



Department
for Work &
Pensions

THE RT HON THERESE COFFEY MP
Secretary of State for Work & Pensions
Caxton House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9AJ

10th August 2020

Dear Stephen and Meg,

Thank you for your letter of 20th July 2020 regarding our approach to fraud and error.

Analysis of fraud and error trends are important to me and the department, but the current situation around COVID-19 presents us all with challenges, including changes to the measurement process which has historically relied on face to face interviews. While we are moving to restore services where it is safe to do so, it will take time to return to full capacity.

We have restarted reviews on UC and we are still considering what different review methods would be possible for other benefits, such as conducting interviews over telephone. It is our intention to produce robust fraud and error estimates for 2020/21 and to include these within the normal timeline for publication in next year's Annual Report and Accounts.

Our primary effort is directed at tackling abuse within the system. There we are seeing increasing success in identifying attempts to defraud the Department, as I have set out previously. We plan to set out our continued strategy to tackle new abuses of the system (alongside fraud and error estimates) as part of annual reporting process.

Finally, it is important to reinstate normal procedures where possible in our processing of the benefits system as they help with tackling fraud and error. The recent easements helped with very high payment timeliness and was to be expected but I am content that timeliness at pre-Covid levels is acceptable going forward.

I hope this provides a clear explanation of our current position on this matter.

Yours sincerely,