



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP  
Chair, Work & Pensions Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

**Justin Tomlinson MP**  
Minister for Disabled People, Work and  
Health

**Mims Davies MP**  
Minister for Employment

**Will Quince MP**  
Minister for Welfare Delivery

**Department for Work and Pensions**  
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Friday 15 May 2020

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your letters to the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, the Minister for Welfare Delivery and the Minister for Employment following our appearance at the evidence session on Thursday 23 April. For ease of reference, responses to your questions in the letters are set out, in turn, below.

**1. Please could you confirm the number of new claims for PIP and ESA received since March 16? How do these numbers compare to those pre-outbreak?**

From 16th March to 30th April, we received over 20,000 claims for ESA and over 40,000 new claims for PIP.

In the calendar month of April 2020 there were 25,000 new claims registered, this compares to 43,000 claims in April 2019. In April 2020 we received 18,000 claims for ESA, compared to 7,000 claims in April 2019.

**2. We welcome your commitment to introducing recording of telephone-based disability benefit health assessments. What are the barriers (if any) to introducing recording now, and when could this start?**

- a. We've heard anecdotally that claimants are being told by assessment providers that, during phone assessments, they cannot have an advocate

**join them on a conference call (similar to having an advocate present during a face-to-face assessment). Could you clarify the Department's position on this? If that is the case, what are the reasons for not allowing advocates to join the call?**

- b. There have been some reports of new PIP and ESA claims, or recent claims which have not yet come into payment, being delayed for three months. Can you confirm that such delays should not be happening? Have you had any representations from support organisations about this?**

We are exploring all communication channels with our suppliers to enable a telephony assessment to be recorded. The principal challenge we need to overcome, before a start date can be considered, is how we protect the claimant's data at all times. This will depend upon what recording method we use and will be considered at all stages as we make progress towards the option of claimants choosing to have their telephone assessments recorded.

Companions are able to join telephony assessments, just as they would have done for the face-to-face assessment. This is confirmed to the claimant in the initial invitation to assessment letter for all phone assessments. If choosing to request a companion, they will be added to the call by the Health Professional at the start of the assessment.

There is no suspension or delay on new claim processing, we continue to process claims as quickly as possible. DWP is also continuing to process Mandatory Reconsiderations and appeals as during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

We are aiming to avoid delay where possible and are working closely with colleagues in HMCTS who continue to undertake paper based and telephony hearings. DWP continue to join these where directed, utilising technology available and we are working with HMCTS to test video hearings. In addition, we have introduced easements providing more time for individuals to complete and return forms. For example, the time required to return a PIP 2 form has been extended to 3 months.

**3. How are you monitoring workplace discrimination against disabled people during this period? The Committee have heard concerns that disabled employees are more likely to lose their jobs.**

- a. Please could you also provide an update on processing times for Access to Work Claims, in the light of reports that these are being dealt with slowly?**

The Government is actively monitoring the impact of Covid-19 on the labour market, including the impact on disabled people and on other groups. It is too early to draw any firm conclusions. The next ONS labour market statistics will be released in May, covering the three-month period up to the end of March. This will provide an indication of early impacts of Covid-19 on the labour market.

To ensure Access to Work continues to deliver support for disabled people, we have deployed resources to maintain service levels and prioritise applications from key workers and those starting work in the next four weeks. We have extended Support Worker awards that are coming to an end by six months. The Department has also extended the timeframe customers

have to submit payment claim forms to nine months and accepted employer and support worker signatures via email.

On average decisions for people in this group are currently being delivered in 27 days which is consistent with normal performance trends.

**4. You said it is your understanding those making a claim under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness are still experiencing a turnaround time of six days. Could you confirm whether that is the case, and if not, what changes have you seen to turnaround times?**

**a. Charities have asked for clarification of whether there has been an official relaxation of the requirement for a signed DS1500 form to be provided to support a Special Rules claim. Their understanding is that this may be the case for Universal Credit claims, but not for other benefits. Please could you make the position clear?**

Supporting people who are terminally ill remains an absolute priority for the Department and we continue to fast track these claims.

DS1500s are not a requirement for a claim under the terminal illness rules but remain the quickest route to gather evidence to support these cases. We recognise the pressures on clinical staff but we would encourage them to continue to support these small numbers of priority special rules cases by issuing DS1500s where possible.

