



Work and Pensions Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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From the Chair

Will Quince MP,
Minister for Welfare Delivery,
Department for Work and Pensions

7 July 2021

Dear Will,

Children in poverty: measurement and targets

Thank you to you and your officials for giving evidence to the Committee on 23 June.

There were a number of questions raised during the session on which you undertook to provide further information to the Committee in writing.

1. The Committee has received evidence that further matching of administrative data sets would enable a better understanding of the interactions between different areas of children's lives including their education, health, and household circumstances. However, we have also heard that progress in linking government data across social security, tax, education and health domains was slower in England compared with other parts of the United Kingdom. We have also been told that DWP had been slow to share its administrative data with Administrative Data Research UK, an ESRC-funded programme. You agreed to investigate further and to provide a note to the Committee.

I would be grateful if your reply could address the following questions:

- a. **What are the main cross-government data matching projects relevant to child poverty that your Department is currently working on, or is otherwise supporting?**
 - b. **What, if any, are the particular barriers in England to matching government administrative datasets, compared with the situation in Scotland and Wales?**
 - c. **What steps is your Department taking to address Administrative Data Research UK's concerns that it is not getting access to the same level of data from DWP as it does from the Department for Education?**
 - d. **What are the Department's future plans for supporting a cross-government approach to the sharing of administrative data in pursuit of evidence-informed policy-making?**
2. In the Government's response to our Committee's report on [Universal Credit: the wait for a first payment](#), your Department said that it had been developing a prototype data sharing model using Universal Credit (UC) data. During the evidence session on 23 June, the Committee asked about the Department's progress with this prototype, recognising its potential to help local authorities mitigate the risk of fraud and support child poverty interventions. You agreed to provide a note.

We would be grateful for your answers to the following questions:

- a. **What is the latest progress with the Department's prototype for sharing UC data, and how do you expect to further involve local authorities in this work?**
 - b. **What extra data sharing will be possible through this new approach, and in what ways will it address local authority concerns that current arrangements undermine their capacity to do preventative work?**
 - c. **What are the Department's further plans and timetable for its approach to sharing UC data with trusted partners?**
3. The Committee referred to external evidence on the distributional impact of changes to social security and tax in recent years and invited the Department to set out how it considers the distributional impact of changes to benefits on different households, including those with children and those with disabled members. I would be grateful if you could provide further information on the Department's approach in this regard, in particular:
- a. **What is the Department's method for calculating the distributional and wider health impacts on children and families of its social security policy decisions?**
 - b. **Has the Department estimated the consequences for income poverty as well as for children's well-being of the removal of the £20 Universal Credit temporary uplift?**
4. The report [Build Back Fairer: The Covid-19 Marmot Review](#) made a recommendation that "[t]he social safety net must be sufficient such that people not in full time work receive a minimum income for healthy living." In his statement to the House on 21 January and in response to a question on Professor Marmot's findings from Debbie Abrahams, the Prime Minister said that he would examine how the pandemic had "impacted on the poorest and most vulnerable".

During the evidence session, you said that you would review what the Prime Minister had said and write to the Committee on this subject. We would be grateful for your thoughts, in particular on your response to the specific recommendation made by Professor Marmot on the minimum income for healthy living.

I would appreciate it if you could reply by 19 July, so that we can continue to make progress with our report.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee