



## Work and Pensions Committee

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From the Chair

15 March 2018

Alok Sharma MP  
Minister of State for Employment  
Department for Work and Pensions  
Caxton House, Tothill Street  
London, SW1H 9DA

### **Universal Credit for victims of domestic abuse**

Under Universal Credit (UC) couples have to make a joint claim. They then receive a single payment monthly which is paid into one account.

We have heard concerns that this system gives abusive partners further opportunity to exert financial control over their spouse. The withholding of funds by the paid partner can make it more difficult for women to access money to meet their own and their children's needs and to leave abusive relationships. Victims can request separate payments via their Work Coach, but this entails explaining their sensitive situation to someone they may not know well. Many worry that requesting this would worsen the abuse when the partner found out.<sup>1</sup>

Might you please provide the following:

1. Data on:
  - a. The number of requests made for separate UC payments and the number granted;
  - b. A summary of reasons why such requests have been declined; and
  - c. The proportion of couple awards that go to i) men ii) women.
2. An outline of the process for claimants to request separate payments.
  - a. What guidance does the Department provide to Work Coaches on handling requests for separate payments, and what reasons for refusal does this permit?

<sup>1</sup> [https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Women\\_s\\_Aid\\_TUC\\_Financial\\_Abuse\\_Report\\_March\\_2015.pdf](https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Women_s_Aid_TUC_Financial_Abuse_Report_March_2015.pdf)



- b. What input does the other partner have in requests for separate payments? Can they request a decision be reversed ie. a return to joint payments?
  - c. How is the decision to implement separate payments explained to the non-requesting partner?
  - d. Are there any measures in place to protect victims from possible consequences at home of asking for separate payments?
3. What training do Work Coaches receive to support claimants disclosing domestic violence?
- a. How do Work Coaches decide a time limit on separate payments for domestic abuse victims?

Best wishes and I look forward to hearing from you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Frank Field', written over a large, light-colored scribble or mark.

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