HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY

DEBATE PACK

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Opposition Day Debate: Universal Credit

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Summary

This House of Commons Library debate pack briefing has been prepared in advance of an Opposition Day debate on Universal Credit, which will take place on Wednesday 17th October 2018.

The motion to be debated has not yet been announced, but the debate is expected to focus on:

- The impact of Universal Credit on families, and in particular how the amounts received compare with existing benefits and tax credits;
- Ongoing issues and concerns about aspects of the Universal Credit system and its administration; and
- The Department for Work and Pensions' plans for the final "managed migration" stage of Universal Credit, which is expected to involve around 2 million households moving onto UC between 2019 and 2023.

On Tuesday 16th October BBC News reported that leaked documents showed that the Government was considering further measures to mitigate the effects of migrating to Universal Credit including:

- Allowing payment of certain benefits to continue for 2 weeks following a claim for UC;
- Reducing the maximum rate for deductions from UC from 40% to 30%; and
- Measures to help self-employed claimants

According to this report, alongside these measures, the end date for the introduction of Universal Credit would be pushed back further, from March 2023 to December 2023.

This briefing provides background information, alongside recent relevant parliamentary and press material, in addition to suggested further reading which Members may find useful when preparing for this debate.

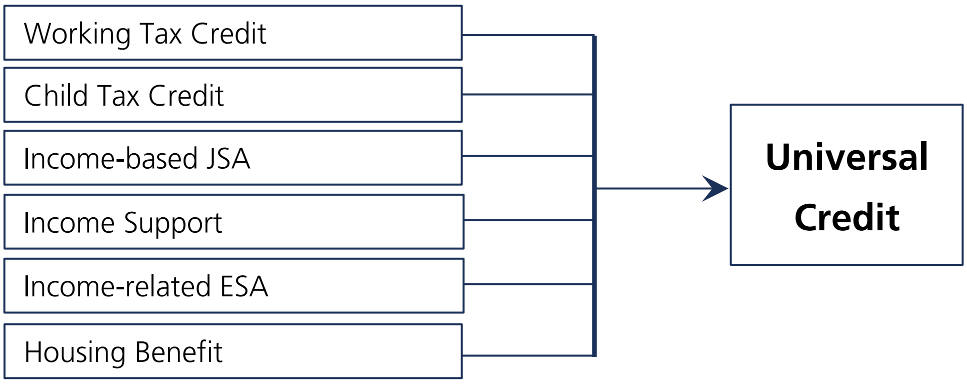
The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Background

1.1 What is UC?

Universal Credit (UC) is replacing a range of existing means-tested benefits and tax credits for working-age households. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) refers to the benefits and tax credits UC is replacing as "**legacy benefits**." When it is fully rolled out, around 7 million households will receive Universal Credit and payments will total around £60 billion a year.[1]

"Legacy" benefits and tax credits replaced by Universal Credit



The aim of Universal Credit is to simplify and streamline the benefits system for claimants and administrators, improve work incentives, tackle poverty among low income families, and reduce the scope for fraud and error. UC is administered by the Department for Work and Pensions in Great Britain, and by the Department for Communities in Great Britain.

Universal Credit awards comprise a **standard allowance** with **additional amounts** for children, housing and other needs and circumstances such as childcare and caring. The actual amount a family receives will however depend on its income and savings. **Unearned income** – such as income from certain benefits, or an occupational pension – will usually reduce the maximum UC award on a pound for pound basis. **Earned income** – i.e. income from employment or self-employment – will reduce the UC award at a constant rate (the "**single taper"**), although families will be able to keep some of their earned income (the "**work allowance**") before it begins to affect their UC. The taper rate was originally 65 pence for each additional pound of net earnings, but from April 2017 it was reduced to 63 pence for each pound.

Families already get means-tested assistance through tax credits, but while tax credit awards are based on annual income, UC is based on current income. UC awards are calculated on an ongoing basis and increase or decrease each month in response to changes in income and

1 Office for Budget Responsibility, Welfare trends report, Cm 9562, January 2018

other factors. For employees paid through Pay as You Earn (PAYE), HMRC's **Real Time Information** allows DWP to automatically adjust their UC award if their wages change. Claimants will however have to notify DWP directly of other changes in circumstances affecting their award as they occur.

The financial support provided by Universal Credit is underpinned by a new "**conditionality**" framework setting out the responsibilities claimants may be required to meet. The level of requirements will depend on the claimants' circumstances. The conditionality framework is backed up by a "strong and clear" **sanctions** regime for non-compliance.

In "**Full Service**" areas – where the final, digital version of UC operates – claimants will normally be expected to make a claim for Universal Credit online and to manage their claim, including reporting changes in circumstances, via an **online account**.

UC is **paid monthly** in arrears and, unless exceptional circumstances apply, as a **single payment** covering all the household's needs. Couples can choose which partner receives the payment, or nominate a joint bank account.

UC is wholly administered and delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions in Great Britain, but DWP has been working with local authorities to develop local face-to-face support services to help UC claimants ("**Universal Support**"). However, on 1 October the DWP said that the current model was "not delivering the support for vulnerable claimants as affectively as it could have been" and announced that funding for local authorities currently providing Universal Support would cease at the end of March 2019.[2] From April 2019, £39 million of funding will instead be made available to Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland to deliver Universal Support.[3]

1.2 Roll-out timetable

The DWP originally envisaged that Universal Credit would be fully introduced by 2017, but the roll-out timetable has been pushed back several times. Following early problems, the entire programme was "reset" in early 2013. In 2016, the DWP began rolling-out the "**Full Service**" – the final digital version of UC, available for all claimant groups – using a "test and learn" approach. The Full Service was to have been rolled-out to every part of the United Kingdom by September 2018, but in autumn 2017, following emerging evidence of problems experienced by people moving onto UC, the Government slowed the roll-out plans significantly for January-March 2018 while it introduced measures intended to ease the transition to UC. These included abolishing the 7-day "waiting period", increasing the amount of the advance payment people can get at the start of their claim and

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2 Letter from the Director General, Universal Credit, to local authority Chief Executives, 1 October 2018

3 Citizens Advice to provide support to Universal Credit claimants, DWP press release, 1 October 2018

extending the repayment period for advances, and allowing people moving onto UC to continue to receive Housing Benefit for two weeks. The total package is worth £1.5 billion over the next few years.[4]

In summer 2018 the pace of roll-out accelerated again, and since June the Full Service has been introduced in around 60 new jobcentre areas in Great Britain each month (with a "fire break" in August). By December 2018 the Full Service will be available in all parts of the United Kingdom.

