

Written Ministerial Statement

Wednesday 10 July 2013

THE DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS

Universal Credit Update

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith MP):

Today we set out the next stage of the roll-out for Universal Credit following the successful launch of the Pathfinder in Greater Manchester, on time earlier this year.

Starting from October, the national roll-out will be comprised of three strands.

First, across all Jobcentres we will roll out components to drive the cultural shift under Universal Credit. Notably 20,000 Jobcentre Plus advisers will be retrained to deliver the claimant commitment and enhanced jobsearch support nationally. Ten in-work conditionality pilots will test how best to encourage claimants to progress in work.

Second, we will roll-out improved access to digital services across Jobcentre Plus. 6,000 new computers will be installed across the country, embedding digital technology and ensuring that jobseekers become used to online transactions.

Third, expanding on our early approach, Universal Credit will roll-out to the regions, with six hub Jobcentres – Hammersmith, Rugby, Inverness, Harrogate, Bath, Shotton – taking new claims to the benefit. This plan continues the safe approach to delivering this extensive reform, meaning Universal Credit will be rolling out in areas of England, Wales and Scotland.

The Pathfinder exercise has shown that the IT system works. In parallel, the DWP is working with the new Government Digital Service to explore the possibility of enhancing the IT, using recent advances in technology to ensure the system is as secure, flexible and responsive as possible. This approach builds on the rapid development and roll-out of services such as GOV.UK and Universal Jobmatch, which was developed in one year and since launching in December 2012 is now achieving over 5 million average daily job searches.

The Government has made clear that the priority is to deliver Universal Credit safely and securely over a four year period to 2017. We remain committed to that objective, to these timescales, and to the budget agreed for delivering this important reform.

The Government will set out more details of its development plan in the Autumn.