Where it is not possible to supply a DS1500 in support of a terminal illness claim we will continue to consider alternative evidence and work flexibly with the claimant and/or their clinician(s) to make a quick determination.

**5. Local councils are being asked to provide accommodation for people with no recourse to public funds who are unable to cover their housing costs. Could you confirm whether councils will be able to recover these costs from central government?**

MHCLG have provided £3.2 million in targeted funding to help support individuals who are sleeping rough off the streets, and an additional £3.2 billion provided to Local Authorities as part of the wider government response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Local Authorities must use their judgement in deciding what legal powers and funding they can use in order to support individuals who are ineligible for public funds or statutory housing assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**6. During her appearance on 25 March, the Secretary of State told the Committee that people with no recourse to public funds could access support through the £500 million hardship fund for local authorities. Some organisations, however, have questioned whether this also counts as a 'public fund' for the purposes of**

**immigration. Can you confirm whether people subject to public funds conditions can access this fund?**

The Hardship Fund is not defined as a public fund under Home Office regulations.

Local Authorities are expected to use the fund to give additional council tax reductions to recipients of working-age Local Council Tax Support, but also have opportunities to exercise local discretion. MHCLG has published guidance on this fund:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/874867/COVID-19\\_Council\\_Tax\\_Hardship\\_Fund\\_Guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874867/COVID-19_Council_Tax_Hardship_Fund_Guidance.pdf)

**7. How many claimants who applied for Universal Credit in the week of 16 March received their first payment on time, and your assessment of whether claimants received the correct amount?**

- a. **The department has said that 93 % of new claimants should receive their first payment on time, compared to the usual average of 85 %. Do you expect this improvement to continue after lockdown has ended?**
- b. **Has the department conducted any analysis into the profile of new claimants, and are there any notable groups who aren't claiming?**
- c. **You offered to share Help to Claim uptake data with the Committee. It would be helpful to see uptake figures from 16 March onwards, and details of any additional resources you are putting into the service.**

Statistics on payment timeliness, and the characteristics of the new claimant cohort will be published in line with the Department's standard statistics releases.

The Department has redeployed over 8,000 staff so far to support the processing of new claims for UC.

The Secretary of State has been clear in her desire for DWP to be a learning Department, and this approach will be key to ensuring continuous improvement as we move into the next stage of our response to the pandemic.

We have sought to monitor broad trends in Help to Claim volumes, however, this is initial management information and has not been validated or published. To enable Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland to focus on providing the right support to people quickly, we have been conscious not to increase reporting requirements during this extraordinary period.

Officials have been monitoring demand and working closely with Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland. They have confirmed that they do not need further resources to be able to manage demand for Help to Claim but we will keep this under close review.

**8. What support is DWP providing to claimants who may struggle with online systems—for example, people with accessibility needs and people who don't have access to the internet or can't afford the mobile data needed to apply?**

UC has been designed with a diverse range of claimants in mind and we continuously aim to make the application process as quick and intuitive as possible.

We have taken a 'digital-first' approach in response to the Covid-19 outbreak to ease access to benefits and protect DWP staff. This has enabled jobcentre staff to concentrate on those claimants who require additional support through different channels including telephony or, in necessary cases, face to face appointments.

For claimants unable to access or use digital services, assistance to make and maintain their claim is available through our Freephone UC helpline.

**9. You offered to look into what support the benefits system can offer self-employed claimants not eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Many who responded to our survey reported being ineligible because they have not been self-employed for long enough, self-employment forms only part of their income, or they are directors of single-person limited companies. What benefits might people in these situations be able to claim?**

**a. Will Universal Credit claimants who receive a grant under the SEISS in June have their Universal Credit payments reduced or stopped as a result? Does this depend on the size of the grant? Will payments under the SEISS be treated as earned or unearned income for assessing UC entitlement? Examples of how UC and the SEISS might interact in practice would be very helpful.**

**b. We welcome confirmation that self-employed claimants who have put aside savings of over £16,000 for tax purposes will not have these savings count towards the capital limits in Universal Credit. How are you ensuring that prospective claimants are aware of this? Are you working with the Federation of Small Business and other similar bodies?**

The Department has temporarily relaxed the application of the Minimum Income Floor for all self-employed UC claimants affected by the impact of COVID-19, to allow self-employed claimants to access UC at a more generous rate. Whilst this measure is in place, a drop in earnings will therefore be directly reflected in a claimant's UC award.