When the Full Service is introduced in an area new claims for "legacy" benefits cannot be made (with limited exceptions). Legacy benefit claimants do not move onto UC straight away, but a change in circumstances may trigger a move to UC. The DWP refers to this as "**natural migration**." When a person moves onto UC, it will not normally be possible to move back to legacy benefits – the "lobster pot" rule.

Legacy benefit and tax credit claimants not experiencing a change in circumstances will transfer to UC by a process known as "**managed migration**." This is expected to begin in July 2019 and be completed in 2023.

Around 2 million households – mainly people receiving income-related Employment and Support Allowance and families on tax credits – are expected to move onto UC by managed migration. Where claimants moved to UC via managed migration are entitled to less support than they were receiving through legacy benefits and tax credits, they may be entitled to a top-up payment so that they do not lose out in cash terms at the point of transfer. This "transitional protection" will continue until the claimant's circumstances change significantly, or increases in UC entitlement fully extinguish the additional transitional element.

Further information on the DWP's plans for rolling out Universal Credit and on how people move into UC in Full Service areas can be found in Commons Library briefing CBP-8299, Universal Credit roll-out: 2018-19, 14 June 2018.

The Government's plans for the final managed migration stage are covered in section 1.6 below.

At June 2018, there were 883,000 Universal claimants in Great Britain, and around 5 million working age households in receipt of legacy benefits and/or tax credits. Only around 15% of those who will eventually be affected by Universal Credit were actually receiving the benefit, although the percentage varies by region (see below).

[4] For further information see Simon Osborne, Universal credit changes now and then, CPAG Welfare Rights Bulletin, February 2018

ESTIMATED UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND "LEGACY" BENEFIT CLAIMANTS (JUNE 2018)	Total "legacy" cases	Universal Credit	*Estimated % on UC*
England	**4,250,000**	**751,000**	***15%***
East	391,000	65,000	*14%*
East Midlands	382,000	40,000	*9%*
North East	252,000	52,000	*17%*
North West	657,000	160,000	*20%*
London	681,000	122,000	*15%*
South East	516,000	74,000	*13%*
South West	364,000	77,000	*17%*
West Midlands	523,000	85,000	*14%*
Yorks. & Humber	484,000	77,000	*14%*
Wales	**292,000**	**41,000**	***12%***
Scotland	**460,000**	**91,000**	***17%***
Great Britain	**5,002,000**	**883,000**	***15%***

Notes Caseload data rounded to nearest thousand claimants. The methadology section provides full details of how we have compiled these estimates.

Sources

DWP Stat Xplore: Employment Support Allowance, Housing Benefit and Universal Credit - households datasets

ONS NOMIS: Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance (5% sample) datasets

HMRC Provisional Child and Working Tax Credits geographic statistics (April 2018)

1.3 Changes to UC

The Welfare Reform Bill 2010-12 – which provided the legislative framework for Universal Credit – had its First Reading in the House of Commons on 16 February 2011, and received Royal Assent on 8 March 2012.[5] On 10 December 2012 draft regulations setting out more detailed rules for the new benefit were laid before Parliament.[6] The regulations were agreed by both Houses in February 2013[7] and came into force in April 2013.

In addition to changes to the roll-out schedule, key parameters of Universal Credit have also changed since the original legislation was agreed.[8] The Conservative Government's Summer Budget in July 2015 announced a series of controversial changes to Universal Credit (and, in advance of the full UC roll-out, to tax credits):[9]

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5 See Commons Library briefings RP 11/24, Welfare Reform Bill 2010-12: Universal Credit provisions, 7 March 2011; RP 11/48, Welfare Reform Bill 2010-12: Committee Stage report, 8 June 2011; SN06202, Welfare Reform Bill 2010-12: amendments at the Lords Committee and Report stages, 27 January 201

6 See Commons Library briefing SN06548, Draft Universal Credit Regulations 2013, 7 February 2013

7 DLC Deb 11 February 2013 cc1-24; HC Deb 12 February 2013 c827; HL Deb 13 February 2013 cc664-702

8 A full policy timeline for Universal Credit – from initial proposals put forward by the Centre for Social Justice to the present – can be found in section 1.1 of Commons Library briefing CBP-8299, Universal Credit roll-out: 2018-19

9 See Commons Library briefing CBP-7252, Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2015-16, 16 July 2015

- A reduction in the income threshold in tax credits, and an increase in the tax credit withdrawal rate ("taper"), from April 2016
- Reductions in the work allowances for most UC claimants, from April 2016
- Limiting the child element of tax credits and UC to two children for new claims and births after April 2017[10]
- Removing the family element in tax credits (and the corresponding first child premium in UC) for new claims from April 2017
- Freezing most working age benefits – including most tax credit and UC elements – for four years (annual increases having previously been limited to 1% for three years from 2013)

Following a Government defeat in the House of Lords on 26 October 2015[11], in the Autumn Statement 2015 the then Chancellor, George Osborne, reversed the planned changes to the income thresholds and taper rate within tax credits. The other changes have however been implemented. The **reduced work allowances** have been particularly controversial. Although the impact varies according to household circumstances, the changes were criticised by some commentators as reducing the generosity of UC work working claimants and, for some groups, incentives to enter or progress in work.

More detailed analysis of the impact of the work allowance cuts can be found in Commons Library briefing CBP-7446, Universal Credit changes from April 2016, 16 November 2016.

The work allowance changes announced at Summer Budget 2015 are estimated to save around £2.9 billion in the coming fiscal year 2019-20, rising to around £3.6 billion in the last full fiscal year of this Parliament (202-/23). The subsequently announced change in the taper rate from 65% to 63% costs the Exchequer £0.4 billion in 2019-20 rising to £0.8 billion in 2022-23.

