

Universal Credit Managed Migration Event: 17 October 2018

Whilst we have been undertaking work internally to deliver managed migration effectively, your insights, input and participation in our event this October will be hugely valuable to us in developing our collective thinking around the conditions for success. In order to provide some context, this note sets out some of the facts and background to delivering managed migration, and highlights some of the aspects where things can be influenced and where we can work together to design solutions, and where the processes or policy may be more fixed.

During 2019/20 we will test and refine our processes, and this is why working in partnership with you is so important to us - beyond saying we will complete the migration process in 2023, we are keeping options open. We might approach the task by phasing it geographically (as we have done for roll-out) or nationally taking a set number of cases each week to manage the workloads – but at this stage we want to ensure we keep the design options open and respond to tests. Our focus is therefore this coming test year, and we are keen to find the best ways of delivery, drawing from a number of different approaches or new ways of working with different claimant types.

We anticipate that there will be around 3m people who will need to be migrated onto Universal Credit as part of a managed process, across some 2m households. The draft regulations which provide for the ability to do this are currently before the Social Security Advisory Committee and out for consultation, and will come before Parliament in the autumn. We can't begin work with claimants until those regulations are in place. Alongside enabling us to deliver migration processes, those regulations also provide for the delivery of transitional protections, worth some £4bn, for any case where the migration results in a lower entitlement than on legacy benefits: however, for many 100,000s of people the movement onto UC will mean an increase in entitlements, including around two-thirds of all severely disabled people who are not in receipt of the Severe Disability Premium.

The regulations also provide for the termination of the legacy claims (which could, in practice, mean the termination of up to three aspects of the legacy claim: with HMRC for tax credits, with the Local Authority for Housing Benefit, and with DWP for other benefits). We aim to ensure that Universal Credit avoids legacy complexities of overlapping entitlements (as each benefit and tax credit has different qualifying conditions and payment periods) and creates a fixed point for the transitional protection calculation.

This leads us though to one of our key priorities: enabling claimants to end a legacy claim and begin a new UC one without disruption. We do not have the ability in the cases of multi-faceted legacy claims to gather all of the information that we need from the three separate organisations to build a new claim for UC. Moreover, UC is a digital service in which the claimant is an active participant: owning their data; and also having the responsibility for advising changes and keeping information up to date. We need to do all that we can to ensure that claimants initiate their claims quickly, and that we support them through that process.

The importance of encouraging claimants to initiate their new claim to Universal Credit is the key one that we would like to focus on with you. We can, and have, developed a broad process which, if claimants respond on time and as expected, will work. However, we also know that some claimants don't respond as planned, and may not read communications from DWP, or might only act at the last moment. Around half of these new claimants won't be existing customers of DWP at all, so may not recognise the relevance of a communication from DWP to them. This is where we need your help. Many of these individuals will have existing relationships with your organisations, and will have developed a level of trust in your advice and direction, which could be instrumental in helping us to reach and reassure these individuals and support them to transition from legacy benefits to UC.

Resources within DWP, in both the Jobcentres and our newly created UC service centre network, will be ready and available to support claimants and deliver the tail end of any claim activity, but we have been thinking about how we can work better in partnership with organisations like yours to create the conditions to make this a success, including engaging with difficult to reach audiences in the most appropriate ways, and supporting individuals to make their new claims quickly and smoothly.

The event on 17th October will be a key part of that process of discussion and design. We will continue that dialogue with you and your organisation across the winter and into the testing phases for migration, sharing what we learn before we reach final conclusions about how we will deliver the best possible service for the larger volumes from 2020 onwards. Please come to the event with your ideas for how we can make this work for everyone together: we commit to listening and working with you to make migration a success.