

Scottish Affairs Committee

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From the Chair, Pete Wishart MP

Justin Tomlinson MP
Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work
Will Quince MP
Minister for Welfare Delivery
Department for Work and Pensions

30 March 2021

Dear Justin and Will,

Thank you very much for appearing before the Scottish Affairs Committee on 18 March for our final evidence session into our inquiry into welfare policy in Scotland.

I had a few questions on what you said to the Committee and hoped you could answer them.

1. In the session you said that you were worried that the people you are responsible for would receive less money as a result of the change in the assessment process that the Scottish Government are intending to introduce when they take over responsibility for disability benefits. You mentioned that with the UK government's face-to-face assessments (that uses contracted-out assessors for PIP and WCA) you are "six times more likely to get the highest rate of support with a mental health condition" ([Q206](#)) and that you had concerns that an increased reliance on supporting evidence from medical professionals (in particular GPs) could be problematic and limit what people are able to receive. Has the DWP done any research or are you referring to any particular data in coming to this conclusion? If so, can you share that research or data with the Committee?
2. In the session you said you had concerns that split payments in Universal Credit because of 'potential implications in relation to domestic abuse' ([Q199](#)). Again – has the DWP done any research or are you referring to any particular data in coming to this conclusion? If so, can you share that research or data with the Committee?
3. During the session Margarita Morrison (Area Director, Work and Health Services Scotland, DWP) spoke of how the DWP could 'use data mining to make sure we pick up any key words of concern' ([Q181](#)) to help to safeguard vulnerable claimants and then share this data with agencies such as local authorities to discuss any further support these claimants require. Could you clarify how data can be mined and shared between agencies for issues of safeguarding but there are legal barriers around consent that limit other forms of data sharing to the Scottish Government and local authorities ([Q186](#) and [Q187](#))? Is there a protocol that exists between the DWP and local

authorities or Scottish Government that enables data sharing behaviour on certain issues, but not on other issues?

4. Could you outline the existing consent process that is in operation on how a claimant's data will be used when they apply for or are awarded a DWP managed benefit?

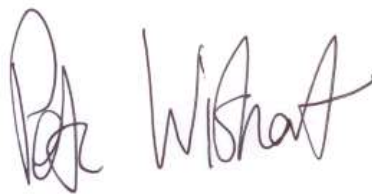
In the session you and your colleagues also suggested that you would write to the Committee:

- with more information on Universal Credit migration and the number of people in Scotland who have been migrated from legacy benefits to Universal Credit unintentionally during the pandemic ([Q200](#)).
- We are also looking forward to seeing the accreditation on the DWP Charter that the DWP in Scotland received the day before the evidence session. Margarita Morrison (Area Director, Work and Health Services Scotland, DWP) spoke about this during the evidence session ([Q179](#)).
- We would also appreciate detailed information on the Flexible Support Fund and how it is operating in Scotland as it was mentioned in the evidence session too ([Q208](#)).

You also kindly showed an interest in seeing the survey that the Committee conducted as part of this inquiry. The findings of our survey can be found [here](#).

I look forward to seeing your reply.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pete Wishart', with a stylized, cursive script.

Pete Wishart MP
Chair, Scottish Affairs Committee