ANNUAL SAVINGS / COSTS RESULTING FROM CHANGES TO UNIVERSAL CREDIT WORK ALLOWANCES AND TAPER RATE

Positive figures are Exchequer savings; negative figures are Exchequer costs

£ million, nominal

Announced at fiscal event:	Measure description:	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Summer Budget 2015	Reduce work allowances in UC	120	1,225	2,225	2,850	3,190	* *3,440*	* *3,560*
Autumn Statement 2016	Universal Credit: reduce taper to 63%	0	-35	-175	-400	-570	-700	* *-770*
Total		**120**	**1,190**	**2,050**	**2,450**	**2,620**	*** 2,740**	*** 2,790**

Source: HM Treasury Budget 2016 table 2.2 line aw & Spring Budget 2017 table 2.2 line a. Figures with an * *asterisk* are HoC Library calculations based on UC migration profile set out in OBR Welfare Trends report Jan 2018, which assumes completion of UC managed migration in September 2022. The DWP has since revised the completion date of managed migration to the end of the fiscal year 2022-23.

At Autumn Statement 2016 the Government announced that the Universal Credit taper **rate would be reduced from 65% to 63%** from April 2017, ultimately benefiting around 3 million working households. The taper rate reduction was welcomed, but for most affected by the work allowance cuts the gain will be insufficient to offset the losses as a result of that measure and other changes. A Commons Library blog, Universal Credit: jam tomorrow? looks at the

10 See Commons Library briefing CBP-7935, The two child limit in tax credits and Universal Credit, 10 April 2017

11 HL Deb 10 April 2015 cc976-1042

combined impact of the work allowance and taper changes on a range of example families.

1.4 Impact of UC

The Department for Work and Pensions published an Equality Impact Assessment for Universal Credit on 9 November 2011 and an Impact Assessment on 10 December 2012. Updated versions of the impact assessments taking into account the various policy changes since 2012 have not been published. Given the extent of the changes, the original impact assessments are now of limited use for those seeking to gauge the impact of Universal Credit as it now stands.

The impact of benefits changes can be considered in different ways, but recent debates have focused on the impact of Universal Credit in terms of the effect on entitlements for different households, when compared with existing legacy benefits and tax credits.

On 6 October *The Times* reported that the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions had briefed Cabinet colleagues that "half of lone parents and about two thirds of working-age couples with children would lose the equivalent of £2,400 a year" under Universal Credit.[12] The DWP has not however published any recent analysis of changing entitlements as a result of UC.

On 14 October *The Observer* reported findings from a "comprehensive analysis of the impact of universal credit" undertaken by the consultancy Policy and Practice and "shared with" the paper.[13] According to the report, the analysis found that:

- Almost two in five households in receipt of benefits would lose an average of £52 a week.
- Some 2.8 million households would see their income cut.
- A million homeowners currently receiving tax credits would be worse off, losing an average of £43 a week.
- 600,000 working single parents currently receiving tax credits would be worse off, losing £16 a week on average.
- 750,000 households on "disability benefits" would lose on average £76 a week.
- 2 million households would gain compared to the old system, by £26 a week on average.
- Households gaining include around 900,000 private tenants in work, gaining on average £14.52 a week.
- "People deemed too ill to work or to prepare for work" were likely to be better off or receive the same amounts – households in this situation would on average be £7.76 a week better off.

The analysis does not however appear to have been published.

Analyses of changes in entitlements under Universal Credit, taking into account policy changes including the work allowance cuts and the taper

12 "Families lose £200 a month in universal credit switch", *Times*, 6 October 2018
13 "Millions to lose £52 a week with universal credit, report shows", *Observer*, 14 October 2018

rate reductions, have been published by the Resolution Foundation and by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR).

Resolution Foundation "Universal Remedy" report

The Resolution Foundation published a report in October 2017, Universal Remedy: Ensuring Universal Credit is fit for purpose, which gives results from an analysis of the impact of Universal Credit **for working families**, by family type. The key findings as regards entitlements are given in the extract below (pp29-30):

These estimates do not take into account other benefits changes affecting families, such as the abolition of the family element and the 2 child limit (it is assumed these have already been fully introduced, in order to isolate the impact of Universal Credit alone). Nor do they take into account the fact that some families losing out will be eligible for transitional protection (but only those moving onto UC at the final "managed migration" stage):

> We can consider the number and type of gainers and losers, as well as the size of those shifts in income, by using a microsimulation model applying different tax and benefit systems to household survey data, identifying the key characteristics that determine entitlement. We model a baseline scenario that corresponds to the world in 2017-18 in which the current tax credit system is fully in place, and compare that to a scenario in which UC is fully in place. In both scenarios, we assume that cuts to family support (the removal of the family element and limiting of support for two children) have been fully implemented: this is to isolate the impact of the change in support for working families in the steady state system.
>
> Table 1 sets out in detail the impact of UC as currently designed compared to the current tax credit system on working families. It shows that:
>
> »» 2.2 million families are expected to gain under UC, with an average increase in income of £41 a week.
>
> »» 3.2 million families are expected to be worse off under UC, with an average loss of £48 a week. 600,000 of those losers, mostly couple parent families, will no longer be entitled to benefits under UC.
>
> »» The net impact on couple parent families is broadly neutral. Slightly fewer couple parent families will gain (1.0 million) than lose (1.1 million). The average gain of £54 a week compares to an average loss of £53 a week.
>
> »» That is not the case for single parents. They will overall lose by an average of £26 a week but almost twice as will lose (0.7 million) as gain (0.4 million), and lose by almost twice as much on average (many losing £57 a week compared to gains of £31 a week).

Table 1: Change in income for different working family types for families entitled to the current system or UC, 2017-18

	Couple parents	Single parents	Non-parents	All
Change in generosity for population entitled in either the current system or UC (millions)				
Gainers	1.0 m	0.4 m	0.8 m	2.2 m
Losers	1.1 m	0.7 m	1.4 m	3.2 m
of which:				
receive UC	0.6 m	0.6 m	0.4 m	1.6 m
do not receive UC	0.4 m	0.1 m	1.0 m	1.6 m
Total population entitled to UC	1.6 m	0.9 m	1.2 m	3.7 m
Change in entitlement (£ per week)				
Mean Gain	£54	£31	£30	£41
Mean Loss	-£53	-£57	-£40	-£48
of which:				
receive UC	-£55	-£57	-£49	-£54
do not receive UC	-£50	-£56	-£37	-£42
Net change in income	-£2	-£26	-£14	-£12

Source: Resolution Foundation analysis using the ippr tax-benefit model

Notes Estimates are on an entitlement basis, there is no adjustment for take-up. We would broadly expect take-up assumptions to have a significant effect only on the number of working families without children gaining or losing with the entitled population of 1.2 million falling to around 0.7 million recipients.

OBR Welfare trends report

Chapter 5 of the OBR's Welfare Trends Report (January 2018) modelled UC's impact on household entitlement in 2022-23. The OBR's policy simulation modelling identified how many households might, in 2022-23:

- Gain from UC as a result of higher take-up,
- Gain from UC as a result of higher entitlement,
- Lose from UC as a result of lower entitlement.

The table below shows the OBR's assessment of the effect of these factors on different groups of recipient household (categorised by the type of benefit they received in the legacy system), not taking into account any transitional protection payable to claimants moved across from the legacy system to UC. In combination these UC take-up and entitlement effects are estimated to result in a net cost to the Exchequer of £0.8 billion in 2022-23 relative to the legacy system.

It is important to note that the OBR's modelling could not capture the household-level impact of every factor influencing the amounts received in UC versus the legacy system. The main factors omitted are the losses arising from introduction of the minimum income floor, and the gains/losses arising from the abolition of income disregards and run-ons and changes to fraud and error rates. The OBR estimate that these other factors, omitted from the household-level modelling, generate net savings of £3.1 billion. Once these are taken into account, the overall net effect of UC on welfare spending becomes a saving of £2.4 billion in 2022-23.

The table below shows that, in 2022-23 UC means:

- **0.7 million households might gain an average £4,061 per annum** as a result of increased benefit take-up;
- **2.4 million households might gain an average of £1,625 per annum** as a result of increased benefit entitlement in UC, notably resulting from higher

entitlements for those working fewer than 16 hours a week and also the UC limited capability for work-related activity element which is higher than the equivalent component in ESA;

- **2.7 million households might lose an average –£2,106 per annum** as a result of reduced benefit entitlement in UC. Key reasons for losses are the reduced work allowances and extension of capital limits to in-work claimants, and the removal of certain disability-related premiums and tax credit elements.

GAINERS AND LOSERS FROM CHANGES TO BENEFIT ENTITLEMENT UNDER UNIVERSAL CREDIT*
OBR estimates for Great Britain, 2022-23

	Gainers				Losers**	
	Take-up rises		Entitlement rises		Entitlement falls	
	Households affected	Average gain	Households affected	Average gain	Households affected	Average loss
	000s	£ per annum	000s	£ per annum	000s	£ per annum
'Legacy' claimant group* **						
New claimants	80	3,946	183	1,674	-	-
JSA	26	3,844	28	1,768	73	-1,117
ESA	84	3,420	871	1,121	950	-2,608
Income support (non-incapacity)	15	5,655	26	1,891	159	-1,248
Tax credits (employees)	201	3,692	514	1,149	756	-1,927
Tax credits (self-employed)	48	5,050	103	1,335	197	-2,138
Child tax credit only	149	4,959	444	2,676	473	-1,855
Housing benefit only	108	3,481	232	2,542	55	-1,728
Total	**711**	**4,061**	**2,399**	**1,625**	**2,664**	**-2,106**

Notes
* Table includes the 5.7 million households identified by the OBR's policy simulation model as having a change in entitlement resulting from differences in the underlying generosity of UC compared to the 'legacy' system. Analysis does not capture gains and losses arising from introduction of the minimum income floor, from abolishing income disregards, changes to fraud and error and other factors whose effects on households could not be modelled. These excluded factors account for net savings to the Exchequer of around £3.1 billion per annum in 2022-23.
** Table does not include the roughly 1 million households whose entitlement will neither rise nor fall as a result of the changes modeled above, or who experience losses purely from lower take-up. The OBR assumes that losses due to lower take-up might account for £0.4 billion of savings to the Exchequer in 2022-23.
*** Mutually exclusive household groupings based upon the benefits they were claimiing under the 'legacy' system.
Source Table based on tables 5.1 - 5.7 of the OBR's Welfare Trends Report 2018

Housing – rent arrears

Housing Benefit is one of the benefits that Universal Credit is replacing. Information on the housing element of Universal Credit can be found in a Library briefing paper: Housing costs in Universal Credit (last updated January 2018).

As the roll-out of UC has progressed, both public and private sector landlords have expressed concerns about growing rent arrears and levels of tenant debt. Section 3 of Housing costs in Universal Credit outlines evidence of the impact of UC on rent arrears and the Government response.

Since the paper was last updated in January 2018, several reports have been published which have continued to draw attention to the issue of rent arrears. The key findings are set out below.

Universal Credit and rent accounts (National Housing Federation, 10 July 2018):

> The roll out of Universal Credit to households is approximately 10% complete, as of December 2017. Research undertaken so far suggests:
>
> - Universal Credit claimants have higher average arrears than tenants on legacy benefits
> - There appears to be a spike in arrears prior to and immediately following a claim, with a return to pre-claim level after approximately 52 weeks
> - The reasons for increased levels of arrears are complex, but relate to the delay in a claimant receiving first payment, design of Universal Credit and carrying over of pre-existing arrears
> - There are differences in levels of arrears between housing providers – while some of these differences are due to the use of Alternative Payment Arrangements, research so far has not explored why these differences exist.

Carrying the debt – measuring the impact of Universal Credit on tenants and landlords – survey results 2018 (Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) and the National Federation of ALMOs (NFA), 11 July 2018). The data referred to is from March 2018, i.e. before the changes to advance payments and waiting days:

> As reported in previous surveys, a significantly higher proportion of tenants claiming UC are in arrears (74%) compared to all households living in council and ALMO owned homes (26%).
>
> - For all organisations, the total amount of arrears owed was £61.5 million. The proportion of all households in arrears across the 2017 and 2018 survey groups is broadly the same.
> - The average level of arrears per household for all tenants was £328, which is approximately 4 weeks rent. For households in receipt of UC, the national average level of arrears was around one and a half times higher at £520. This ranged from approximately 5-7 weeks' rent outside London, and 14 weeks' in London.
> - When looking at the cohort group for UC households, there has been a decrease of the percentage of households in arrears from 76% in 2017 to 72% in 2018. However, the average amount owed is very similar (£514 versus £523).
> - The total arrears debt for the tracked cohort increased by 12% from £39 million to £43.6 million. On average across organisations, 25% of this debt was attributable to households on UC, even though they only make up 4% of total households.
> - About 76% of UC claimants in arrears were recorded as having arrears before they moved onto UC; this is an increase from 60% last year and is the same as the year before. However, feedback suggests that these arrears are then increasingly rapidly at a time when claimants are already financially vulnerable and may have arrears action being taken already.
> - Despite this, only 29% of households on UC were subject to an Alternative Payment Arrangement where the rent is

paid directly to the landlord, down from 41% in 2017 and 44% in 2016.

- Only 44% of respondents felt that APAs are extremely or very useful for supporting people to manage their UC payments, with 46% finding them 'somewhat useful' indicating that there needs to be improvements to the APA process for it to become a useful tool in dealing with arrears. This is especially important if the Government chooses to continue paying UC in arrears.

The NFA and ARCH suggested the following changes:

- Make UC payments monthly in advance rather than in arrears.
- Change the rules around the ending of claims and the need to make a new claim for people on zero hours contracts, seasonal or temporary work to encourage more people to continue to access the work market and gain experience through short term placements rather than being discouraged due to the adverse impact on finances of starting new claims frequently.
- Slow down the speed of UC rollout until the procedural issues with the existing system have been resolved and improvements made to the APA system and Landlord Portal.
- Create a transitional funding pot for landlords to enable them to effectively manage the rollout of UC and adequately support vulnerable tenants.
- Improve the digital engagement for full service (especially for older tenants).
- Implement a wide-reaching advertising campaign to educate the general public about UC.

Investigating the impact of welfare reform on private renting (Dr Tom Simcock for the Residential Landlords Association (RLA), 12 October 2018):

- 21% of landlords reported they let to tenants on Universal Credit.
- 61% of landlords have experienced their Universal Credit tenants going into rent arrears in the past 12 months. This has more than doubled in the past 2-years.
- Landlords were owed on average £2,390.19 in rent arrears.
- 53% of landlords had requested an Alternative Payment Arrangement, and 57% reported that this had been successful.
- On average it took 9.3 weeks for the arrangement to be organised.
- 28% of landlords reported they had to evict a tenant on universal credit in the past 12 months, with the primary reason being rent arrears (77% of landlords).

Universal Credit and food banks

On 24 April 2018 the Trussell Trust published a report, Left behind: is Universal Credit truly universal? Analysis of food banks in areas where the UC Full Service had been rolled out for a year or more found that these projects experienced an average increase of 52% in the twelve months after the roll-out date in their area. Comparative analysis of random samples of foodbanks taken from 247 projects either not in full UC areas, or only in full roll-out areas for up to three months, showed an average increase of 13%.

A further survey of 248 people referred to 30 Trussell Trust food banks in Full Service areas, conducted over five weeks between February and March 2018, found, among other things:

> 1. The wait for a first payment had severe and immediate consequences: 70% of respondents found themselves in debt, 57% experienced issues with their mental or physical health, and 56% experienced housing issues. The majority of respondents were waiting or had waited the intended weeks for their payment but this wait still had severe financial implications.
>
> 2. There was little statutory support available during this wait. 63% were offered no help, while the most likely form of help offered was a foodbank voucher. Advance payments were helpful for some, whilst a half who provided detail said they were unhelpful, too little, or unaffordable to repay.
>
> 3. Only 8% said their full Universal Credit award covered their cost of living. This was even less for disabled people or people with ill-health, of whom 5% said the award covered their cost of living.
>
> 4. Poor administration was a persistent concern. 35% had waited, or were waiting, longer than 6 weeks for their first payment. A third had experienced poor communication, and 30% had experienced underpayment. Over and underpayment were particularly rife amongst those in work, with 50% in work affected.[14]

The report recommended:

- A "true Universal Support service" which "supports people transitioning onto the service or making a new claim; expands support for people with the greatest financial need; and extends beyond the initial claim or transition";
- More financial support, in particular for the most vulnerable;
- An "urgent inquiry into poor administration" within Universal Credit and its effects, particularly in relation to insecure work; and
- More flexibilities for claimant requirements and a "yellow-card" warning system for sanctioning.

Asked what plans the Department for Work and Pensions had to respond to the recommendations in the Trussell Trust report, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Kit Malthouse said in a written answer on 9 May (PQ 139374):

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[14] Left behind, p3

> People use food banks for many and varied reasons, and it would be misleading to link them to any single cause. Work offers people the best opportunity to get out of poverty and to become self-reliant; adults in working families are around four times less likely to be in poverty than those in workless families. This is why we are undertaking the most ambitious reform to the welfare system in decades - so that it supports people to find and to stay in work. While there are no official statistics on food bank usage, recent data from the Trussell Trust shows that the majority of users are out of work.
>
> As a safeguard for people needing more support, we have a well-established system of hardship payments, benefit advances and budgeting loans. Universal Credit has introduced a further package of measures announced at the Autumn Budget 2017, such as making advances of up to 100 per cent of the indicative award available and increasing the repayment period to 12 months, removing the 7 waiting days, providing an additional payment of 2 weeks of Housing Benefit to support claimants when they transition to UC, and changing how claimants in temporary accommodation receive support for their housing costs.

