



Work and Pensions Committee

05 October 2023

Peter Schofield CB

Permanent Secretary
Department for Work and Pensions
(By e-mail only)

Dear Peter,

Carer's Allowance

I have been in [contact](#) with the Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work earlier this year in relation to Carer's Allowance. I am concerned that problems with Carer's Allowance (CA) remain, particularly in relation to how Carer's Allowance interacts with other benefits claimants might be receiving.

When you appeared before the then Committee in May 2019 (see in particulars [Qq123–126](#)) the then Committee asked you about the requirement for CA claimants to inform DWP about a change in earnings via the claimant's journal even when DWP have this updated information for calculating income support and Universal Credit should the claimant also be receiving such benefits. You said that an automated process that removed the need for claimants to update their journal would be desirable. You also noted that "Ultimately, the VEP system, which is based on exactly the same feed as universal credit, will give that alert straight away".

Experience of claimants suggests this automation of alerts is not taking place, or such alerts are not been dealt with in a timely manner (see, for example the experience of an individual reported in [The Guardian](#)). The Minister's letter suggests it might be the latter given that there were 57,429 outstanding CA VEP alerts in 2022–23, representing more than 53% of cases flagged by the system in that year alone as potentially in need of investigation. This suggests that issues flagged in the system are not being dealt with effectively: as the Guardian article shows, debts are building up for longer than necessary with all the stress that entails for the claimants affected, as well as the impact on DWP's finances.

The Committee would be grateful if you could set out:

- your assessment of how effectively the VEP system is working; and
- the Department's plans to address the backlog of VEP alerts for Carer's Allowance.

I would be grateful for your response to these questions by Wednesday 18 October. As is usual practice with the Committee's correspondence, I will be publishing this letter and your response on the Committee's website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Stephen Timms'.

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