

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Creaking havoc

THE director-general of the government's universal credit (UC) programme has admitted that benefits staff are "creaking" under their caseloads, minutes of a meeting with welfare rights advisers reveal.

Neil Couling (pictured) was addressing a meeting of the Greater Manchester Welfare Rights Advisers Group (GMWRAG) last October, attended by welfare advisers and local council staff. Under UC's "digital by default" system, claimants are encouraged to communicate with the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) by entering updates into their online "journals". But according to the minutes obtained by the *Eye*, one attendee warned that some claimants were entering queries into their journals but were not getting a response as their case managers – who handle calls and messages from claimants – were too busy.



According to the minutes, Couling