In a subsequent written answer (PQ 146351, 29 May 2018), Mr Malthouse said that the Department had not carried out any research into trends in the number of people using food banks.

Asked by Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope what plans the Government had to meet representatives of the Trussell Trust to discuss the use of food banks in Full Service UC areas, the DWP Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Baroness Buscombe said in a written answer on 18 June (HL8290):

> Officials from the Department for Work and Pensions meet regularly with key stakeholders including the Trussell Trust, where a range of issues are discussed. We are also currently reviewing research carried out by organisations including the Trussell Trust to add to our understanding of food bank use and will consider requirements to add to our evidence base.

In response to a question on when the Department planned to complete its review of research on food banks, the DWP Minister Justin Tomlinson said in a written answer on 13 September that-

> The Department reviews on an ongoing basis the evidence from research carried out by different organisations, to add to its understanding of food bank use, and will consider requirements to add to its evidence base.[15]

1.5 National Audit Office report

On 15 June 2018 the National Audit Office (NAO) published a report, Rolling out Universal Credit (HC 1123 2017-19).

The NAO found that while some elements of Universal Credit are working well, with the Full Service operational in 258 jobcentre areas by 12 April 2018, evidence of good relationships between work coaches and claimants, and significant improvements in systems since they were

[15] PQ 172507

first introduced, some claimants had struggled to adjust to Universal Credit. It noted:

- Evidence from local and national bodies suggesting that a significant number of claimants had suffered difficulties and hardship during roll-out of the Full Service, as a result of issues with the design of UC and its implementation.
- The Department had found it difficult to identify and track those it deemed vulnerable – it had not measured how many UC claimants were having difficulties because it does not have systematic means of gathering intelligence from delivery partners.
- DWP did not accept that Universal Credit has caused hardship among claimants, because of the availability of advances. However, its own survey of Full Service claimants published in June 2018 found that four in ten claimants surveyed were experiencing financial difficulties.
- One in five claimants do not receive their full payment on time. Around 113,000 new claims were paid late in 2017, approximately 25% of all new claims. On average these were paid four weeks late.
- Universal Credit is creating additional costs for local authorities and other organisations that help administer Universal Credit and support claimants. The Department had acknowledged and compensated local authorities for some additional costs, but had placed the burden of proof on local authorities to prove them and had not sought to systematically collect data on these wider costs.
- Organisations told the NAO that DWP had been "unresponsive" to issues they had raised.

NAO noted that the DWP's Full Business Case for Universal Credit (a summary of which was published on 7 June) states that the Department expects UC eventually to deliver £8 billion of net benefits of year, but added that this "depends on some unproven assumptions." NAO has "significant doubt" about the main benefits of UC. It points out:

- It is not known whether the employment impact identified in early evaluations can be replicated across the programme.
- It is not clear that UC will cost less to administer than existing benefits.
- DWP does not know whether UC is reducing fraud and error.

The NAO states that "The Department will never be able to measure whether Universal Credit actually leads to 200,000 more people in work, because it cannot isolate the effect of Universal Credit from other economic factors in increasing employment" (Executive Summary, para 16).

The NAO's overall conclusion on value for money is that:

> 17 We think that there is no practical alternative to continuing with Universal Credit. We recognise the determination and single-mindedness with which the Department has driven the programme forward to date, through many problems. However,

> throughout the introduction of Universal Credit local and national organisations that represent and support claimants have raised a number of issues about the way Universal Credit works in practice. The Department has responded to simple ideas to improve the digital system but defended itself from those that it viewed as being opposed to the policy in principle. It does not accept that Universal Credit has caused hardship among claimants, because it makes advances available, and believes that if claimants take up these opportunities hardship should not occur. This has led it to often dismiss evidence of claimants' difficulties and hardship instead of working with these bodies to establish an evidence base for what is actually happening. The result has been a dialogue of claim and counter-claim and gives the unhelpful impression of a Department that is unsympathetic to claimants.
>
> 18 The Department has now got a better grip of the programme in many areas. However, we cannot judge the value for money on the current state of programme management alone. Both we, and the Department, doubt it will ever be possible for the Department to measure whether the economic goal of increasing employment has been achieved. This, the extended timescales and the cost of running Universal Credit compared to the benefits it replaces cause us to conclude that the project is not value for money now, and that its future value for money is unproven.

The NAO report notes that the DWP is now approaching the task of migrating existing benefit and tax credit claimants to Universal Credit and that, after that, UC needs to provide the basis for future development and refinement of working age benefits. To succeed, NAO believes that DWP "must ensure its flexible approach to delivery helps it learn from its own experiences, those of claimants, and those who support them." It recommends that the Department (Executive Summary, para 19, original emphasis):

> **Improve the tracking and transparency of progress towards Universal Credit's intended benefits**. It should set out clearly how it calculates those benefits and encourage third parties to review and monitor assumptions. The Department should assess the impact of Universal Credit on third parties and include this in its calculation and budgeting of the implementation costs.
>
> **Ensure that operational performance and costs improve sustainably before increasing caseloads through managed migration**. It should formally assess the readiness of automation and digital systems to support increased caseloads before migration begins, and ensure the programme does not expand before business-as-usual operations can cope with higher claimant volumes.
>
> **Work with delivery partners to establish a shared evidence base for how Universal Credit is working in practice**. The Department needs to ensure that delivery partners' feedback on both implementation issues and the impact on claimants is considered alongside the existing feedback from frontline staff and programme managers. It needs to systematically collect, analyse and publish data and evidence from delivery partners and produce a shared understanding of what is happening on the ground and how it is addressing any issues raised.
>
> **Make it easier for third parties to support claimants**. This might include:

extending the concept of the landlord portal to simplify verification processes (for example, for childcare costs);

sharing, with the claimant's consent, appropriate information with third parties, such as information on additional support requirements;

allowing the bulk upload and download of information helpful to the support of claimants, such as changes in rent; and

allowing those supporting claimants access to a version of the journal through which they can view appropriate shared information and communicate with the Department.