Self-employed claimants may also benefit from other changes including the £20 per week increase in the UC standard allowance and increases to the Local Housing Allowance.

Regulations to manage the interaction between UC and SEISS will be laid next week and updated guidance will be published alongside this for claimants.

Where a claimant has capital over £16,000 we will contact them to understand their circumstances and determine eligibility. If this money is to be used for business purposes, it will not be counted towards their capital, but they may be asked to prove that the money is for business purposes.

The Understanding UC website provides information on UC and self-employment including the treatment of business assets. The Department also provides regular updates to self-employment groups, including the Federation of Small Business whom the Minister for Employment has met with recently.

**10. Please could you look again at the situation of those who apply for Universal Credit during the crisis, only to lose their Working Tax Credit, and with it any future entitlement to transitional protection if they were to move to UC via managed migration?**

- a. Can they be permitted, exceptionally, to return to Working Tax Credit? In response to the Government's offer of support where income has been reduced during the crisis, one of my constituents applied for Universal Credit. She did not know she would lose her Working Tax Credit. She and her husband have just over £16,000 in savings, so they now receive no support at all. It is a severe case of benefit mis-selling.**

As the Secretary of State said in her statement to the House on 4<sup>th</sup> May, this is something we are looking carefully at.

Should your constituent's circumstances change, and their capital reduce, then we would encourage them to reapply to UC and they will be reassessed according to their new circumstances.

Information for potential claimants – and particularly for people who are currently receiving Tax Credits – has been updated on gov.uk on the Understanding UC website and through our social media channels. I have provided links to the guidance below:

<https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/employment-and-benefits-support/making-a-new-claim/>

<https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/new-to-universal-credit/is-it-for-me/>

<https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>

<https://www.gov.uk/how-tax-credits-affect-other-benefits>

**11. Has the department made any assessment of the impact of Covid-19 on overall levels of household debt and poverty, including in the long term? Can you share the results of any analysis the department has conducted?**

- a. What assessment have you made of likely pressures elsewhere in the system, eg in local authorities and the voluntary sector?**

The Government has been clear in its commitment to support people in these difficult times and we have made a number of changes to the welfare system to ensure people are receiving the support they need.

Currently there is insufficient data to estimate the precise economic impact of the pandemic on different groups.

The Government is aware of the financial challenges charities are facing during the coronavirus outbreak. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport recently announced £750m funding to support those who need to continue providing their services as part of the coronavirus response, which includes up to £16 million to provide food for those impacted by the pandemic. This programme will provide millions of meals over the next 12

weeks and be delivered through charities including FareShare and WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme)

The Government is taking action to relieve work pressures on Local Authorities in a number of different ways. For example, DWP is working closely with MHCLG to understand the additional pressures on Local Authorities from increases in housing benefit claims, and have offered easements around the claims processes.

One such example is the Tell Us Once service, where DWP is supporting Local Authorities to practice social distancing as they register deaths and allowing more reporting time throughout the use of the service.

**12. What guidance has been provided to Work Coaches on the Flexible Support Fund. Do you have any plans to extend the FSF to allow Work Coaches to offer innovative support in this unusual situation? Does the department have any similar funds that can be drawn upon?**

In line with the guidance, published at the start of the Covid-19 outbreak, we have removed the need to attend Jobcentres, this includes in order for claimants to access the Flexible Support Fund (FSF).

However, the decision to award a payment from the FSF is at the discretion of local Jobcentre Plus staff. We have provided additional guidance to Work Coaches on the amended application process removing the need for claimants to sign paperwork in order to receive FSF. This guidance includes an email process to confirm upfront childcare costs with providers to ensure there is no delay in these payments through FSF.

