From the Chair

19 February 2019

Sarah Newton MP
Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work
Department for Work and Pensions

Dear Sarah,

Carers’ Allowance

Thank you for your letter dated 28 January.

On question 8, you accepted that improvements could be made to communications for claimants. Could you please confirm if you will update the award letter prior to moving to the new system letters platform in late 2019? In any case, in light of your willingness to work with stakeholders and the Committee to improve communications, please could you provide the Committee with a draft copy of the updated award letter or other communications to Carers’ Allowance claimants?

On question 11, you state that if a self-employed claimant sends in their accounts “immediately, as soon as they receive them” that “any overpayment arising due to the earnings being above the threshold will not need to be repaid”. Could you please clarify (a) what the deadline is for a self-employed claimant sending in their accounts “immediately” (e.g. if it is the day of receipt, the week of receipt, etc.) and (b) if, when a self-employed claimant sends in their accounts immediately, a claimant can theoretically earn an unlimited amount in a year over the threshold without being liable to repay any overpaid Carers’ Allowance?

On question 13, you state that claimants with fluctuating earnings will have an average calculated over an “appropriate period”. Could you please clarify: (a) if the appropriate period is decided on a case-by-case basis by the CAU, (b) if claimants are invited to agree the appropriate period, (c) if claimants are notified of the appropriate period over which they need to report their earnings, and (d) given that self-employed claimants’ accounts are assessed annually, if you would consider assessing all claimants’ earnings on an annual basis to account for fluctuating income, even if entitlement is based on average weekly earnings?
With best wishes and I look forward to hearing from you,

Rt Hon Frank Field MP
Chair