Rt Hon Frank Field MP
Chair of the Work and Pensions Select
Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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 asked a series of questions about the programme and how it is delivered. I have answered these using the same numbering as in your letter.

1. Please confirm that following the full regional roll out of Universal Credit, the Youth Obligation Support Programme is fully rolled out regionally, and is therefore available in every Jobcentre.

YOSP was introduced to Jobcentres in line with the roll out programme for Universal Credit Full Service. This started in April 2017 and was completed on target in December 2018. YOSP is now available in every Jobcentre.

YOSP does not apply to claimants in Northern Ireland.

In addition, you may be aware that the Minister for Employment has announced the rollout of the mentoring circles initiative beyond the black and minority ethnic (BAME) community to across the Jobcentre Plus network nationally, for all youth claimants who would benefit from such support. This will start in London in March and then roll-out across the country from April. Mentoring circles complement the wider offer for young people, which includes YOSP.

2. Please confirm that all 18-21 year olds making a new claim of Universal Credit are required to take part in the Youth Obligation Support Programme.

All 18-21 year olds in Great Britain making a new claim to Universal Credit, who are in the intensive work search regime (part of the All Work Requirements conditionality group) are required to take part in YOSP. People who have previously completed the programme are not required to retake it.
Claimants in the All Work Related Requirements group who have a health condition or a disability that affects their ability to work, and who present a valid 'fit note' will have their work related requirements tailored in light of what would be considered 'reasonable'. As such, claimants who are awaiting the outcome of their work capability assessment will not automatically be required to take part in YOSP.

In some circumstances claimants can have the requirement to take part in YOSP switched off as an easement for a specific period of time. Easements to work search (and hence YOSP activities) could be applied in the following circumstances:

- For health reasons (if the claimant has a fit note)
- If the claimant has an increase in earnings that moves them to the light touch regime
- If the individual is gainfully self-employed
- To accommodate a public duty
- In cases of homelessness
- In cases of domestic violence
- If the claimant has a drug or alcohol problem
- Following a bereavement
- In cases of temporary emergency

Once the easement has ended the claimant re-joins the YOSP journey at the point they had reached.

Take up of provision such as apprenticeships, traineeships, work experience or sector-based work academies at the end of the YOSP journey is voluntary, rather than required.

3. Please clarify if all 18-21 year olds making a new claim of Universal Credit will automatically be placed on the Youth Obligation Support Programme as part of their claimant commitment.

If there is a new claim to Universal Credit, and the claimant is 18-21 years old and in the intensive work search regime, the Universal Credit system applies a flag to indicate that YOSP is appropriate. The claimant’s Work Coach would then start the YOSP journey for the claimant and follow the agreed process. This includes a full discussion with the claimant and then completing the claimant commitment (for example with an agreement to attend the workshops as part of the Intensive Activity Period at the start of the YOSP journey).

Easements may apply in certain circumstances, as outlined above.

4. Please clarify if all 18-21 year olds migrating to Universal Credit, whether via natural or managed migration, will (a) have access to YOSP or (b) be required to take part in the programme.
YOSP is only for new claims to Universal Credit and so 18-21 year olds migrating to Universal Credit Full Service (whether via a change of circumstance or migration) will not be invited nor required to take part in the programme.

Such claimants will have access to many (but not all) of the component parts of YOSP, including applying for apprenticeships and starting traineeships, work experience and sector-based work academies or equivalents. There is good evidence that such provision is effective in helping claimants spend more time in employment and less time on benefit.

5. Please clarify if ‘work of community value’ forms any part of the Youth Obligation Support Programme, whether as a placement during the scheme or as an outcome following the five month stocktake.

‘Work of community value’ is not a required element of YOSP. Claimants who are still unemployed and in the Intensive Work Search Regime at the six month stage of the YOSP journey will receive a referral interview where they will be encouraged to take up a voluntary work experience placement from public, private or third sector organisations. This should match the claimant’s job goals as closely as possible.

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.

Best wishes,

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