

## **STUART HEATH – WRITTEN EVIDENCE (EUC0116)**

### **The economics of Universal Credit**

My name is Stuart Heath, I am a 53 year old white British male and I have been an HGV driver for 20 years. On 08/03/2019 I injured my ankle at work; I self-certified for the first 7 days of work and then took 2 weeks holiday pay to aid my recovery but my ankle did not get better. On the 01/04/2019 my GP sent me for x-rays and I was advised that I had a sprained ankle and that it would take 8 weeks to recover.

The local council advised that I contacted universal credit for help, I started to make a claim but didn't follow it through as I believed my injury was getting better and would soon return back to work. At the end of May 2019 my ankle felt a bit better so I informed my Agency that I would return to work on 10/06/2019 and I went on holiday to Turkey for a week to help further recover from my injury. Within 24 hours of being in Turkey I was rushed into Hospital with a badly swollen ankle and informed it was actually fractured. I managed to get home and my local hospital confirmed that it was in fact fractured.

The agency advised me that I did not have a job with the company anymore and that they would not deal with any sick notes from my GP, I was advised by the council to re-apply for universal credit, which I did. Unfortunately, because of a 6 day break in my sick notes universal credit refused to back date my claim to the date of my injury even though I had been in receipt of statutory sick pay since 1/04/2019. The universal credit recovery unit then confirmed that any money paid to me from the 8/03/2019 would be paid and recovered from the third party insurance company dealing with the claim. All of this has been explained numerous times with Universal Credit, the staff at universal credit told me that this was an NHS problem and not theirs.

I am absolutely gobsmacked at the attitude of universal credit staff and their lack of skills when dealing with a member of the public. The lack of respect and inability to solve problems would certainly not last long in the private sector. Later in the year around November, I was advised by Universal Credit that I needed to attend a disability assessment test at Five Ways House in Birmingham. As there was no parking available and a suggestion of using public transport, I referred them to my fit note and that I had an ankle injury and politely declined. I also pointed out that I had an appointment with an NHS Consultant in early December. The next day they informed me that a taxi had been arranged to pick me up at their cost, so I agreed to attend. The Doctor who examined me was very pleasant but did inform me that it would be someone in a suit and not him that made the decisions. I went to my appointment with my NHS Consultant a week or so later and he advised me not to do my job as a HGV driver until I had a scan and the results would be known.

I've now had my scan and my next appointment with the Consultant is On 5<sup>th</sup> March '20. Meanwhile Universal Credit have been in touch and said their assessment deemed me fit for work! So now I feel my Human Rights are being abused by putting me in a very dangerous position that could land me in prison if I go back to work as a HGV driver and an accident was to occur, I'm pretty sure the blame would rest on my shoulders. As for "alternative" work, what am I as a driver with a recovering damaged ankle going to be able to do without training? It was made very clear to me at the Job Centre Plus that there was no training available and that they only had manual labouring jobs, all totally unsuitable for me to be doing in the "meantime".

I have found that Universal Credit is not fit for purpose and should be looked into immediately before innocent members of the Public are killed because of a lack of duty of care in its day to day business.

*27 February 2020*