



# Work and Pensions Committee

House of Commons | London | SW1A 0AA

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From the Chair

9 July 2019

Peter Schofield  
Permanent Secretary, Department for Work and Pensions  
Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
London  
SW1H 9NA

Dear Peter,

## **Universal Credit: fraud**

Following a report from the BBC that “tens of millions of pounds of public money is believed to have been stolen” through Universal Credit fraud, I would be very grateful for your answers to the following questions.

### **1. Do you believe that the extent of this fraud is as described in the article?**

**a. If not, what is your estimate of the amount of money that DWP has paid out in fraudulent Universal Credit Advances to date?**

**b. How much, if any, of this money has so far been recovered?**

The BBC also reports that concerns have been raised on an “internal DWP message board” used by operational staff, including one comment that “All of us 'on the shop floor' are screaming about it but nobody is listening who has any influence.”

### **2. When did you first become aware of concerns from frontline staff about this type of fraud?**

**a. What action has the Department taken so far to prevent this type of fraud? What further plans do you have to tackle it?**

**b. Are you satisfied that the Department has the right processes in place to enable the concerns of staff to be listened to and acted on promptly? If not, what action do you plan to take?**

You will know that Ruth George has raised concerns with the Secretary of State about the Department's treatment of claimants who are the victims of fraud. Even when the department is informed that a claim for Universal Credit was fraudulent and made without the claimant's knowledge or consent, it seems that claimants are being prevented from returning to their legacy benefits—even if they are worse off on Universal Credit.

**3. What operational guidance do you give to your staff about the handling of cases in which a claim for Universal Credit is made fraudulently, without the claimant's knowledge or consent?**

**a. What is the legal basis for refusing to allow claimants whose legacy benefits have been stopped because a fraudulent Universal Credit claim has been made in their name from returning to their legacy benefits?**

**b. The Department recently ran an advertising campaign on Universal Credit 'myth-busting'. Does the Department plan to run an awareness campaign to warn claimants about Universal Credit fraud?**

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank Field', written in a cursive style.

**Rt Hon Frank Field MP**  
**Chair**