The Rt Hon AMBER RUDD MP  
Secretary of State for Work & Pensions

The Rt Hon Frank Field MP  
Chair  
Work and Pensions Select Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
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Dear Frank

Youth Obligation Support Programme

Thank you for your letter of 16 January 2019 regarding your one-off evidence session on the Youth Obligation Support Programme (YOSP).

You said that a question you intend to consider is about the availability of data on the Youth Obligation Support Programme scheme and how the Department plans to evaluate it. You then asked me to indicate what aggregate data my Department collects, specifically on:

a) The total number of claimants who have taken part in the YOSP scheme.

b) The number of claimants who were participating in the YOSP scheme by period, region, or Jobcentre.

The YOSP was additional to the original Universal Credit build specification, and so there was limited functionality added directly onto the system to allow monitoring in the usual way. Ministers accepted that limitation when agreeing to proceed with the programme, recognising it was better to put in this extra support for young people, rather than wait until it was possible to collate data. You may recall the Select Committee urged the Government to roll out YOSP with its report of “Employment opportunities for young people”1 published 29 March 2017. Therefore, in order to provide some assurance on how the programme is being delivered, we have had to use an alternative approach to collect information on YOSP, prior to changes being made to the UC build to automate this data collection in a robust way. From January 2019, Jobcentre Plus offices began conducting a census of the number of YOSP participants. This information is manually collated by Work Coaches. This will provide data on the number of programme participants as of the end of January 2019, which can be broken down by region and Jobcentre. I expect my officials to have completed this analysis by Easter 2019 and we will consider whether we can publish this Management Information in due course.

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1 https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmworpen/586/586.pdf
c) The number of claimants who leave the YOSP scheme within six months without moving into employment or training.

The Department doesn’t collate aggregated data for the number of claimants leaving the scheme within six months without moving into employment or training as part of the Universal Credit build specification. As mentioned before, data will be manually collated which should then make it possible to track this cohort over time, and report the proportion of claimants who leave the YOSP scheme without moving into employment or a training provision based on this cohort. This data should be available six months later and should be reportable by autumn 2019.

d) The outcomes of claimants who leave the YOSP scheme to take up employment or training (e.g. apprenticeship, permanent employment, etc.).

The original Universal Credit build specification did not capture whether a claimant was on the YOSP journey, therefore it is not possible to report the outcome of claimants specific to the Youth Obligation Support Programme based on this information. Once we have census information from Jobcentre Plus, it would be possible to report what provision YOSP claimants go on to take up. It would also be possible to identify claimants on Universal Credit Full Service who have started and finished their YOSP journey, which opens up the possibility of further data linkage that would enable the Department to better identify outcomes of YOSP claimants.

e) Claimant characteristics (e.g. ethnicity, disability, etc.).

When a claim is made on Universal Credit, a claimant tells the Department their age, gender, self-declared disability, and whether they are pregnant or newly maternal. Since early 2016, they’ve been able to voluntarily declare their marital status, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religion.

However, since the original Universal Credit build specification did not capture whether a claimant was on the YOSP journey, it is currently not possible to report these characteristics for a YOSP claimant. Once we have census information from Jobcentre Plus, it would be possible to identify claimants on Universal Credit Full Service who have started and finished their YOSP journey, which should enable the possibility of this analysis.

f) The number of claimants who take part in sector-based work academy placements, traineeships and guaranteed work experience placements.

The original Universal Credit build specification did not capture sector-based work academy placements, traineeships and work experience placements for UC Full Service. However, the census information from Job Centre Plus will be capturing this provision for the January 2019 cohort. I expect my officials to have completed this analysis by Easter 2019.

In the short term collecting this census data from Jobcentre Plus should provide assurance. My officials are reviewing how to best collect this information on an ongoing basis. Manual Work Coach count will not be a sustainable activity in the
longer term and we are looking to refine data analysis within the build to monitor delivery.

You then asked me to indicate if my Department intends to evaluate the performance of the YOSP scheme and if so, by when, and using what criteria and methodology.

DWP uses evidence from a number of sources to monitor the effectiveness of its policies. This includes administrative datasets, survey data and commissioned research, as well as feedback from staff and stakeholder groups. We routinely record labour market statistics on youth unemployment and in 2018 we’ve seen record low numbers of young people unemployed; and the vast majority of 16-24 year olds are in full-time education or work.

The Youth Obligation Support Programme has been developed using types of support that we know work. Evaluation conducted by the Institute for Employment Studies\(^2\) of the Intensive Activity Period showed that it increased people’s confidence, improved the quality of their job applications and increased their search for work. The Department also published a quantitative analysis of sector-based work academies\(^3\) and found that young people who took part on average stayed in employment for 50 days more than those who didn’t take part. Furthermore, outcome-based success measures published by the Department for Education show that of all young people who complete a traineeship, nearly two thirds find a sustained positive destination.\(^4\) We have also identified through feedback from work coaches where we can strengthen the operational process and this will be rolled out shortly.

Now that the YOSP scheme has been rolled out to all Jobcentres as of December 2018, we intend to continue a national evaluation of the scheme, ensuring that there has been enough time for the scheme to fully mature. The criteria and methodology will be considered in consultation with analysts.

I hope that this provides the information you need for your one-off evidence session. Please let me know if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,

The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS
