



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

**THE RT HON THERESE COFFEY MP Secretary  
of State for Work and Pensions**

Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
London  
SW1H 9NA

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

7 April 2022

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your letter of 23 February following the evidence I gave to your committee on 9 February.

Please find detailed responses to your questions below.

***Inter-ministerial Group on the cost of living***

- 1. When will the inter-ministerial group on the cost of living next meet?**
- 2. Please could you provide us with more detail about the work that has arisen from meetings of the inter-ministerial group?**

Ministers and officials continue to engage regularly across Government on a number of areas relating to the cost of living. However, there is no agreed date for the next meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Group. To protect the private space for ongoing policy development, I am unable to share further details of this work at present.

***Moving to UC***

- 3. What progress has been made on your plan to encourage people who would benefit from moving to UC to do so voluntarily?**

We continue to engage with stakeholders to inform our approach to voluntary moves, recognising the valuable insight they provide. We have also worked with HMRC to include factual information about Universal Credit within the 2022 Tax Credit renewals pack, to help claimants make an informed decision about whether a voluntary move to UC is right for them. From March, this activity will be supported by a public information-type campaign using digital and social media advertising and radio advertising.

## **Local Welfare Assistance Schemes**

### **4. Please could you set out for us in more detail your plans for future local welfare assistance schemes, and how you see the role of community foundations and forms of tax relief developing in this area**

The funding councils in England receive from central Government (via the Local Government Finance Settlement for local welfare assistance) recognises the resources councils need to meet their pressures and maintain current service levels. Within this context, it is for local authorities to decide how best to provide Local Welfare Assistance in their area, including in relation to community foundations.

### ***Disabled people***

### **5. What internal assessment did the Department conduct of the expected impact on disabled people and people with health conditions of the uprating Order?**

An internal public sector equality duty assessment taking account of all protected characteristics including disability was conducted ahead of concluding the annual review of benefits and pensions.

#### **a. You said that you were not aware of research conducted by Scope into the additional costs faced by disabled people. What evidence do you take into account when assessing whether the rates at which disability benefits are paid are sufficient to meet peoples' needs?**

The extra costs benefits, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment, are designed to provide a contribution towards the additional costs that disabled people may face. This is in addition to other support the individual may receive, including income replacement benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit. The benefits have been consistently uprated in line with the rate of inflation.

### **6. What progress has been made in establishing this Taskforce?**

#### **a. What involvement will DWP have in the Taskforce?**

BEIS and the Disability Unit will set out in due course their plans for establishing the Taskforce, though it is my judgement that this work needs to be paused as a result of the High Court's decision on 25 January.

If this position changes, I will update the Committee. The Minister for Disabled People will shortly be meeting the BEIS Ministerial Disability Champion to discuss progress on general policies.

**7. Please could you let us know which of the commitments in the Strategy are not expected to be delivered on time?**

The National Disability Strategy has not been quashed as a result of the High Court's decision on 25 January.

However, in light of the decision, we have paused the delivery, implementation and communication of activities, mechanisms or actions that were driven by the strategy, including those that originated from insights gathered from the listening exercise.

We expect some activities included within the strategy will continue, as we recognise, they were in place prior to the strategy. This will ensure we continue to improve and transform the everyday lives of disabled people.

***Transport***

**8. What is DWP's role within government in tackling transport-related barriers to both finding work and in-work progression? You also told us that some jobcentres signpost to Wheels 2 Work, a registered charity, and that some employers fund transport for their staff.**

**9. Other than signposting to private and voluntary provision, what steps is DWP taking to tackle transport problems which are creating barriers to people finding work and progressing in work?**

**a. Is there any specific work to support jobseekers in rural areas, who face particularly acute difficulties with transport?**

The Department for Transport (DfT) has responsibility for ensuring transport costs remain affordable for those unemployed and seeking employment.

At a local level, JCPs will sometimes work directly with employers to consider bespoke travel support they could offer to help fill the vacancies.

***Childcare***

**10. Does the Department have management information about Flexible Support Fund spending by each jobcentre? Would you consider publishing that information?**

DWP does hold management information on FSF spend by individual jobcentre. We would not consider publishing this information due to the discretionary nature of FSF spend. In particular, there would be a risk that this is seen as a league table and introduce perverse behaviour in relation to spend. We want local jobcentres to use FSF to meet the needs of their local client group and support them to get back into work. FSF spend by category and region is shared annually with the committee.

