From the Chair

17 September 2019

Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Department for Work and Pensions

2019 Spending Round

Following the Chancellor’s spending review for 2020-21, I note the 1.9% real terms increase to the Department’s resource budget, which I am sure is welcome given the previous 2015 Spending Review.

The Committee would like to understand in more detail the impact of the Spending Round on the Department’s budget and spending plans. We would be grateful to know in particular how this will benefit the most vulnerable in society.

1. Might you please provide the Committee with a memorandum setting out in detail the spending review outcomes for the Department and the impact on the Department’s spending plans?

2. How will the Department’s increased budget make a difference to claimants, especially the most vulnerable?

The Committee has published two reports in this session expressing concern about the risks to the approximately three million people who will be moved to UC through managed migration.¹ The Social Security Advisory Committee has observed the “huge

¹ Work and Pensions Committee, Universal Credit: tests for managed migration, Twenty-sixth Report of Session 2018-19 (HC 2091)
logistical task to contact several million people in several million households ... without leaving any gaps or overlaps in entitlement.”

The spending round included £106 million for the “Plan for DWP Excellence”. £23 million will go towards “a range of other measures, including support for vulnerable claimants and people with complex needs migrating to Universal Credit”. Might you please let us know:

3. How exactly the £23 million will be spent to address the operational and logistical challenges of managed migration?

4. If the Department will monitor the impact of the additional spending by setting tests for readiness for managed migration, as previously recommended by the Committee in May and the Comptroller and Auditor General in October 2018?

As you will know, the “other expenses” element Funeral Expenses Payments has been capped since 2003. Meanwhile, the cost of funerals has increased on average by 6% each year. The Minister for Welfare Delivery indicated that uprating Funeral Expenses Payment was an area the Department would likely include in a submission to the cross-government spending review.

5. Might you please provide us with an update on whether the Department will uprate Funeral Expenses Payment?

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

Rt Hon Frank Field MP
Chair

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2 SSAC, The Draft Universal Credit (Managed Migration) Regulations 2018: Report by the Social Security Advisory Committee, p 24
3 GOV.UK, Spending Round 2019