



Department
for Work &
Pensions

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

Sir Stephen Timms MP
House of Commons
Palace of Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

27 October 2023

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your letter of 25 October asking a number of questions about our Work Capability Assessment consultation that is due to close shortly on 30 October. I have fully considered the length of time the consultation should run for with my officials and can confirm there are no plans to extend the deadline date.

We have undertaken extensive engagement throughout the consultation period, taking significant care to ensure the views of charities, groups and organisations that represent disabled people are considered in our response. This has included discussions with members of the Disability Charities Consortium and the Disability Benefit Consortium, which has a membership of over 100 charities and organisations, encouraging them and the people they support to take part in the consultation. In addition, we have held meetings with clinical groups, employers and business groups to secure their views on the proposals.

We have also carried out a series of events in different formats to cater for different accessibility requirements, including in person, virtual and direct meetings with disability rights group and clinical experts. We have held 14 public events on the consultation, of which six were held in-person and eight were held virtually. The consultation has also been widely promoted through various communication platforms, including our weekly stakeholder bulletin Touchbase, which goes to 13,000 subscribers.

We published "Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper" in March. This set out our planned reforms to remove the Work and Capability Assessment in the future and our plans to introduce a new personalised, tailored approach to employment support, with the aim of helping all claimants reach their full potential. This continues to be our future direction. The change will take time to deliver, and we need to take steps now to ensure that the Work and Capability Assessment is delivering the right outcomes before the White Paper reforms are introduced.

We will continue to refine our estimates on impacts as responses are considered, following the end of the consultation period. I will set these out in due course and will continue to keep you and the Committee updated.

With best wishes,

RT HON MEL STRIDE MP



Work and Pensions Committee

25 October 2023

Rt Hon Mel Stride MP

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
(By e-mail only)

Dear Mel,

Work Capability Assessment: activities and descriptors consultation

The Committee has received representations from key stakeholders expressing concern about the timetable for the [Work Capability Assessment: activities and descriptors](#) consultation. There is view that previous changes of this scale have been made after an extensive period of evidence gathering and consultation, including involving experts and representative groups in stages of development and testing. Eight weeks for this consultation may not enable all affected people to engage and contribute.

I would therefore be grateful if you could give consideration to extending the consultation deadline and if you do, if you could determine an adequate length of extension after discussion with key stakeholders. Should you not agree to extend the current consultation, will you give an undertaking now to conduct a further consultation on the detail of the changes to the WCA following the initial announcement at the Autumn Statement.

I would also be grateful if you could confirm that the Department will conduct a full impact assessment of its proposals. If it does conduct such an assessment, can you please also confirm that this will be published.

Further, given the Department's stated objective to abolish Work Capability Assessments (WCAs), is it right to make substantial changes to WCAs which will only last for a short period of time? Or does the current consultation indicate a change in the Government's direction of travel (i.e. to not abolish WCAs)?

I would be grateful for your response as soon as possible given that the consultation is due to close on 30 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,

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