



Work and Pensions Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA
Tel 020 7219 8976 Email workpencom@parliament.uk

Chloe Smith MP
Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work
Department for Work and Pensions

30 March 2022

Dear Chloe,

Phoenix House, Barrow in Furness and other proposed closures

The Department's [written statement](#) to the House on 18 March said that it planned to close a number of offices providing 'back of house' services. I understand that this will include the closure of Phoenix House in Barrow with 46 staff affected.

In her evidence to our Committee in January, Joanne Gordon from the Asbestos Victims Support Groups' Forum told us that the DWP team in Barrow had amassed considerable expertise in processing relatively specialised claims for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit and support under Worker Compensation Schemes. Her organisations clearly value the quality of service provided by Phoenix House. My concern, then, is that accumulated knowledge and skills will be lost if this office is closed.

I would be grateful for answers to the following questions:

- 1. How do your plans for closure of offices in smaller cities and towns outside the main metropolitan areas fit with the Government's ambition to level up and to provide good employment opportunities to more vulnerable communities?**
- 2. What are your plans for administration of services currently provided by each of the 'back of house' offices the Department proposes to close?**
- 3. In particular, what are your plans for ensuring that the specialist skills and experience of the DWP team in Phoenix House (Barrow) are retained?**

It would be helpful to have your reply by 14th April 2022. Please do let me know if this is not possible.

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