



Work and Pensions Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 8976 Email workpencom@parliament.uk

From the Chair

Rt Hon Dr Thérèse Coffey
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

24 March 2021

Dear Thérèse,

We would be grateful for information about your plans for some of the measures that DWP has introduced as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

There are several measures which, unless the Government acts, will expire on 13 May. This date was set in November last year. Since then, the Government has published its [Roadmap out of lockdown](#), which plots a course towards the ending of restrictions and makes clear that the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme will “continue into the summer”.

The relevant measures are:

- Removing the ‘waiting days’ for New Style ESA.¹
- For people claiming ESA, anyone affected by coronavirus can be treated as having a limited capability for work.²
- For people claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance, continued entitlement if they, or child they are caring for, has covid-19 or is self-isolating because of symptoms.³
- For Carer’s Allowance, continued entitlement during breaks in caring if the carer, or the disabled person they care for, has covid-19 or is self-isolating because of symptoms.⁴

¹ The Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit (Coronavirus Disease) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/289), as amended by the Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit (Coronavirus Disease) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/1097)

² The Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit (Coronavirus Disease) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/289), as amended by the Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit (Coronavirus Disease) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/1097)

³ The Social Security (Coronavirus) (Further Measures) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/371), as amended by the Social Security (Coronavirus) (Further Measures) (Amendment) and Miscellaneous Amendment Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/1201)

⁴ The Social Security (Coronavirus) (Further Measures) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/371), as amended by the Social Security (Coronavirus) (Further Measures) (Amendment) and Miscellaneous Amendment Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/1201)



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- Extending entitlement to means-tested benefits, such as Universal Credit, to prisoners on temporary release.⁵

For each of these measures, it would be helpful to know:

- 1. Is it your intention that the measure will expire as planned on 13 May?**
- 2. If not, when do you plan to lay the statutory instruments necessary for any extension?**
- 3. If so, why is the expiry date for these measures not connected to the Government's wider plans for supporting people to self-isolate when they need to in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus?**

We would also be grateful for more information about your plans for the managed migration of people claiming legacy benefits to Universal Credit. The OBR's *Economic and fiscal outlook*, published alongside the Budget on 3 March, says that the planned pilot in Harrogate has been paused "until April 2022".

The OBR's costings show that managed migration will bring savings for the Department over the next six years, peaking at £180m in 2023/24. The OBR's assessment in 2020 explained that delays to managed migration result in lower spending because "the costs for those who gain under UC and transitional protection paid to those who would lose out from a managed move to UC are postponed".

- 4. Why did you choose April 2022 as the date for resuming the pilot?**
- 5. Would it be possible to resume the pilot earlier, given that coronavirus restrictions are expected to be lifted in the summer of 2021?**
- 6. What assessment have you made of the likely numbers of people who will move naturally to Universal Credit—without transitional protection—as a result of this delay?**
- 7. If the pilot resumes as planned in April next year, when do you expect to begin moving claimants to UC at scale?**

We would be grateful for a response by **Thursday 8 April**.

⁵ The Social Security (Coronavirus) (Prisoners) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/409), as amended by the Social Security (Coronavirus) (Prisoners) Amendment Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/1156)



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Yours sincerely,

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

Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP

Chair, Work and Pensions Committee