Non recorded
Number of SMS's issued	41	3
Number of claims made after SMS	19	1
Number of phone call reminders made	18	No calls made
Total number of claims made	90	15
Total of number of people who didn't transfer	32 (25%)	3 – (12.5%)

* Numbers may not add up to totals, due to people being at different stages of the process

Thorne Trial : How long do people take to make their claim?



From available data, most people who were in work related and non work related regimes tended to put off making their claim until the 14 day deadline and beyond. This may give us an indication of where peak migrate traffic might occur. ***This is a small sample size so may not be representative. Data unavailable in some cases.**

Thorne Trial : High Level Insights

What worked well



SMS messages worked well at **reminding** people to do something.



Work coaches warming people up at **face to face** interventions helped **raise awareness** of what was going to happen.



Phone calls at 2nd reminder stage helped to identify someone who needed help and signpost them to support.



Face to face digital support offered in job centres helped the people that needed it to make their claim online.



Digital support over the phone helped people to continue their online journey at home.



Local knowledge of people, helped in preventing money being stopped where was inappropriate to do so.

What didn't work so well



Some people did **not receive** an Orientation letter at all, so the notification in some cases, was the **first time they knew anything**.



Some people didn't receive prior awareness from work coaches, so if they hadn't received the orientation letter it was again, the first they knew.



Incorrect and inconsistent contact numbers made it difficult to speak to people to find out why they haven't claimed.



Orientation letter not being used to 'get ready' to go online with UC.



Claims being made at Orientation stage.

*** Insights derived from a combination of qualitative interviews and data.**

What did people need help with to make their UC Full Service Claim?

11 claimants asked for support to make their online claim to UC.

- 1 claimant asked for **telephone support**, stating the online claim wouldn't accept his bank details, but **wanted to continue his claim at home.**

Other **face to face support** queries included:

- Confusion over partner codes and where to enter them
- Verify being 'down' and **not knowing what to do next**
- Help setting up the new account, **passwords being the main sticking point**
- People not **knowing what to do**
- Email addresses **not being accepted**
- **A failed attempt at a local library** resulted in attending the JC
- Claims being abandoned due to **not having the right information** with them i.e – bank details.
- Health factors which affect comprehension of the online form i.e Dyslexia

* **Source – qualitative interviews and work- coach notes**

Why did some people not transfer across onto UC Full Service?

35 claimants out of the 152 that had letters issued to them did not transfer onto UC Full Service.

Looking at the sample of claimants to Transfer, there are a few factors which led to someone not being transferred onto UC Full Service. Some of these included:

- A claimant became suspended after letter was issued
- Claimants moving out of the area
- Someone starting work / working more hours so no longer entitled
- Someone in later stages of pregnancy and housebound with no internet access
- An unverified date of death, resulting in someone who had passed away appearing on a list to issue a letter to
- People hadn't 'got round to it'

We are still to ascertain reasons for people that DWP have been unable to get in touch with so we may have to continue to track these people to see if they make a claim once their money has been stopped.

* Source of data – work coach notes

How successful were we at contacting people?

Phone contact proved to be difficult when it came to reminder 2 stage for a number of reasons:

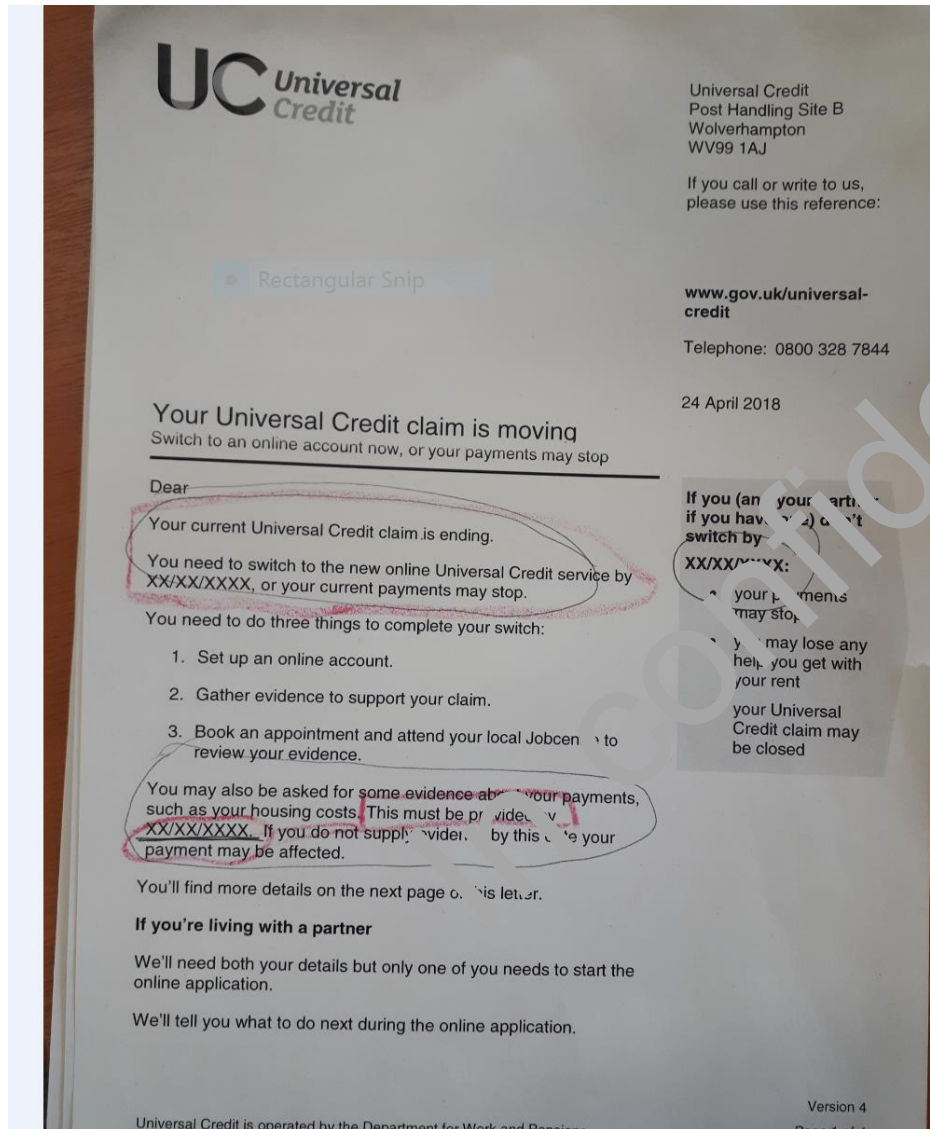
- Invalid mobile phone numbers
- Calls going straight to voicemail
- No number recorded
- Someone else now having the number

Letters also posed a problem due to:

- Incorrect addresses
- Letters not being received – (Orientation and Call To Act)
- Letters not being understood in some cases

Email was not used as a way of contacting people, although 1 claimant used email to contact a work coach to ask for help.

How did people react to the letters?



- Proactive people, were prompted into taking action as a result of seeing that their claim is ending and that their payments will stop.
- This worried people into taking immediate action because of fear of being “sanctioned”.
- The letter also raised concerns about not having the right evidence and ID, or what to bring to their JC appointment.
- Some didn't read the title and were drawn to the first paragraph where it said claim was ending.
- People didn't receive both letters in some cases, so didn't always know it was time for them to claim.

Qualitative Interviews: Case Studies

Julianna and Joe



Joe was previously on Universal Credit for 2 and half years and added Julianna onto his claim when they became a couple and started a family. The first time they had heard about having to move onto the Universal Credit online service was when they both received their letter telling them they had to go on and make their claim by the 7th May 2018.

They didn't receive the first letter telling them this was coming so they panicked when they saw that their money might stop and tried to claim the day after they got the letter on their smart phones at home.

They tried to make a joint claim – Julianne began the application and requested the partner code. This was sent to her but couldn't see where to input it and couldn't continue with the claim.

"It was the date that scared me."

Julianna then starts a claim on behalf of Joe, fills all his details in and indicates he has a partner and gets another partner code. They try to link the claims together but now have 2 partner codes and don't know what to do.

They come into the jobcentre and ask for help to sort it out.

Qualitative Interviews: Case Studies



Sean:

Sean has been on Universal Credit Live Service since December 2016. He lives in Sheltered Accommodation and currently has his rent paid straight to his landlord so he doesn't have to worry about it.

Sean only received one letter telling him he had to make his claim. He couldn't sleep after he had read the letter telling him his money might stop and came to the jobcentre the very next day to make his claim with help from the work-coach, as he does not have access to a computer.

It takes Sean about 45 minutes to make his claim. He gets stuck on the email questions. He has so many different email accounts and can't remember the passwords. He creates a new email account.

Sean is frustrated and confused about why he has to put all his information in again and verify he is who he is.

"Your already paying me you must know who I am"

Executive Summary

The Orientation letter doesn't at the moment, appear to be helpful in preparing people for the switch to the online service. Some people didn't receive the letter at all, and for some it created questions about what to do next.

Face to face conversations with work coaches helped raise awareness with some people about what was going to happen. This engagement didn't work for everyone, as some people still did not make a claim even after a work coach conversation.

We cannot ascertain at the moment the reasons why some people have made no contact to make their claim, or if they made contact after their money had stopped. This maybe something we will follow up with the jobcentre.

From the feedback received, there is little difference in how people in work related and non related work requirements behaved when it came to making an online claim to Universal Credit.

What does all this mean for Migrate?

There is still as possibility that people may try and claim too early at Orientation stage. It still seems unclear what people need to do/or not and may generate contact.

Lack of up to date contact details will cause problems at reminder stages, and incorrect addresses will mean we can't start people off in their migrate journey.

Offering telephony digital support may help keep people on-line, but there is still a need for face to face help with a number of issues that people have problems with.

Strong messages work when trying to get people to do things.

Where there is a contact number – SMS messaging works as a way of reminding people to do something.

Having knowledge of people and their circumstances helps to make judgement calls.

Making it easy for staff to feedback and and raise issues is essential to run successful trials.

Next Steps

The team will look to try and ascertain what has happened to the people that did not make their claim.

We will run more trials in larger areas to validate more assumptions.

Gather more evidence in the trials around the difference in behaviour between people who visit JC's regularly and those who don't.

In confidence