25 February 2019

The Rt Hon Frank Field MP  
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Frank

Universal Credit: tests for managed migration

Thank you for your letter of 31st January seeking SSAC’s views on suggested tests for readiness for Universal Credit managed migration.

Following our consultation on the Universal Credit managed migration proposals last summer, our advice to the then Secretary of State\(^1\) highlighted that it would be important to take account of how effectively Universal Credit was operating before finalising plans for the roll-out of the Department’s proposals.

While we took the view that the Department itself would be best placed to determine the most appropriate tests of operational readiness, we said that we would expect them to include the following:

- *the time it takes to make a successful claim – where the start point is, when a claimant first registers on the Government digital gateway, and the end point when the first full payment of benefit is made;*

- *the level of backlogs, including the extent to which the Department is withdrawing migration notices to safeguard the efficient administration of Universal Credit;*

- *the proportion of appeals and requests for mandatory reconsideration in relation to the number of claims determined;*

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\(^1\) The Rt Hon Esther McVey MP

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• the level, and rate of accumulation, of claimant debt.

Our report also made clear that an equality impact assessment should form an important element of the assessment of readiness.

We additionally advised the Department to publish its assessment of the triggers that would signal a deceleration or suspension of the managed migration process. For example:

• a percentage threshold of people in vulnerable situations not being identified and appropriately supported;

• growing backlogs;

• falling accuracy in the determination of awards;

• a disproportionate increase in the number of complaints; and

• requests for a mandatory reconsideration and appeals.

These tests and triggers are broadly consistent with those in your letter. We remain of the view that the Department is best equipped to set the tests of readiness as it has a unique insight of the data, resources and levers to undertake that assessment.

We recently had the opportunity to question DWP about its plans for the delivery of the managed migration pilot and beyond and we were encouraged by the informed, measured and cautious approach being taken by the Department. As you might expect, this is something that we will keep under close review.

Yours faithfully,

[By email]

Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Chair