



# Work and Pensions Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 8976 Email [workpencom@parliament.uk](mailto:workpencom@parliament.uk) Website [www.parliament.uk/workpencom](http://www.parliament.uk/workpencom)

From the Chair

Richard Hughes  
Chairman  
Office for Budget Responsibility

23 April 2021

Dear Richard,

I am writing about a statement in the OBR's most recent Economic and fiscal outlook, published in March, about the Universal Credit managed migration pilot.

The outlook says that "the Government has again paused the pilot phase of the UC managed migration scheme, this time until April 2022".<sup>1</sup> With reference to this, the Committee recently wrote to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions asking why the Government had chosen to resume the pilot at that time, and a set of related questions. In her response to those questions, however, the Secretary of State said that she "cannot comment on the independent assessment made by the OBR". I have enclosed a copy of both letters.

It is not clear to us from the Secretary of State's response whether the Government has decided to resume the pilot in 2022, or whether this is when the OBR estimates that the pilot to restart, based on your own assessment. It would be helpful to have answers to the following questions:

- 1. Can you confirm where the April 2022 date referred to in the Economic and fiscal outlook comes from? Was this date supplied to the OBR by DWP?**
  - a. As far as you are aware, has the April 2022 restart date been confirmed, or is it an estimate?**
- 2. If the April 2022 start date is based on your forecasts, could you share your analysis of why the pilot is likely to restart at that time?**

We would be grateful for a response by Thursday 29 April.

Yours sincerely,

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

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



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

**THE RT HON THERESE COFFEY MP**  
**Secretary of State for Work & Pensions**

Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
London, SW1H 9NA

16 April 2021

Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP  
Chair  
Work and Pensions  
Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your letter dated 24<sup>th</sup> March, in which you asked for an update on some of the temporary measures my department has introduced as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

### **Covid response**

Throughout the public health emergency, this Government has provided an unprecedented package of support to help individuals and families with the financial shock of Covid-19, protecting lives and livelihoods. We have provided £407 billion of support to protect jobs, keep businesses afloat and help families get by.

We have continued to assess and measure our response against the national health and economic picture, while continuing to support the direction of travel set out in the Prime Minister's roadmap. This includes keeping sites open throughout national lockdown to support claimants who have been unable to access our services through other channels. We successfully recruited an extra 13,500 Work Coaches before the end March. One of the Government's fastest and largest recruitment rounds ever, this has bolstered the personalised support available to help get people back into work. Alongside this we have delivered an unprecedented rollout of IT equipment to maintain service delivery, with over 80% of our staff currently working from home. We have resumed normal opening hours and are implementing our Saturday working in line with stage two of the roadmap.

### **Extension to measures (in line with roadmap)**

I have considered this carefully but my intention is to extend the easements. My proposals are currently with SSAC for scrutiny but, subject to their response, I expect to extend the following three measures to 31/08/21:

- For people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, continued entitlement if they, or a child they are caring for, has Covid-19 or is self-isolating because of symptoms;
- 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;
- Extending entitlement to means-tested benefits, such as Universal Credit (UC), to prisoners on temporary release.

I can also confirm that the two ESA measures will be extended until 12/11/21. I expect to lay the relevant Statutory Instruments before the end of this month.

### **Managed migration to UC**

With regards to the managed migration of people claiming legacy benefits to UC, I cannot comment on the independent assessment of the OBR in its *Economic and fiscal outlook*, but moving people to UC, as voted on by Parliament, remains a high priority for the Department.

Over the past year, we have needed to focus our attentions on responding to the pandemic to ensure people get the support they need from us. This included ensuring the UC system could cope with three million new claimants during the pandemic, while rolling out our ambitious *Plan for Jobs*.

As we continue with the roadmap out of lockdown, I am determined to build on this success and therefore we are exploring an approach to encourage those who will benefit from moving to UC to do so voluntarily. At the same time, we are reviewing options to restart the managed migration process.

I will continue to keep Parliament updated as our plans develop.



**Thérèse Coffey**  
**Secretary of State for Work and Pensions**



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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.<sup>1</sup>
- For people claiming ESA, anyone affected by coronavirus can be treated as having a limited capability for work.<sup>2</sup>
- 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.<sup>3</sup>
- 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.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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)

<sup>2</sup> 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)

<sup>3</sup> 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)

<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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**.

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<sup>5</sup> 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 that reads "Stephen Timms".

**Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP**

Chair, Work and Pensions Committee