Frank Field MP
Work and Pensions Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

August 2019

Dear Frank,

Thank you for your letter dated 29 July 2019 on the content of fit for work notifications following Work Capability Assessments (WCA).

The amendments made to the Universal Credit decision letters sent to claimants are deliberate and were designed to make it easier for claimants to identify how and why a decision was made. Following a release of the new notification system last year, we concluded that the information contained in the old style decision notification was not particularly helpful to the claimant.

The previous notification would sometimes contain multiple pages of information and the format and content was not always consistent between claimants, dependant on the nature of their assessment and the outcome. The letters would also contain personal and health related information.

To improve this part of the WCA process, Universal Credit has designed a notification using simple and easy to understand language. The new notifications are the result of our normal development approach as we continue to test the processes we are introducing to minimise the risk to delivery and service.

Notifications now identify the descriptors that have been considered when making a decision and information is now delivered consistently, allowing claimants to see which standard assessment criteria is considered as part of their assessment. It also removes the risks around data protection by omitting sensitive information.
We are sympathetic to the fact that this process can be stressful for some claimants and this development helps to improve their experience by streamlining the process and delivering the information that is relevant to their situation. These improvements do not appear to have adversely impacted mandatory reconsideration rates.

As always, I would be more than happy to answer any further questions and welcome any subsequent comments you may have on Universal Credit and its processes.

Yours sincerely,

Justin Tomlinson MP
Minister for Disabled People, Health & Work