1.6 The final stage: "managed migration"

Legacy benefit and tax credit claimants who do not experience a change in circumstances triggering a claim for Universal Credit will remain on their existing benefits until the final stage of the introduction of Universal Credit, known as "**managed migration**." This is due to begin in July 2019 and be completed in 2023.

Of the 7 million or so households expected to receive Universal Credit when it is fully introduced, around 2 million households (containing 2.87 million people) are expected to have moved onto UC via managed migration; of whom:

- around 1 million will be families on tax credits; and
- around 745,000 will be Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants

DWP MANAGED MIGRATION ESTIMATES

	Total households to be migrated
JSA	39,000
ESA	745,000
Income Support	119,000
Child Tax Credits	395,000
Working & Child Tax Credits	620,000
Working Tax Credits	102,000
Housing Benefit only	72,000
Total	**2,092,000**

Guidance to reading this table

Under the legacy system it is possible for one household to claim multiple of the above benefits and/or tax credits. Where this is the case, the table above lists each household only once according to which of the benefits the household claims is the 'highest' in DWP's hierarchy. JSA is at the top of this hierarchy and Housing Benefit is at the bottom – hence the ordering of the table above. A household receiving both JSA and Housing Benefit would be recorded as a "JSA"

DWP the Universal Credit (transitional provisions) (managed migration) regulations 2018: explanatory memorandum for the Social Security Advisory Committee; paragraph 118, table 1, page 29

Claimants will be contacted by the DWP and informed that their legacy benefits will stop and that they must make a claim for UC instead. Draft regulations setting out the detailed rules for managed migration and related matters were published by the Government in June this year and the independent Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) launched a public consultation on the proposals. SSAC has now submitted its report to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. DWP will consider any recommendations SSAC makes and issue its response together with the final draft regulations, which are expected be laid before Parliament later this year.

Managed migration is controversial. SSAC received over 400 written responses – a record for a SSAC consultation. Concerns voiced by think tanks, pressure groups and other include:

- The possibility that people may experience hardship if managed migration does not proceed smoothly and payments are interrupted.
- DWP's proposed approach places the burdens of arranging the move to UC, and the financial risks associated with it, almost entirely on the shoulders of claimants – who may be vulnerable and least able to bear it.
- DWP plans to write to people and give them a deadline to claim UC – which may be as little as a month. If they fail to claim, their existing benefits will stop and the claimant may be left with no income whatsoever. Some organisations have argued that DWP should instead ensure that existing benefits should remain in payment until the UC claim has been sorted out, or that DWP should adopt a different approach where people are moved to UC automatically using existing information on them the Department has. Whatever the approach, it is argued that DWP has to have in place comprehensive and robust plans to help people who do not engage with the migration process – e.g. because they're busy, stressed, ill, don't have a computer, can't get through to the helpline or don't understand what they have to do. There is real concern that significant numbers of people could "fall through the cracks."
- Worries about the capacity of DWP to undertake such a large and complex operation, and about whether resources are being made available to local authorities and to others to help people navigate the process.
- Whether the DWP's proposals for "transitional protection" for claimants whose entitlement to UC is less than their existing benefits do actually provide adequate protection.
- Concerns that DWP is pressing ahead with managed migration when there is evidence that people which have claimed UC are experiencing hardship as a result of various aspects of the system. Some argue that managed migration should be postponed until the DWP has addressed these existing problems and UC is working satisfactorily (last week two former Prime Ministers have voiced their concerns about Universal Credit – see Universal credit: Brown says benefit rollout could lead to 'poll-tax-style chaos', BBC News, 10 October 2018; John Major: Universal credit could repeat poll tax problems, BBC News, 11 October 2018).

Links to responses to the consultation from:

- Child Poverty Action Group
- Citizens Advice
- Disability Rights UK
- Mind
- National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers
- Children's Society
- Disability Benefits Consortium

On 6 September the Resolution Foundation hosted an event, "Making Universal Credit universal: Getting the next phase of Universal Credit right." This covered the managed migration plans and included presentations by Resolution Foundation staff, the Chair of SSAC, and the head of policy at Citizens Advice; followed by a Q&A session.

A video of the discussion is now available on the Resolution Foundation's website. The Resolution Foundation's new report launched at the event, The benefits of moving: Managing the transition of existing claimants to Universal Credit.

A number of organisations have argued that the DWP should not proceed with managed migration until problems with the Universal Credit system identified by the National Audit Office, the Work and Pensions Committee, voluntary organisations and others have been addressed. The Child Poverty Action Group, for example, believes that managed should only start when the NAO, the Work and Pensions Committee and the Social Security Advisory Committee are satisfied that DWP has completed the following:

> a. A formal process to assess the readiness of automation and digital systems to accept increased claim volumes, as recommended by the NAO.
>
> b. Significant progress in the automation of key processes which are currently done manually leading to delays and errors in claims, including: improved automation of verification of identity; automated transfer of WCA assessment outcomes from ESA to UC; automated application of exemptions from non-dependant deductions for households where either the claimants or non-dependants are in receipt of DLA or PIP.
>
> c. A significant reduction in the proportion of current claimants experiencing financial hardship.
>
> d. A full analysis of the reasons why one in five UC claims fail due to 'non-compliance with the process' and, should natural migration continue, a significant reduction in the proportion of claims which fail.
>
> e. A fundamental review carried out in partnership with SSAC and representatives of frontline organisations of key problem areas already identified as causing hardship or putting vulnerable claimants at risk, including: problems with monthly assessment of pay and circumstances; single payments to a single household member; deductions (including advance repayments) and sanctions; administrative errors; communication difficulties.
>
> f. Completion of the promised changes to UC in relation to pay cycles, debt repayments and support for self-employed claimants.

