From the Chair

3 August 2018

Rt Hon Esther McVey
Secretary of State
Department for Work and Pensions, Caxton House
Tothill Street, SW1H 9NA

Dear Esther

Managed migration and Universal Support

As part of our inquiry on Universal Support (US), the Committee has heard about the role played by US in helping claimants adjust to Universal Credit (UC)—a role that will only increase in importance as legacy benefit claimants are transferred to UC.

I would be very grateful if you would therefore provide clarification on the following issues.

Neil Couling’s letter to the Committee, dated 18 July, set out broad objectives against which the success of Universal Credit—including managed migration—will be measured. They are delivering full employment; controlling welfare costs; improving efficiency; reducing fraud and error; and providing a safety net.

1. How does the Department plan to monitor the progress of managed migration?
2. How will you measure whether the safety net is maintained during the migration process for vulnerable claimants specifically?

The Department’s plans for managed migration are currently under consultation with the Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC). The Explanatory memorandum issued to SSAC states that all legacy benefit claimants will undergo a four to six-month “preparation period”. During this period they will receive communications preparing them for the change, including information on any actions they might need to take to prepare for UC (such as opening a bank account).¹

Claimants will then receive a notification informing them that they need to make a UC claim by a certain date. This will allow the Department to control to the flow of migrations, and should allow it the “capacity to deal with certain claimants in different ways”—if, for example, they are part of a vulnerable group.

¹ Explanatory memorandum for SSAC, p.11-12
3. Will claimants in the “preparation period” be eligible for Universal Support provision?
4. What safeguards are in place to ensure vulnerable claimants migrate safely to UC?
   a. Might you please give some illustrative examples of the different approaches to migration that the Department is considering for vulnerable groups?
5. What process will the Department follow for identifying legacy benefit claimants who have not made a UC claim by the specified date and following up with them?

The burden of preparing claimants for migration will fall on local authorities, housing associations and support services, as well as on Jobcentre Plus. Might you please explain:

6. What steps the Department is taking prior to the commencement of managed migration to ensure good communication between JCP and local support services?
7. Whether there are any standards local authorities will be expected to meet with respect to Universal Support provision, before managed migration begins in their area?

I would be grateful if you would please reply by Friday 7 September so that we can progress with our inquiry.

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

Rt Hon Frank Field MP
Chair