



Work and Pensions Committee

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Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Department for Work and Pensions

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury

15 April 2019

Dear Amber and Philip

I am writing in relation to the HMRC and DWP research report on *The transition from tax credits to Universal Credit: qualitative and quantitative research with claimants* (the UCTC research).

Several of the report's findings are alarming. The Committee has a number of detailed questions about these and about DWP/HMRC's response to them, which I will set out in a separate letter. In this letter, I want to raise some wider questions about the Government's approach to sharing its research findings.

The UCTC research was carried out between October 2016 and July 2017. The report is dated November 2017. It was not published until 4 April 2019: eighteen months later. Even allowing for the vagaries of Government announcements and publications, this seems an excessively long delay. It is unfortunate that the delay coincided with a period of intense scrutiny of Universal Credit, spanning the decision to accelerate the Full Service roll-out in October 2017, to ongoing scrutiny of DWP's plans for "managed migration" of claimants of existing benefits to Universal Credit.

- 1. Might you please explain why there was a delay of eighteen months between the UCTC report being finalised and its publication?**
- 2. Please will you confirm when Ministers in each Department first saw the report?**
 - a. Might you also please provide copies of any briefing provided to Ministers on the report's content?**
- 3. Did the Social Security Advisory Committee have access to this report when it was carrying out its consultation on "managed migration"?**
- 4. Might you also please tell us what actions DWP and HMRC took immediately on seeing the report, aside from deciding to delay publication?**

DWP has recently acknowledged that transparency in Universal Credit is vitally important to its success.¹ The Department has repeatedly told us it is taking a "test and learn" approach to Universal Credit. Claimants and support organisations need to know what the Department is learning from its "tests" if they are to have any faith in Universal Credit working well.

¹ [Q7](#) (Neil Couling)

Both the Committee and the wider House need access to this information to carry out our scrutinising roles effectively, and to ensure that we make informed decisions. This is particularly important now given that DWP will, at some point, ask for the approval of the House to proceed with the managed migration pilot and to take managed migration to scale.

5. Please will you provide:

- a. A list of ongoing research related to Universal Credit and expected publication dates for findings;**
- b. A list of completed reports and/or research related to Universal Credit that have not yet been published, and expected publication dates;**
- c. Copies of any briefing to ministers provided in relation to Q3b.**

As I know you are both aware, the decisions taken to date on Universal Credit and those to be made in the coming weeks and months will affect the lives and incomes of millions of people. Members of Parliament should not be asked to make these pivotal decisions based on partial information. It would be deeply irresponsible for the Government not to provide Members of both Houses with the best possible information on which to make them. It is profoundly regrettable that this seems to have occurred in this case.

I very much hope that this consideration will be at the forefront of the Government's mind as it makes future decisions on sharing the findings of its own research.

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



Rt Hon Frank Field MP

Chair, Work and Pensions Committee

cc. Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Prime Minister