



Department
for Work &
Pensions

The Rt Hon DAVID GAUKE MP
Secretary of State for Work & Pensions

Rt Hon Frank Field
Work and Pension Select Committee
House of Commons

13 November 2017

Dear Frank

Thank you for your letter of 27 October 2017.

You asked about the final iteration of the Universal Credit business case and when that will be available. I have attached to this reply a copy of the Department's latest update to the PAC which sets out a revised timetable. We remain committed to producing the analysis sought by the PAC and would be happy to copy that, when it is completed, to the Work and Pension Select Committee.

We remain committed to producing robust comparative analysis of the employment impacts of Universal Credit. As we informed the Committee we are planning to expand the analysis for single cases in the Live Service to couples and families in both services. This analysis will estimate a labour market impact for these broader claimant groups. In this instance it is misleading to draw a distinction between two services. The underlying policy for both is the same so any comparative analysis will hold true for both systems.

We have no plans to expand the comparative analysis into debt as the evidence shows debt as a temporary phenomenon.

We are continuing to work with Local Authorities on tackling the issues associated with Temporary Accommodation. There is more than one option but when that work is complete, and subject to passing the necessary secondary legislation, we will implement any changes as soon as practicable.

On seeing the supplementary evidence from the Halton Housing Trust I asked my officials to follow up on the details. When I have seen this work I would be happy to write again. My only observation at the moment is to draw a contrast to how the Trust reported the impact of Universal Credit in their most recent set of annual accounts where they say "Our arrears performance has remained consistently strong. We have provided wisely during the year for the Universal Credit cases that are in arrears and the higher balances that we are carrying from former arrears" (p18 annual accounts 2016/17)

As the Committee will expect we are following up with some contributors to the enquiry and we are finding, just like as in some of media coverage, that things are not

always exactly as portrayed. For example on checking with Gloucester City Homes about the 8 evictions which the Committee were concerned about, they now accept that most of the evictions had nothing to do with the nature or administration of Universal Credit. I am sure if you ask them they will share with the Committee the information they have shared with the Department.

Finally, I understand that you were not able to join the visit to London Bridge jobcentre on 19 October. I am sure it would be helpful for you to see the Full Service in operation at least once before finalising the enquiry, I know that Neil Couling would be happy to set this up for you.

Yours ever
David

The Rt Hon David Gauke MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS