



Work and Pensions Committee

11 June 2026

Rt Hon. Sir Stephen Timms

Minister for Social Security and Disability
Department for Work and Pensions

(By e-mail only)

Dear Sir Stephen,

Change to Access to Work

As part of its work on employment support for disabled people, my committee is keen to understand how the government plans to reduce the very long waiting times faced by applicants to Access to Work. In a recent [written parliamentary answer](#), you said you had increased the number of staff by 29%, from 500 in March 2024 to 648 in March 2026, and “streamlined processes to improve the service”. To aid our scrutiny, could you please provide us with a detailed list of all the changes you have made and intend to make, and your assessment so far of the impact these changes are having on waiting times? Could you also please provide an update on when you plan to publish your plans for reforming the scheme, following on from last year’s consultation?

I would be grateful for your response by Friday 5 June. As is usual practice with the Committee’s correspondence, we will publish this letter and your response on the committee’s website.

Yours sincerely,

Debbie Abrahams MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee



Department
for Work &
Pensions

THE RT HON. SIR STEPHEN TIMMS MP

Minister for Social Security and Disability

Department for Work and Pensions

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Debbie Abrahams MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee
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CHANGES TO ACCESS TO WORK

Dear Debbie,

Thank you for your letter about the Government's efforts to reduce Access to Work waiting times. I apologise for the delay in my response.

I know just how much disabled people value the role of Access to Work in supporting them to secure and sustain employment. It is why the Government has taken decisive action to cut waiting times in the short term, and why we are working closely with disabled people to ensure the scheme is fair and sustainable in the longer term.

As you are aware, this Government inherited a large backlog of cases with lengthy waits. Over the last year, we have taken a range of actions to address this. We have:

- deployed more resource to speed up waiting times and free up more experienced case managers to focus on more complex cases;
- introduced a dedicated Triage Team to look at cases prior to them being allocated to a Case Manager, working with customers to ensure all relevant information is received and cases are ready for review;
- introduced a dedicated Change of Circumstances Team which has resulted in faster case resolution, reduced handling times and more consistent decision-making;
- commenced work to align the communication processes so that Complaints and Reconsideration requests are aligned to wider DWP services;
- strengthened the conversation between employer and employee around reasonable adjustments and removed routine email communication to ensure cases are dealt with efficiently and securely, and so that contact is made

within a set timeframe and decision outcomes are communicated in a timely manner; and

- begun rolling out the Standard Operating Process, complemented by a contact framework, to all Case Manager Teams. This ensures a clear and consistent approach to end-to-end case handling, reducing unnecessary steps and providing for timely customer contact and decision outcomes.

In May, I announced our plans to go even further and clear the backlog of Access to Work cases by September 2027. To do this, we are recruiting an additional 480 case staff to process the higher volume of applications, to join the existing 658 staff working on Access to Work.

Reform in this area is complex, and changes must be carefully designed to ensure they deliver real improvements. We have taken the time needed to consult widely, collaborate and gather evidence from disabled people and their organisations, employers and representative bodies. We continue to draw on the outcomes of the Green Paper consultation, the Collaboration Committees and the Independent Disability Advisory Panel, to help shape longer-term reforms to the scheme, and I will continue to keep your Committee updated as we develop our proposals.

With all best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephen Timms". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line above the name.

Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP

Minister of State for Social Security and Disability