**13. We were surprised to hear that, before the pandemic, DWP had ‘zero’ people working remotely, given wider Government efforts to promote flexible working. Why were so few staff working remotely before? Do you plan to allow more people to work remotely after the outbreak?**

- a. In addition to existing staff redeployed internally, how many additional staff has DWP taken on for the Coronavirus response? How many staff have joined DWP from elsewhere in government?**

Before the pandemic approximately 20,000 colleagues had mobile devices and were able to work remotely. Work was also ongoing through the development of our DWP 2023 People Strategy to make the most of the tools available to enable Smarter Working to improve the ways and the environment in which colleagues work.

The Department holds a significant volume of personal data which necessitates significant data security requirements. As such, we have always taken a cautious approach on accessing data from non-government networks, though we have considerably increased VPN capacity to allow remote working for more people within the Department.

We have already deployed almost 15,000 devices to colleagues to assist with the processing of claims and enable more working from home. We continue to deploy around 750 devices

per day. DWP is a learning department and we will look to understand the impact of increased home working has had on the delivery of our services and, where able, will take these learnings forward.

The Department has sought to increase resource through a number of different routes. This includes, an Administrative Officer (AO) direct recruitment campaign for 6-month temporary contracts has resulted in around 2,500 claimant referrals from Work Coaches and over 2,100 employment offers being made to date.

Offers have also been made to candidates on the Department's waitlists from previous recruitment exercises, with over 500 offers already accepted. This has been complemented by agency staff and through existing contractual arrangements.

We also continue to work with colleagues across government to provide us with staff to support DWP front line delivery. We now have agreed transfers for almost 1,000 OGD staff, with almost 500 already having started in their post.

**14. During the session, you said that the number of people who will be affected by the benefit cap (i.e. unable to benefit fully from the increases to benefit and LHA rates) will be 'very small'. Could you explain how you reached that assessment and share any analysis that the department has done?**

**a. What is the department's view on the analysis carried out by St Mungo's, which suggests that a single people living in one-bedroomed flats in many areas of London will see their benefits reduced due to the cap?**

As of February 2019 (the latest statistics available at that time of the oral evidence session) there were 46,000 capped households receiving UC, in contrast to a UC caseload of 2.3 million. The cap applied to only 1.7% of the overall UC caseload.

The Department will publish characteristics of the new claim cohort as part of its standard statistical release cycle, however, we anticipate interaction with the benefit cap will be broadly consistent with previous trends.

We also anticipate that many new claimants will have a sustained employment record, and therefore will be eligible for the nine-month grace period.

Any UC claimant that is placed in Temporary Accommodation and awarded Housing Benefit will not have that housing benefit capped.

The cap may continue to apply to other claimants but the Government has quickly and effectively introduced over £6.5bn of measures that targeted support at those facing the most severe financial disruption. Exemptions will continue to apply for the most vulnerable claimants who are entitled to disability benefits and carer benefits. Likewise, claimants can approach their Local Authority for a Discretionary Housing Payment if they need additional help to meet rental costs.

As announced at the spending round for 2020/21 there is already £180m in Discretionary Housing Payments for Local authorities to distribute for supporting renters with housing costs including an additional £40m to tackle affordability pressures in the private rented sector.

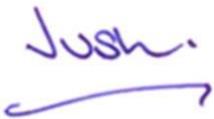
**15. I share your concerns about pregnant workers being told by employers they cannot be furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). Maternity Action have pressed for the Government to clarify the position. Could you provide an update on the discussions you are having with BEIS on this, and confirm whether pregnant employees who are self-isolating can benefit from the scheme?**

Pregnant women can be furloughed if the employer and employee agree to this and they meet the wider eligibility criteria for the scheme.

Where this happens, the Government has changed legislation to ensure that entitlement to family-related statutory payments and Maternity Allowance will be calculated based on full earnings rather than furlough pay. As the Secretary of State made clear in her recent Oral Statement, we continue to monitor this situation closely and any further changes will reflect alterations to PHE guidance.

We hope you found this response useful.

Yours sincerely,



**Justin Tomlinson MP**  
Minister for Disabled People,  
Work and Health



**Mims Davies MP**  
Minister for Employment



**Will Quince MP**  
Minister for Welfare Delivery



# Work and Pensions Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA  
Email [workpencom@parliament.uk](mailto:workpencom@parliament.uk)

From the Chair

Justin Tomlinson MP  
Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work  
Department for Work and Pensions

4 May 2020

Dear Justin,

Many thanks for coming to give evidence on 23 April. There were a few points that arose during the session on which the Committee would appreciate some further detail.

