



Public Accounts Committee

Jo Churchill MP
Minister for Employment
Department for Work and Pensions
London
By e-mail



Work and Pensions Committee

15 May 2024

Dear Jo,

Change of timetable to migrate income-related ESA claimants to Universal Credit

As you will be aware, on 19 April the Prime Minister announced changes to the rollout of welfare benefits, stating: "we'll accelerate moving people from legacy benefits onto Universal Credit, to give them more access to the world of work".

The key details of this announcement were subsequently [provided](#) on the personal X (formerly Twitter) account of the Director General for Change and Resilience and Senior Responsible Owner for Universal Credit (UC) at your Department. Neil Couling stated that, for income-related Employment and Support Allowance (IR-ESA), managed migration notices would be sent by the end of December 2025, some three years earlier than the prevailing 2028 date. This change is expected to affect 600,000 IR-ESA households, including many vulnerable claimants.

The Public Accounts Committee is currently seeking clarification from DWP officials on how the Department is preparing for this new managed migration date, and the lessons learnt regarding communications. The Work and Pensions Committee will have an opportunity to discuss this matter with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Permanent Secretary at its hearing scheduled for 22 May.

At the time of writing, Parliament has still not been informed of the new date of the managed migration by you or another DWP Minister.

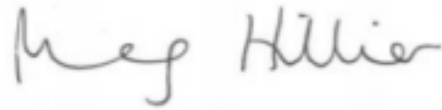
Parliament was informed through the 2022 Autumn Statement of the intention to delay the managed migration of this customer group (from 2025 to 2028). It would therefore be expected that Parliament should similarly be informed of the decision to revert to the 2025 date, not least as the Government had at that time expected to save over £1 billion by delaying the issuance of final managed migration notices until 2028.

As the Ministerial Code states: "When Parliament is in session, the most important announcements of Government policy should be made in the first instance, in Parliament". We believe that, given the sums of taxpayer money involved and the number of households and vulnerable people affected by this decision, this policy change falls within the scope of this section of the Ministerial Code.

We therefore request that you make a written ministerial statement on this matter to Parliament at the earliest opportunity and provide Parliament with information including on the rationale for the change, the likely cost of the policy, and what measures the Department will take to support those customers affected. There are, of course, other means for Members to seek to bring Ministers to the Despatch Box in order for the Government to be held to account.

We are copying this letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Treasury Officer of Accounts, and to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Yours Sincerely



Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts



Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP
Chair of the Work and Pensions Committee