

Dame Meg Hillier
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
By email

14 October 2023

Dear Meg

TM26 – DWP ACCOUNTS 2021-22 – RECOMMENDATION 5A

I am writing to set out how we are addressing this recommendation about the impact of data analytics on protected groups and vulnerable claimants. At the 18 September hearing on DWP Report and Accounts 2022-23, we committed to come back to the Committee by November 2023 to explain the information we expect to publish in response to the recommendation. I also stated that we thought, for future reporting, the correct way would be via our Annual Report and Accounts.

We have now worked through the recommendation, and I can confirm we will include our first assessment in our Report and Accounts 2023-24.

Our first assessment will provide a view on any bias detected and whether this is in line with our expectation. It will also provide indications of the type of mitigations put in place to reduce risk of unfairness within the overall system or action taken to address issues.

Assessments will be made in relation to characteristics where we have robust data enabling sound conclusions to be drawn. We have been using three protected characteristics and are building on these by including further protected characteristics provided by customers voluntarily in their Universal Credit claim. We are encouraging more customers to complete these voluntary questions to improve the accuracy of our assessment.

Our preparation of an assessment for the inclusion within our Annual Report and Accounts will be shared with the National Audit Office and be open to consideration within their Report on Accounts at the time of publication.

We remain committed to reporting our assessment of the impact of data analytics on protected groups and vulnerable claimants annually.

Yours sincerely 

Peter Schofield CB
Permanent Secretary