It would be helpful to have answers to the following questions on disability and sickness benefits:

- 1. Please could you confirm the number of new claims for PIP and ESA received since March 16? How do these numbers compare to those pre-outbreak?**
- 2. We welcome your commitment to introducing recording of telephone-based disability benefit health assessments. What are the barriers (if any) to introducing recording now, and when could this start?**
  - a. We've heard anecdotally that claimants are being told by assessment providers that, during phone assessments, they cannot have an advocate join them on a conference call (similar to having an advocate present during a face-to-face assessment). Could you clarify the Department's position on this? If that is the case, what are the reasons for not allowing advocates to join the call?**
  - b. There have been some reports of new PIP and ESA claims, or recent claims which have not yet come into payment, being delayed for three months. Can you confirm that such delays should not be happening? Have you had any representations from support organisations about this?**

**3. How are you monitoring workplace discrimination against disabled people during this period? The Committee have heard concerns that disabled employees are more likely to lose their jobs.**

**a. Please could you also provide an update on processing times for Access to Work Claims, in the light of reports that these are being dealt with slowly?**

**4. You said it is your understanding those making a claim under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness are still experiencing a turnaround time of six days. Could you confirm whether that is the case, and if not, what changes have you seen to turnaround times?**

**a. Charities have asked for clarification of whether there has been an official relaxation of the requirement for a signed DSI500 form to be provided to support a Special Rules claim. Their understanding is that this may be the case for Universal Credit claims, but not for other benefits. Please could you make the position clear?**

The Committee also had questions about the impact of the 'no recourse to public funds' visa condition:

**5. Local councils are being asked to provide accommodation for people with no recourse to public funds who are unable to cover their housing costs. Could you confirm whether councils will be able to recover these costs from central government?**

**6. During her appearance on 25 March, the Secretary of State told the Committee that people with no recourse to public funds could access support through the £500 million hardship fund for local authorities. Some organisations, however, have questioned whether this also counts as a 'public fund' for the purposes of immigration. Can you confirm whether people subject to public funds conditions can access this fund?**

You mentioned that you would be holding a meeting on Monday 27 April with organisations who support claimants and sharing their needs and concerns with HM Treasury. This is welcome, and we would be grateful for an update on that meeting.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to reiterate our thanks to the thousands of DWP staff who have worked so hard to respond to this unprecedented challenge.

It would be helpful to have a response to the questions above by **Monday 11 May**.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Timms". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

**Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP**  
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee



# Work and Pensions Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Email [workpencom@parliament.uk](mailto:workpencom@parliament.uk) Website [www.parliament.uk/workpencom](http://www.parliament.uk/workpencom)

From the Chair

Will Quince MP  
Minister for Welfare Delivery  
Department for Work and Pensions

30 April 2020

Dear Will,

Many thanks for coming to give evidence on 23 April. The Committee would appreciate some further detail on a few points that arose during the session:

**1. How many claimants who applied for Universal Credit in the week of 16 March received their first payment on time, and your assessment of whether claimants received the correct amount?**

**a. The department has said that 93 % of new claimants should receive their first payment on time, compared to the usual average of 85 %. Do you expect this improvement to continue after lockdown has ended?**

**b. Has the department conducted any analysis into the profile of new claimants, and are there any notable groups who aren't claiming?**

**c. You offered to share Help to Claim uptake data with the Committee. It would be helpful to see uptake figures from 16 March onwards, and details of any additional resources you are putting into the service.**

**2. What support is DWP providing to claimants who may struggle with online systems—for example, people with accessibility needs and people who don't have access to the internet or can't afford the mobile data needed to apply?**

**3. You offered to look into what support the benefits system can offer self-employed claimants not eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).<sup>1</sup> Many who responded to our survey reported being ineligible**

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<sup>1</sup> Q110

**because they have not been self-employed for long enough, self-employment forms only part of their income, or they are directors of single-person limited companies. What benefits might people in these situations be able to claim?**

**a. Will Universal Credit claimants who receive a grant under the SEISS in June have their Universal Credit payments reduced or stopped as a result? Does this depend on the size of the grant? Will payments under the SEISS be treated as earned or unearned income for assessing UC entitlement? Examples of how UC and the SEISS might interact in practice would be very helpful.**

**b. We welcome confirmation that self-employed claimants who have put aside savings of over £16,000 for tax purposes will not have these savings count towards the capital limits in Universal Credit. How are you ensuring that prospective claimants are aware of this. Are you working with the Federation of Small Business and other similar bodies?**

You mentioned that you would be happy to work with the Committee to ensure that clear information is available for self-employed people who are thinking about applying for Universal Credit. Might we suggest that, as a starting point, the following wording be added to the relevant pages on gov.uk:

“If you have business assets, these won’t be counted as savings when we’re assessing whether you’re entitled to claim Universal Credit. This includes money that you’ve set aside to pay a future tax bill.”

**4. Please could you look again at the situation of those who apply for Universal Credit during the crisis, only to lose their Working Tax Credit, and with it any future entitlement to transitional protection if they were to move to UC via managed migration?**

**a. Can they be permitted, exceptionally, to return to Working Tax Credit? In response to the Government’s offer of support where income has been reduced during the crisis, one of my constituents applied for Universal Credit. She did not know she would lose her Working Tax Credit. She and her husband have just over £16,000 in savings, so they now receive no support at all. It is a severe case of benefit mis-selling.**

**5. Has the department made any assessment of the impact of Covid-19 on overall levels of household debt and poverty, including in the long term? Can you share the results of any analysis the department has conducted?**

**a. What assessment have you made of likely pressures elsewhere in the system, eg in local authorities and the voluntary sector?**

**6. What guidance has been provided to Work Coaches on the Flexible Support Fund. Do you have any plans to extend the FSF to allow Work Coaches to offer innovative support in this unusual situation? Does the department have any similar funds that can be drawn upon?**

**7. We were surprised to hear that, before the pandemic, DWP had ‘zero’ people working remotely, given wider Government efforts to promote flexible working.<sup>2</sup> Why were so few staff working remotely before? Do you plan to allow more people to work remotely after the outbreak?**

**a. In addition to existing staff redeployed internally, how many additional staff has DWP taken on for the Coronavirus response? How many staff have joined DWP from elsewhere in government?**

During the session, you also said that the Permanent Secretary would be writing to me following a letter from the UK Statistics Authority about pre-announced management information not being published. I have not yet received a copy of this letter.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to reiterate our thanks to the thousands of DWP staff who have worked so hard to respond to this unprecedented challenge.

It would be helpful to have a response to the questions above by **Friday 8 May**.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Timms". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP**  
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee

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<sup>2</sup> Q118



## Work and Pensions Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Email [workpencom@parliament.uk](mailto:workpencom@parliament.uk) Website [www.parliament.uk/workpencom](http://www.parliament.uk/workpencom)

From the Chair

Mims Davies MP  
Minister for Employment  
Department for Work and Pensions

30 April 2020

Dear Mims,

Many thanks for coming to give evidence on 23 April. There were a few points that arose during the session that the Committee would appreciate further detail on.

It would be helpful to have answers to the following questions:

**1. During the session, you said that the number of people who will be affected by the benefit cap (i.e. unable to benefit fully from the increases to benefit and LHA rates) will be 'very small'. Could you explain how you reached that assessment and share any analysis that the department has done?**

**a. What is the department's view on the analysis carried out by St Mungo's, which suggests that a single people living in one-bedroomed flats in many areas of London will see their benefits reduced due to the cap?**

You also said that, following the publication of the next set of benefits statistics, the department will conduct a learning exercise into the impact of the cap during this time. It would be helpful if you could share the outcomes of any exercise with the Committee as they arise.

**2. I share your concerns about pregnant workers being told by employers they cannot be furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). Maternity Action have pressed for the Government to clarify the position. Could you provide an update on the discussions you are having with BEIS on this, and confirm whether pregnant employees who are self-isolating can benefit from the scheme?**

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to reiterate our thanks to the thousands of DWP staff who have worked so hard to respond to this unprecedented challenge.

It would be helpful to have a response to the questions above by **Friday 8 May**.

Yours sincerely,

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**Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP**  
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee