Dear Raji

I recently wrote to the Department for Work and Pensions to ask about changes to the decision letters received by would-be ESA claimants who have undergone a Work Capability Assessment (WCA). I know that Z2k has been campaigning on this issue.

The previous letter provided claimants with a breakdown of DWP’s decision on their case, including “points” scored on the WCA. The current version simply provides a decision (for successful claims) or a tick list of activities considered (for unsuccessful claims). Claimants who want to understand the basis of the decision—perhaps because they are considering challenging it—have to request that information from the Department. Claimants have one month to request a breakdown, and one, concurrent, month to request an MR.

The Department told us that the change to the letters was “deliberate” and “designed to make it easier for claimants to understand how and why a decision was made”, by omitting information that can be copious and confusing.

Might you please tell us, drawing on Z2k’s experience in advice work:

1. Does the new letter make it easier for claimants to understand the basis of WCA decisions?
2. Is it sufficiently easy for claimants to request additional information from the Department and make a decision on MR, in the time available?
3. What changes to the letter would you recommend?

With very best wishes and I look forward to hearing from you,

Rt Hon Frank Field MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee