



Work and Pensions Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 8976 Email workpencom@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk/workpencom

From Sir Stephen Timms, Chair of the Work and Pensions Committee

Rt Hon Mel Stride MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

14 December 2022

Dear Mel,

I am grateful to you and Peter Schofield, your Permanent Secretary, for appearing before the Committee on 30 November. There were some points on which you undertook to provide us with further information and some on which we would appreciate more or updated detail. We would therefore be grateful if you could answer the questions set out below. Question numbers refer to the transcript of the [evidence you gave to the Committee on 30 November](#).

EHRC and Section 23 Agreement

1. We noted that you characterised discussions between EHRC and DWP on reaching a Section 23 Agreement to assist in achieving equal treatment for claimants with a disability as constructive and on-going. But we wish to re-iterate that this is a matter of the utmost urgency. Please set out the reasons for the length of time it is taking to reach agreement with EHRC on this? When do you expect agreement will be reached? (Questions 70-72)
2. We understand that Section 23 agreements are confidential. What will you do to ensure that that the agreement, when reached, is implemented and that DWP is open to scrutiny of its performance in this area?

Benefits uprating

3. What is the outcome of your consideration of publication of the outcomes of the 2019 and 2022 review of benefits uprating? Please can you explain your reasoning for your decision (Question 14).
4. Until March 2022, under the terms of the Welfare Reform Act 2012, the statutory requirement for the frequency of a review of the benefits cap was once every Parliament. Commencement of the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022 changed this requirement to once every five years. Are you content that your Department has fulfilled its statutory requirements on the frequency of reviews of the benefits cap since commencement of the Welfare Reform Act 2012? What advice have you received on this point? When do you expect the next review of the benefits cap to take place?

Benefits sanctions

5. At Question 2, you suggested a reconsideration the decision not to publish the outcomes of DWP's 2020 evaluation of the impact of changes to the benefits sanctions regime. What decision, and for what reasons, have you made on this? (Question 2)

Economic inactivity

6. You said that the review of economic inactivity is an inclusive process and that you intended to hold roundtables with businesses and panels of individuals. Can you tell us more about the approach are you taking to your review of economic inactivity?
7. You indicated that the review would conclude 'early in the New Year' and 'in good time for the Spring Statement. (Questions 1, 7). Can you now give more certainty on when you expect that to be? Will you publish the outcomes of the review?

Migration to Universal Credit

8. You estimated that there would be around 400,000 fewer people on ESA by 2027-28 and offered to provide a breakdown of estimates of the proportions of that reduction is likely to be attributable to a range of causes (Question 21). We would be grateful to receive that breakdown.

Pensions credit take-up

9. What further consideration have you given to the suggestion that the exchange of information with local authorities would enable the identification of a significant group of people in receipt of housing benefit who may be entitled to Pension Credit (Question 39).
10. When do you expect the next set of Pension Credit take-up statistics to be published (Question 45).

Comprehensive Sickness Insurance

11. What changes to policy and practice has the Department made following the March 2022 *VI* judgement by the European Court of Justice on Comprehensive Sickness Insurance (CSI)? What steps is the Department taking to identify cases where an incorrect decision has been on CSI in the past? What corrective measures do you propose to take? (Question 57).

Retained EU Law

12. What legislation with DWP remit has been removed from the statute book under powers granted by the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, and with what effect? (Question 57)
13. Please set out DWP's plans to remove or retain further measures captured by the provisions of affected by the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill? What is your level of confidence that DWP will identify, assess and take any necessary action on all affected measures before the 'sunset' date of 31 December 2023? (Question 59)

Bereavement Remedial Order

14. Please confirm the date from bereavement payments will be backdated following commencement of the Bereavement Benefits Remedial Order 2022? Please explain in more detail the 'administrative complications' that made backdating payments beyond this date more complicated? Why was re-introduction of the Remedial so heavily delayed? (Questions 61-65)
15. Why have bereavement payments not been uprated in line with other benefits? (Question 66)

I would be grateful to receive your response to these questions, and any other relevant information you may wish to share with the Committee by Monday 23 January.

Yours sincerely,

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

Rt. Hon. Sir Stephen Timms
Chair
Work and Pensions Committee