Welfare reforms: a data briefing

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Section 1 Welfare reforms: A data briefing

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Right now, the most significant change to the benefits system in a generation is under-way. Many of the benefits currently provided are going to be subsumed under Universal Credit (Income Support, Housing Benefit, Income based Jobseekers Allowance/ Employment Support Allowance), some will continue to be provided as separate benefits (Contribution based Jobseekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance) and some will be removed altogether (Council Tax Benefit).

1.1.2 There’s lots of analysis out there about the likely impacts of the change on particular groups – see Inside Government, BBC News- Business, CLES, Guardian Data Blog, the National Housing Federation, Guardian Society, Child Poverty Action Group and Joseph Rowntree Foundation for interesting briefings.

1.1.3 However, the benefit changes will also result in changes to the availability of open data. Here, we will look at the changing data and statistical outputs that will be provided under the new benefits system. See our blog on “Welfare reforms and open data” to consider what these changes mean for our ability to understand and measure deprivation levels across the country.

1.2 Official statistics consultation

1.2.1 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has released an official statistics consultation to outline the proposed statistical breakdowns and outputs to be supplied under Universal Credit and invite feedback from the public.

1.2.2 The consultation is now closed. DWP are currently reviewing the responses and will publish a summary alongside their comments over the next month or so here).

1.3 DWP will publish all benefits data through Stat-Xplore

1.3.1 Stat-Xplore provides statistics down to small area level and offers the means of visualising the data or creating and downloading cross-tabular tables.

1.3.2 Almost all DWP benefit data will eventually migrate to Stat-Xplore (see figure A), unless the series is ceasing completely in which case old data tables will remain available (full details on p34 of Consultation).
New benefits

1.3.3 Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment will be published as a single new statistical series. As they are phased in, the statistics for these series will build up gradually.

1.3.4 DWP will also publish a unified customer database of benefit receipt across DWP benefits: Universal Credit, HMRC Tax Credits and Housing Benefit. This will be provided from 2010 onwards to allow a legacy series back to 2010 and the comparison of benefits prior to Universal Credit, during transition and after transition.

Existing Benefits

1.3.5 Existing benefits that are being subsumed by Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) will continue to be published as normal until the caseloads cease.

1.3.6 Remaining DWP benefits will continue to be published as now. Some will be completely unaffected by changes (e.g. State Pension) whilst others will see a reduction in caseloads (e.g. Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance).
1.4 When is this happening?

1.4.1 Between 2013 and 2017 (see figure B).

1.4.2 As data becomes robust enough and caseloads of Universal Credit and Personal Independent claimants build up, the data will be passed through rigorous quality assurance checks and published monthly on Stat-Xplore.

1.4.3 Unfortunately, DWP do not provide an exact estimate of when the first data will be published and although the first datasets are likely to appear in early 2014, more robust breakdowns will take a while to build up and could take as long as 2017 to become available.

1.5 What sort of breakdowns will be provided?

1.5.1 The introduction of Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment brings with it a set of new statistical breakdowns that will eventually override those used to currently supply benefit data. By 2017 all old and new benefits will be provided under this new set of categories.
Statistical group breakdowns under the new system

1.5.2 As seen in the chart in Figure C below, Universal Credit will be broken down by a number of statistical groups and accessible in any combination of these groups (see page 16 of consultation for flow chart).

1.5.3 Existing DWP benefits will eventually be brought under these definitions to make them useable alongside one another. The statistical groups available are as follows:

- Employment status (In work/ Not in work)
- Work-related requirements (all, some or none)(full, partial, or none)
- Universal Credit statistical group (the bottom row)
- Any combination (e.g. work-related requirements combined with the statistical group)

1.5.4 See table A below for a detailed list of the types of indicators that it will be possible to extract under the new statistical group breakdowns.

Figure C: Statistical group breakdown for Universal Credit
### Table A: Possible indicators available within statistical groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Possible indicators (to be released as data becomes available)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universal Credit</td>
<td>• Individual characteristics (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, relationships, asylum status, education level, geography (including small area geography such as LSOA and output area), children etc.)&lt;br&gt;• Some assessment unit level information where appropriate (e.g. number of adults, total payment etc.)&lt;br&gt;• Labour Market (e.g. employment status, work-related activity requirements, sanctions, employment details, Work Programme status, Provider details, other employment assistance, hours, self-employment status etc.)&lt;br&gt;• Claim information (e.g. start dates, end dates, duration, claim processing statistics)&lt;br&gt;• Housing (e.g. rent, tenure, mortgage interest)&lt;br&gt;• Payments (e.g. frequency, method of payment, amount, benefit cap, transitional protection)&lt;br&gt;• Health (e.g. Work Capability Assessment details, condition, decision maker decisions)&lt;br&gt;• Entitlement (e.g. appeals, entitlement breakdowns, benefit cap status)&lt;br&gt;• Money (e.g. other income and disregards)&lt;br&gt;• Fraud and error (e.g. overpayments, underpayments etc.)&lt;br&gt;• Changes of Circumstances (e.g. reasons, number etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Independence Payment</td>
<td>• Personal characteristics (e.g. age, gender, geography)&lt;br&gt;• Claim Information (e.g. start date, end date, claim duration, claim type (i.e. Daily Living and/or Mobility) total score for Daily Living, Total score for Mobility)&lt;br&gt;• Payments (e.g. frequency, Daily Living Amount, Mobility Amount, method of payment, Payment start date)&lt;br&gt;• Money (e.g. other benefits, adjustments)&lt;br&gt;• Disputes (e.g. number of reconsiderations, number of appeals)&lt;br&gt;• Decisions (e.g. event type (e.g. reassessment), event type start date, impairment type)&lt;br&gt;• Health (e.g. disabling condition, information around independent assessment, hospital stays)</td>
</tr>
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### 1.6 Summary

1.6.1 The Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment data series have the potential of supplying very detailed information to feed into deprivation analysis and needs assessments across the country, with broader statistical breakdowns than have previously been available.

1.6.2 However, DWP have not provided precise publication details and it is unclear how long these statistics will take to develop into the robust datasets that researchers require.

1.6.3 It will be very interesting to read DWP’s response to the official statistics consultation and we will follow up this blog with any developments in this area, taking particular note of public comments and any changes to the proposals that might result from them.