**UNIVERSAL CREDIT FULL SERVICE – update**

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**UCFS Overview**

UC continues to roll out steadily learning from experience and adjusting the UC service as we go.

From June 2018 the rollout of UC full service to 60 Jobcentres a month.

Nationally we are currently taking more than 5,000 new claims to UC every day and the UC caseload is approaching 1 million.

**Key changes**

Claimants with three or more children.

If claimants have 3 or more children they won’t be able to make a new Universal Credit claim at the moment, unless:

•        they are making a re-claim because they were receiving Universal Credit within the last 6 months (the previous claim must include the same children that are included on the renewal claim), or

•        they are making a new claim as a single person within one month of a previous joint Universal Credit claim ending, because they are no longer a member of a couple.

New claimants with 3 or more children (that can’t currently apply for Universal Credit) should be directed to claim Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, and any other benefits they may be entitled to.

Her Majesty’s Government Payment Exception Service

Her Majesty’s Government Payment Exception Service (HMGPES) – is now available to customers in UCFS but has to be the absolute last resort for payment:

Some claimants may not be able to open or access traditional bank accounts or use standard banking products. In such cases, in order to make a first payment of Universal Credit, DWP will consider making a payment using a different method.

Payment methods by exception include:

•Post Office card accounts

•Payments into Third Party Accounts

•Her Majesty’s Government Payment Exception Service

All of the above methods of payment should only be considered when all other standard banking payments have been explored and options discounted.

They should be used for first payments or for making payments for a limited duration. It is important to conduct a method of payment discussion at the earliest opportunity to ensure they don’t continue without review.

Claimants should be encouraged and supported to use an existing bank, building society or credit union account or open a bank account to have their Universal Credit payments paid into at every opportunity. Consideration should also be given to other support available. This may include signposting to the UC online “Money Manager” Tool or making a referral to Personal Budgeting Support (PBS) for help opening a bank account and to budget.

For customers who do not have a bank account, how do they complete the on-line application as they cannot get past the bank question? – There is a temporary work around for this issue at the moment. The customer should enter 12 34 56 as the sort code and 00000000 as the account number and can then continue with their claim. HMGPES payments will then be set up as a temporary measure.

A reminder about free helplines:

All DWP Universal Credit phone lines are now free and nobody will be charged when they need to call to get help with their Universal Credit claim.

The key Universal Credit Freephone numbers include:

* Universal Credit live service: 0800 328 9344

(this replaces 0345 600 0723)

* Universal Credit full service: 0800 328 5644

(this replaces 0345 600 4272)

Anyone calling the old numbers will hear a message informing them of the change and the new number to call. Freephone numbers for other DWP benefits and services are set to follow, with all numbers switched over by the end of 2017.

Further information can be found on GOV.UK at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-helplines-for-universal-credit-claimants>

**Cambridgeshire Update**

The roll-out for Cambridgeshire Jobcentres is due to continue as planned, this means Ely and Wisbech offices go live onto UCFS on 12th September and Cambridge and Huntingdon go live on 17th October.

The managed migration is now planned to commence in July 2019 and be completed in March 2023.

An updated rollout schedule can be found on GOV.UK at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-transition-to-full-service>