**11. Please could we have a copy of the recent revised guidance issued to work coaches about use of the Flexible Support Fund, with the changes made to the earlier guidance clearly identified?**

FSF guidance is reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that it reflects any policy or operational changes to delivering FSF, and that it is clear and comprehensive for our Jobcentre staff.

A copy of the current guidance regarding FSF childcare payments is attached as an Annex. However, changes made to the guidance are not dated. Therefore, we are not able to identify these.

**12. Please could you explain to us in more detail why the Department does not consider that direct invoicing for childcare costs would be practical for Universal Credit claims?**

Universal Credit is a dynamic benefit which is paid as a single monthly payment in arrears. The structure of UC means that the individual elements which make up the award such as the childcare costs element, cannot be ring fenced or separated from the monthly award or paid for example by direct invoice to a childcare provider before the end of the assessment period.

As UC is paid monthly in arrears, entitlement is decided at the end of each assessment period (following the real time assessment of what a claimant has earned and the application of the earnings taper and any deductions). Because of this no separate element of Universal Credit can be paid in advance. If UC childcare costs were paid on an invoice before the end of the assessment period but the claimant's earnings were high, there may not be any entitlement to UC to allow for UC childcare costs to have been paid. This would mean that the claimant was overpaid and would need to pay this money back.

UC claimants who need help with upfront childcare costs to enter employment or significantly increase their working hours can apply for help from the Flexible Support Fund (FSF). This is discretionary non-repayable payment that will pay their initial childcare costs directly to the provider up to the first salary received for those eligible claimants. Alternative help with upfront costs for eligible Universal Credit claimants is available through Budgeting Advances.

***Foodbank research***

**13. When will the Department's literature review on the factors driving the use of food banks be published?**

The Department reallocated resources to prioritise work to help the COVID-19 effort. This caused delays to some work, including this literature review. Any review would summarise publicly available information and does not contain any new research carried out by the Department.

## **Sanctions**

**14. Please could you set out in more detail the reasons for not publishing the evaluation?**

**a. At what point after Neil Couling's evidence to the Economic Affairs Committee in June 2020 did you decide that the evaluation should not be published?**

The decision not to publish the sanctions evaluation report was made in October 2020.

The evaluation looked at the impact of UC sanctions on claimants moving into work and their earnings but could not assess the deterrent effect. The 'deterrent effect' is an important element in representing the full picture of sanctions. Without this, the evaluation is incomplete and does not reflect the complete picture of the effectiveness of benefit sanctions. The reason for this is that all claimants in UC intensive regime are subject to mandatory conditions, so it was not possible to assess the current system relative to a non-mandatory system.

**15. What plans do you have to restart the proof of concepts for a warning system, as described in the Government's response to our report?**

We have restarted the proof of concepts to test issuing a written warning instead of a sanction, for a first sanctionable failure to attend a work search review. This second proof of concept is testing the operational viability of a warning system and a further proof of concept is planned for later in the year. Once the proof of concepts are complete, we will assess the results and determine whether a larger-scale pilot is required.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thérèse Coffey".

**Thérèse Coffey MP**

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

# DWP Flexible Support Fund Instructions

## 04 Payment of Childcare Costs

### Introduction

1. Jobcentre Plus understands the importance of childcare as a key enabler to work. It also recognises how childcare provides support for parents by removing childcare as a barrier to work.
2. In order for parents to enter sustained employment, many will need to source and use formal childcare.
3. This chapter sets out the national guidance relating to the payment of childcare costs.
4. If something isn't specifically mentioned in this chapter, decisions should be made locally, taking into account guidelines set by the Service Leader (SL).

### Eligibility

1. Financial assistance for childcare costs is available to [eligible parents](#) undertaking activity to move them closer to the labour market. It's also available for a limited period of time once they start work. This includes self-employment.
  2. Dependent children are those up to, but not including, the first Tuesday in September following their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.
  3. Payments can be made for a dependent child up to, but not including, the first Tuesday in September following the child's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday when a child is:
    - in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
    - in receipt of Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
    - registered blind
  4. Parents ineligible for help with childcare costs through the FSF include:
    - those participating in Steps to Employment (Wales)
    - those participating in Intensive Personalised Employment Support (IPES)
    - those participating in Fair Start Scotland (with the exception of those customers in districts operating the DWP Public Sector Comparator Pilot where FSF can be considered)
- Note:** Financial assistance for these is the responsibility of the provider.
5. Parents participating in Training for Work (Scotland) are only eligible for financial assistance for childcare costs once it has been confirmed that this cost is not the responsibility of the provider.

