



**Department
for Work &
Pensions**

Minister for Family Support,
Housing and Child Maintenance
4th Floor
Caxton House
Tothill Street
LONDON
SW1H 9DA

www.dwp.gov.uk

1 July 2019

Rt. Hon. Frank Field MP
Chair
Work & Pensions Select Committee
House of Commons

Dear Frank,

Many thanks for your letter dated 19 June 2019. I agree that now all new claims are under Universal Credit as opposed to legacy benefits it makes sense to focus on the outcomes for those claiming that benefit. It is for this reason that I was pleased to note that the evaluation showed that all of the Universal Credit claimants in the sample received their first payment on time.

In your letter you asked what efforts are made to contact eligible refugees. The current position is that the Post Grants Appointment Service (PGAS) is administered by Home Office civil servants. Every person leaving asylum support as the result of a grant of refugee or other immigration status receives a letter that advises them of the availability of the service and gives its contact details, so that the person can call for advice if they wish. The letter is followed up with a telephone call to the person if a number for them is held and a message is left advising them to call back if there is no answer.

With regards to your question about steps being taken to look at ways of reaching more of the eligible group of refugees, I am pleased to inform you that responsibility for administering the service will shortly transfer to Migrant Help, the voluntary sector organisation funded by the Home Office to provide a range of advice services to supported asylum seekers. As part of the new arrangements, accommodation providers will supply Migrant Help with the address and contact details of people receiving asylum support, so that accurate, up to date records are available.

These changes should ensure that it is easier to contact newly recognised refugees and that more of them receive an early appointment with their local Job Centre and are therefore assisted to make a prompt application for Universal Credit. I should also mention that the PGAS service will be extended to offering advice on housing matters and signposting the refugees to local authorities if they require assistance with such.

The 28-day period is currently set out in regulations (the Asylum Support Regulations 2000). I understand the Home Office has no current plans to amend the regulations to provide for a longer period, but will be looking closely at how the new arrangements with Migrant Help are working, including conducting further evaluations as necessary. DWP are not, at this point considering discretionary payments to those who refuse an advance payment of benefit.

The Home Office and DWP will also continue to liaise with the main voluntary sector organisations working with refugees (for example the British Red Cross and Refugee Council) and consider other practical changes to improve their transition from asylum support to mainstream benefits.

I hope that this information addresses your concerns and would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your continued interest in this area of work.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Will Quince', written in a cursive style.

Will Quince MP

Minister for Family Support, Housing and Child Maintenance