

DWP response to questions from Shelter

We are confident the approach we are taking is workable. The benefit system can only reflect the claimant's circumstances as they currently are, not what they may be at some point in the future. The present system offers no guarantee that a person will be entitled to help with their rental payments if and when they move to a new address, and this policy does not change that principle.

There is no hard evidence that landlords will not let to claimants in this age group as a result of this policy – this is speculation. However, we are preparing guidance that we believe will satisfy the concerns of Shelter and other stakeholders. We are working with a range of stakeholders as we develop guidance for our staff to ensure that their concerns are fully reflected in the available advice. We are also working with the Department for Communities and Local Government to make sure landlords are properly informed about the changes so they can continue to rent to those who are exempted with confidence.

A key provision is that a young adult unable to safely return to their parental home will remain eligible for support. This provision is similar to one that applies with respect to 16 and 17 year olds who are estranged from their parents, so DWP staff are familiar with the issues and the sensitivities involved. In addition, a statement from an appropriate third party (such as a social worker or a homelessness charity) will be sufficient to access this exemption.

The guidance that will be used to determine exemptions is not yet public – this is normal for a digital project where information is deployed as and when it is needed. This measure is coming in gradually, in Universal Credit full service areas only, so we will test, learn and refine the guidance as the first claimants go through this process

The Department is committed to monitoring its policies, both in terms of equality and diversity, and in relation to the quality and accessibility of services for our customers. The impact of this provision will be considered as part of the overarching monitoring and evaluation of Universal Credit.