### When an award must be made

6. Financial assistance must be awarded:

- when a parent is attending mandatory provision where such costs are not met by the provider
- where it has been agreed a parent can attend approved non-contracted provision, i.e. there is a formal agreement in place
- where it has been agreed a parent can participate in a Work Trial, work experience or sector-based work academy
- when a parent is attending pre-arranged (mandatory or non-mandatory) labour market interviews at the Jobcentre. This applies only in the exceptional circumstances where the interview could not be arranged at a time when childcare costs would not be incurred

### **When an award must not be made**

7. Financial assistance must not be awarded in the following circumstances:

- for attending training courses, provision or an activity where no formal agreement is in place. The formal agreement is between the work coach and the claimant and, can be in writing or by another method for example, verbal.
- for attending provision where the provider is contracted to, or has agreed to, pay participant's childcare costs

### **When an award might be made**

8. Financial assistance may be awarded when a parent is:

- attending an interview with a training provider or employer
- attending a voluntary labour market interview at the Jobcentre
- undertaking a work placement
- in the period between commencing employment (at least 16 hours per week for legacy and New Style JSA claimants) and first receipt of wages. Where wages are paid weekly, discretion should be used to consider payment of FSF beyond the first wage (upfront childcare costs)
- legacy benefits and New Style JSA claimants working under 16 hours a week – paid to a maximum of £125.00 per week for one child and £187.50 per week for two or more children. Any such arrangement must be reviewed regularly (at least quarterly) and it's strongly recommended that such an arrangement not be allowed to continue for more than 12 months from the date the part-time work commenced
- in the seven days immediately before work (of at least eight hours per week) starts
- in circumstances covered by In-work Emergency Payments for lone parents guidance
- there's no minimum hours required for Universal Credit claimants to access this support
- **Note:** This list is not exhaustive.

### **UCFS claimants only**

9. There's no minimum hours required to access FSF for upfront childcare costs. Where wages are paid weekly, discretion must be used to consider payment of FSF beyond the first wage (upfront childcare costs).

### **What you must do when agreeing an award**

10. When agreeing to pay childcare costs for parents, districts must adhere to the following i.e. local flexibilities do not apply:

- the parent must identify the childcare provider; any contract for childcare is between the parent and the childcare provider and must not involve Jobcentre Plus

- the childcare must be registered - Tax Credits description of registered childcare should be applied, see the HMRC site [Childcare you can get help paying for\(link is external\)](#)
- with the exception of upfront childcare costs, all payments must be paid in arrears
- all payments must be made directly to the childcare provider into their nominated bank / building society account via [SOP](#)
- ensure any agreement to meet childcare costs on behalf of the parent does not exceed the maximum permitted amounts, these are childcare costs up to £250 per week for one child (up to a daily limit of £50) or £375 per week for two or more children (up to a daily limit of £75) can be paid. If awarding childcare for parents on legacy benefits or New Style JSA working over eight hours and under 16 hours the maximum permitted amounts are paid to a maximum of £125.00 per week for one child and £187.50 per week for two or more children
- be satisfied that the amount being charged for childcare is reasonable, taking into account average charges in the local area
- if combining work and training it is important that the parent is made aware of the maximum childcare payments available
- when agreement has been made to meet the cost of childcare for an extended period of time, care must be taken to ensure that the parent has not had any changes to their circumstances which would mean they are no longer eligible for continuing payment of childcare costs
- the [child details functionality](#) on the parent's client record on LMS must be up to date

### What you mustn't do

11. Local flexibilities don't apply when agreeing to pay parents for childcare costs. Districts cannot do any of the following:

- make payments for care that is funded elsewhere. For instance, all three and four year olds are entitled to 15 hours free childcare per week; some two year olds are also eligible for free childcare (see [childcare](#) intranet site for further information)
- enter into a contract of care; this is the responsibility of the parent and the childcare provider
- recommend a childcare provider to a customer. [External organisations and internet sites \(link is external\)](#) can help parents source care to meet their needs.
- make childcare payments over the permitted limits.
- issue any payment until the parent has attended the interview, or started their training / provision course or until employment has been confirmed unless the payment is for upfront childcare costs.
- agree to pay costs to childcare providers that are not registered

### Upfront childcare costs

12. Upfront childcare costs are any costs that the claimant incurs in relation to childcare between starting work and receiving their first wage. Examples of some upfront childcare costs are:

- deposit – to pay a provider a one off advance payment of childcare costs, in addition to the agreed childcare to be delivered in the first week/month that the childcare is provided.
- retainer – to pay a provider a one off advance payment to secure the nursery provision prior to the parent starting work or training.
- fees – to pay a provider upfront childcare fees in advance of the service being delivered
- taster/settling in periods – to pay a provider a one off advance payment to enable the parent to prepare their child(ren) before taking up the full childcare offer

**Note:** This list is not exhaustive.

13. Upfront childcare costs are now recorded under a separate account code.

### **Historical child care cost limits for checking purposes**

14. For those undertaking FSF checks the following table shows the historical and current childcare cost limits to be used during checks:

	<b>Childcare cost limits before 19 March 2021</b>	<b>Childcare cost limits from 19 March 2021</b>
Childcare costs for one child	£175 per week (up to a daily limit of £35)	£250 per week (up to a daily limit of £50)
Childcare costs for two or more children	£300 per week (up to a daily limit of £60)	£375 per week (up to a daily limit of £75)
Legacy/New Style JSA benefits working over 8 hours and under 16 hours for one child	£87.50 per week	£125 per week
Legacy/New Style JSA benefits working over 8 hours and under 16 hours for two or more children	£150 per week	£187.50 per week

### **Meeting our obligations to childcare providers**

1. If, for whatever reason, a parent doesn't use a childcare place that Jobcentre Plus has committed to fund, the commitment made to the childcare provider must be honoured in full. The childcare provider has acted in good faith and must not be penalised for the actions of the parent concerned.

### **Overpayments and incorrect payments**

1. The responsibility for any overpayment rests with the parent. Jobcentre Plus does not enter into any contract with childcare providers, only an agreement to make a specified cost on the parent's behalf.

2. By signing the FSF2, the parent declares that they understand the terms by which the agreed childcare costs will be paid by Jobcentre Plus on their behalf.

## Process for awarding costs

1. There are two FSF forms for the process of awarding childcare costs, the FSF2 and the FSF3. These must be fully completed before a payment can be made to a childcare provider.
2. Depending on the circumstances of the parent, the work coach and claimant sections on both forms can be completed during one interview.
3. When it is identified that a parent may be eligible for financial support with the cost of childcare you must complete the FSF forms in the following order:

- **FSF 2 - Care Costs:**
- this is an internal form between the parent and work coach, providing a formal record of the specific childcare costs the Jobcentre has agreed to pay. Under no circumstances should it be passed to a childcare provider
- the FSF2 must be completed in full and include all relevant information in sufficient detail to fully support your award. To support staff in completing the FSF2, local offices may decide the level of information they expect to see in Part 2 of the form. For help completing the FSF2, [see Annex 1 in the 'Forms and letters' chapter](#)
- ensure that you make parents aware that they will be liable for overpayments; see the overpayment section in this chapter for further details
- explain to the parent that although the Jobcentre has agreed to meet the cost of childcare specified on this form, payment cannot be made to a childcare provider until the **FSF3** has been completed
- Once the FSF2 is fully completed and the parent has sourced suitable childcare complete the FSF3
- **FSF3 – Jobcentre Plus Agreement and provider claim form**
- parents must source childcare that meets the needs of their children; Jobcentre Plus cannot be held responsible regarding their welfare. It is vital that the care provider's agreement to the terms of payment is sought before the parent uses childcare for the reasons stated in Part 2 the FSF2
- for help completing the FSF3, [see Annex 1 in the 'Forms and letters' chapter](#)
- the FSF3 covers one calendar month of care, give the parent the appropriate number of FSF3 forms to cover the period of care agreed

## Authorising the award

4. To comply with financial requirements and mitigate the risk of fraud all payments must be approved by one person (usually the work coach) and then authorised by a different person (either another work coach or their line manager depending on the level of delegated financial authority required); this is referred to as separation of duties

## Paying childcare costs

5. Payments of agreed childcare costs must always be paid directly to the childcare provider into their nominated bank / building society account.
6. When the FSF3 has been authorised for payment, transfer the details onto the **SOP Payment Request form or SOP4** and submit to purchase to pay. Guidance on making payments through **SOP** is available on the intranet.

## Cost centre and account codes

7. It's important that the correct cost centre code and account code are used.

5213102904	Exp – Purchase of goods and services, Social Care, claimant childcare costs for training only	Training related childcare costs for all claimants (excluding upfront childcare costs)	Welfare to Work	FSF - Childcare - Training related	SOP payment
5213102929	Exp – Purchase of goods and services, Social Care, in work emergency fund	The aim of in work emergency payments is to provide support to eligible lone parents who experience a financial emergency in the first 26 weeks of work, enabling them to remain in work	Welfare to Work	In Work Emergency Fund	55109
5213102931	Exp – Purchase of goods and services, Social Care, upfront childcare costs	All upfront childcare costs that the claimant incurs between starting work and receiving first wage	Welfare to Work	FSF - Upfront childcare costs	N/A
5213102932	Exp – Purchase of goods and services, Social Care, other childcare costs	All childcare costs not covered by training or upfront codes	Welfare to Work	FSF – Other childcare costs	N/A

8. For information regarding Single Operating Platform (SOP) account codes refer to 'Knowledge Base' within the SOP system.

9. The new cost centre code tables are available in [SOP Instructions](#)

### Labour Market System (LMS) action

10. All childcare expense payments must be registered on the [LMS ADF hotspot](#).

### Suspected Fraud

In case of suspected fraud, access the Fraud Referral Form (FRF) icon on your desktop and follow the on-screen completion instructions



## Work and Pensions Committee

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Rt Hon Dr Thérèse Coffey MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Work and Pensions

23 February 2021

Dear Thérèse,

### **Evidence session on 9 February**

Thank you for giving evidence to the Committee on Wednesday 9 February. There were some points on which you undertook to provide us with more detailed answers in writing. We would therefore be grateful if you could answer the questions set out below.

#### **Inter-ministerial Group on the cost of living**

You told us that the Inter-ministerial Group on the cost of living, which you chair, “is on pause because I have been pulling together some thoughts”. You were not sure whether the group would meet in the first quarter of 2022.

#### **1. When will the inter-ministerial group on the cost of living next meet?**

You also told us that “there is other work continuing about childcare” and that there were other “big ticket items” on which Departments had been working.

#### **2. Please could you provide us with more detail about the work that has arisen from meetings of the inter-ministerial group?**

#### **Moving to UC**

You told us that DWP estimates that “quite a lot of people would still be better off by moving to Universal Credit if they wanted to”. In April last year, you told us that the Department was exploring an approach to encourage people who would benefit from moving to Universal Credit to do so voluntarily. In July, you told us that you hoped that a plan for this would be available by the end of 2021.

#### **3. What progress has been made on your plan to encourage people who would benefit from moving to UC to do so voluntarily?**

### **Local welfare assistance schemes**

We asked you about your future plans for local welfare assistance schemes and how they might operate alongside the benefits system. You described the advantages of the approach taken to some of the Covid funds, namely that “We could be a lot more specific on how it got used and conditions had to be met in order to get the money.”

You also told us that:

“Moving ahead—I remember having this discussion a while ago—I think we all have community foundations. There are ways that people can be creative responding to local needs. There are all sorts of aspects of tax relief on social impact bonds and different elements like that rather than cash.”

- 4. Please could you set out for us in more detail your plans for future local welfare assistance schemes, and how you see the role of community foundations and forms of tax relief developing in this area?**

### **Disabled people**

We asked what assessment you had made of the impact on disabled people of the Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 2022.

- 5. What internal assessment did the Department conduct of the expected impact on disabled people and people with health conditions of the uprating Order?**
  - a. You said that you were not aware of research conducted by Scope into the additional costs faced by disabled people. What evidence do you take into account when assessing whether the rates at which disability benefits are paid are sufficient to meet peoples’ needs?**

We also asked about the Extra Costs Taskforce, of which you were not aware. The Government’s National Disability Strategy said that:

“As a first step, we will improve our understanding of disabled people’s experiences accessing products and services in the UK. This will include commissioning research and exploring the extra costs some disabled people may face. BEIS and the Cabinet Office will set up an Extra Costs Taskforce, bringing together disabled people, regulators and businesses, to better understand the extra costs faced by disabled people, including

how this breaks down for different impairments – by summer 2022.”

**6. What progress has been made in establishing this Taskforce?**

**a. What involvement will DWP have in the Taskforce?**

You also mentioned, with reference to the National Disability Strategy, that “some things are behind”.

**7. Please could you let us know which of the commitments in the Strategy are not expected to be delivered on time?**

**Transport**

You noted that “about 70% of people looking for work [...] do not have regular access to cars or other forms of transport”.

The In-work Progression Commission established by DWP identified transport as one of the “central barriers which directly affect individuals’ physical ability to take up progression opportunities”.

You told us that “the DFT’s response is about the bus strategy, some of the powers coming through, and the different aspects of funding” and that this was the responsibility of the Department for Transport.

**8. What is DWP’s role within government in tackling transport-related barriers to both finding work and in-work progression?**

You also told us that some jobcentres signpost to Wheels 2 Work, a registered charity, and that some employers fund transport for their staff.

**9. Other than signposting to private and voluntary provision, what steps is DWP taking to tackle transport problems which are creating barriers to people finding work and progressing in work?**

**a. Is there any specific work to support jobseekers in rural areas, who face particularly acute difficulties with transport?**

**Childcare**

On the Flexible Support Fund, in a letter of 30 December 2021 the Minister for Employment provided us with a breakdown of expenditure by region and by category.

We asked you on 9 February about the collection of detailed information about spending on the Flexible Support Fund.

You also mentioned that the guidance to work coaches about use of the FSF had very recently been strengthened and simplified.

**10. Does the Department have management information about Flexible Support Fund spending by each jobcentre? Would you consider publishing that information?**

**11. Please could we have a copy of the recent revised guidance issued to work coaches about use of the Flexible Support Fund, with the changes made to the earlier guidance clearly identified?**

We also asked you about direct invoicing for childcare costs claimed under Universal Credit, which might offer a means to alleviate the problems that parents face with upfront payments while avoiding the risk of fraud.

**12. Please could you explain to us in more detail why the Department does not consider that direct invoicing for childcare costs would be practical for Universal Credit claims?**

### **Foodbank research**

We asked about the Department's plans to publish its internal review of the drivers of foodbank usage. You asked to be reminded of the Department's earlier commitment on this. On 17 June 2020, the then Minister for Welfare Delivery said in answer to a written parliamentary question that:

“The Department is conducting a literature review on the factors driving the use of food banks, which we aim to publish before the end of the summer; at which point it will be placed in the Library.”

**13. When will the Department's literature review on the factors driving the use of food banks be published?**

### **Sanctions**

In February 2019, in response to a report from our predecessor Committee, the Department accepted that there was a need for further research on the effectiveness of sanctions. It undertook to carry out an evaluation of “whether the sanctions regime within Universal Credit (UC) is effective at supporting claimants to search for work” and said that:

“This evaluation will be completed internally, and the Department will liaise with external experts to quality assure the methodology used for this analysis. The Department would look to publish its results in late Spring 2019.”

Giving evidence to the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee in June 2020, Neil Couling said:

“We are a bit late on our promise to the Work and Pensions Committee, which we have every intention of fulfilling. I was talking to the Secretary of State about this in one of our briefing sessions before the hearing, and we hope to bring that forward soon. One or two events since we made that promise have got in the way of some of that, but we are keen to get that evidence out there.”

The Department has, however, refused a recent Freedom of Information request from Dr David Webster of the University of Glasgow for a copy of the evaluation.

When we asked why the evaluation would not now be published, you told us that “There is some internal analysis, I think, that was done that it was insufficient.”

**14. Please could you set out in more detail the reasons for not publishing the evaluation?**

**a. At what point after Neil Couling’s evidence to the Economic Affairs Committee in June 2020 did you decide that the evaluation should not be published?**

In response to our report on the Disability employment gap, the Government said that:

“The Department also committed in the Government response [to our predecessor Committee’s 2018 report on Benefit sanctions] to look at processes to give claimants a written warning, instead of a sanction, for a first sanctionable failure to attend a Work-Search Review. Before assessing the merits of extending such a system, we are under-taking a series of small-scale proof of concepts of this warning system. However, we have had to pause this work in order to prioritise support for an increased number of claimants owing to the pandemic. We are aiming to restart this activity in due course.”

When we asked you when those trials would be restarted, you said that you did not recall the specific details and would come back to us on this point.

**15. What plans do you have to restart the proof of concepts for a warning system, as described in the Government’s response to our report?**

We would be grateful for a reply no later than **9th March**.

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