



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Neil Couling CB CBE
Universal Credit SRO
6th Floor, Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1A 9NA
Neil.couling@dwp.gov.uk

4 December 2023

Dear Colleagues,

UNIVERSAL CREDIT – PREPARING FOR THE COMMENCEMENT OF MANAGED MIGRATION FOR HOUSING BENEFIT CLAIMANTS

In what continues to be a busy period for the Universal Credit (UC) Programme I thought it might be helpful if I updated Local Authority Chief Executives as we get closer to the point where cases in receipt of Housing Benefit will be migrated. As you may recall, our aim was to issue Migration Notices (the letter that prompts someone to make the move from a legacy benefit to UC) to all tax credit only customers by the end of March 2024. Work is well underway in this regard, and we are on track to issue 500,000 Migration Notices by the end of the Financial Year as planned.

In my last note to you in July, I mentioned that from September we are planning to continue our small-scale Discovery work with other legacy benefit combinations to support our preparations for moving these households at scale in 2024/25.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Local Authority (LA) colleagues in Manchester, Harrow and Northumberland for agreeing to support this work and help us consolidate our learning and ensure preparations are in place to operate at a scale that works for DWP and LAs and most importantly for our shared customers.

I'm pleased to say that my Programme Board Colleagues have now approved our migration plans for 2024/25. We will therefore be notifying the remaining applicable households of the need to move to UC during this period, which includes residual tax credits cases (including those on both Employment Support Allowance and tax credits and Housing Benefit), all cases on Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) and those combined with Housing Benefit and Housing Benefit only cases. (except those Housing Benefit only customers living in Supported or Temporary Accommodation).

We plan to undertake the issuing of Migration Notices to Working Age benefit claimants sequentially starting with Income Support (April–June), Employment Support Allowance with Child tax credits (July – September) and Jobseekers Allowance (September). If a Housing Benefit customer is receiving one of these benefits, they will receive a Migration Notice.

From April we will also invite tax credits with Housing Benefit and then Housing Benefit (only) customers to move.

My team are working closely with Local Authority Partnership Engagement and Delivery Division (LA-PED) colleagues on what these plans mean for LAs and how we will support the LA role in the Housing Benefit to UC Customer Journey.

LA-PED colleagues will be writing to you separately in the New Year with more detail on the national roll out plan and the volumes of Housing Benefit customers involved and what this means for individual LA caseloads so you can understand how and when the work is moving.

They will also be producing detailed guidance for all LAs on the Housing Benefit to UC customer journey and before the end of March they plan to hold an all LA conference call to walk through the plan and guidance in readiness for scaling in April 2024.

We are also working together to determine new burdens funding to ensure LAs are supported in our requirement for Housing Benefit claims to be closed. We will also ensure that support is available for LAs so that issues arising from moving Housing Benefit customers to UC can be quickly resolved.

We will continue to engage and update our stakeholder groups which includes the Move to UC monthly forums, the Local Authority Welfare Steering Group, Local Authority Practitioners Operational Group and our Operational Stakeholder Engagement Forum.

I look forward to continuing working with you all to deliver the safe implementation of Move to UC. If anyone has any further questions or comments in the meantime, please don't hesitate to get in contact with the team at the email address below: universalcredit.engagementteam@dwp.gov.uk or LA-PED colleagues lawelfare.laliaisonteam@dwp.gov.uk.

I will seek to regularly update you on progress to inform your local planning.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Couling', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Neil Couling