> g. Improvements in the quality and tailoring of claimant commitments as reported through the DWP's claimant survey.
>
> h. An assessment of the adequacy of resourcing of jobcentres, service centres, home visiting service and universal support and a published plan to meet growth in demand.
>
> i. A clear plan for supporting and safeguarding claimants who are vulnerable or who require additional support with making a claim. The reasons why claimants may struggle include, but are not limited to, homelessness, domestic violence, learning disabilities, mental health difficulties, physical disabilities or ill-health, caring commitments, terminal illness, digital exclusion, English language skills, working patterns which make contact with jobcentres difficult. This plan needs to recognise that not all claimants will have disclosed their circumstances in full to the DWP or HMRC, so the plan must be broad enough to safeguard all claimants rather than relying solely on targeting support to those already flagged as vulnerable, although this would be a useful starting point.
>
> j. A thorough review and improvement of the way decisions and information are communicated to claimants. In the interests of transparency and as an aid to budgeting and financial planning, claimants need access to a more detailed breakdown of how their UC has been calculated, for example how the housing element has been calculated and how earnings from wages have been taken into account. Information should also be easily accessible on the UC journal about deductions: how much each deduction is, what it is for (e.g. rent arrears, recovery of overpayment, recovery of an advance, utility bills), if appropriate the total amount of overpayment or debt, and how long deductions will last.[16]

CPAG also believes that natural migration to UC – as currently happens to legacy benefit claimants in Full Service areas who experience a change in circumstances – should also be suspended, with immediate effect, until these improvements are made. This, it argues, would ensure that a safer managed migration is in place and allow many more claimants to benefit from transitional protection.[17]

On 11 October the Chair of the Work and Pensions Committee, Chair of the Committee, Frank Field, wrote to the DWP and the NAO with questions on the further roll-out of Universal Credit. He explained:

> "I have today written to the NAO asking it to advise the Committee on the tests DWP must set and meet before it contemplates extending Universal Credit further.
>
> I have also requested that the Minister appear before us urgently to explain the Government's preparedness for the managed migration of claimants of existing benefits onto UC, in view of widespread concerns about the approach the Government is taking."[18]

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16 CPAG, Submission to SSAC consultation on universal credit managed migration, August 2018, para 32

17 Ibid. para 33

18 Chair writes to NAO and DWP on Universal Credit "red lines", Work and Pensions Committee press release, 11 October 2018

1.7 Further developments

In advance of the Budget, media reports have detailed a number of calls on the Government to increase funding for Universal Credit to mitigate potential negative effects on claimants, including calls from the former Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith to restore the cuts made in 2016 to "direct the money back into universal credit exactly as it was originally planned to be rolled out."[19]

On 16 October, BBC News reported that it had seen "leaked documents" revealing "plans to spend hundreds of millions of pounds to prevent claimants suffering hardship as they move onto [Universal Credit]".[20] According to the BBC, the documents show that-

> First off, plans have been drawn up to continue paying income support, employment and support allowance, and job seekers allowance for two weeks after a claim for universal credit has been made.
>
> A similar policy for housing benefit was introduced in last year's Budget, following evidence that some claimants were going into rent arrears.
>
> But the documents highlight that the design of universal credit has already ruled out some concessions.
>
> Allowing claimants to receive child tax credits for a fortnight after they apply for the new benefit - which Ms McVey had asked officials to consider - has been ruled out.
>
> It would have needed two different systems - the DWP's and HMRC's - to work together to deliver the change, potentially creating additional problems.
>
> "Not having a run-on for child tax credit will be presented as unfavourable treatment of lone parents, who many argue are the most in need of protection of the effects of the move to UC," the documents say.
>
> Secondly, there are to be changes to how deductions from a recipient's payment can be made.
>
> Claimants can ask for an advance to help them get by while waiting for their first proper universal credit payment - later the government takes deductions from their regular monthly award to pay that back.
>
> Under the revised plans, the maximum amount that can be deducted will be reduced from 40% to 30% of their total award each month.
>
> Thirdly, more help is set to be given to the self-employed, after warnings they could be left in serious financial trouble because of incorrect assumptions by the Department for Work and Pensions about their earnings.

However, according to the report the documents cast some doubt on whether these concessions can actually be achieved:

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19 "Universal credit will leave some worse off, Esther McVey admits", Times, 11 October 2018; "Universal Credit: Chancellor pressured over welfare system", BBC News, 13 October 2018

20 "Universal Credit rollout delayed again", BBC News, 16 October 2018

> An extract says: "We can currently offer no assurance that ultimately these proposals will prove to be deliverable, can survive legal challenges where they can be delivered, and do not invite new political criticism by generating new policy issues."

Alongside these measures, it appears that completion of natural migration – and therefore full introduction of Universal Credit – is likely to be pushed back further, from March 2023 to December 2023.

2. Parliamentary material

2.1 Select Committees

- Public Accounts Committee, Universal Credit inquiry, open
- Work and Pensions Committee, Universal Credit inquiry, open
- Work and Pensions Committee, Universal Credit and domestic abuse, HC 1166, 1 August 2018
- Work and Pensions Committee, Universal Credit for self-employed, HC 997, 10 May 2018
- Work and Pensions Committee, Universal Credit Project Assessment Reviews, HC 740, 8 February 2018
- Work and Pensions Committee, Universal Credit: the six week wait, HC 336, 26 October 2017

2.2 Written Parliamentary Questions

- Universal Credit: Housing

Asked by: Kane, Mike | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 5 July 2018 to Question 159621 Universal Credit: Housing, how many and what proportion of universal credit claimants with a rent liability received their first payment of housing costs within two months of their date of claim for each month since March 2018.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

For claims to UC Full Service that were due a first payment in July 2018 (the most recent month for which data is available), and that were entitled to support for housing costs, 95% of claims received support for housing within 2 months of the date of claim.

Results for March 2018 to July 2018 are shown in the table below:

Month in which first UC payment due	Proportion of claims that were entitled to support for housing costs, which receive support for housing within 2 months of the date of claim
March 2018	90%
April 2018	90%
May 2018	91%
June 2018	93%
July 2018	95%

Notes:

These results can change retrospectively as further information is received.

There are a number of reasons payments may be delayed including failure by claimants to provide information or attend initial appointments.

11 Oct 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 176321

Date tabled: 08 Oct 2018 | **Date for answer:** 11 Oct 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Oct 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Phillipson, Bridget | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the reasons for any late payments of universal credit in the last 12 months.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

We published statistics on payment timeliness for new claims on 9 July 2018, available at https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/length-of-payment-delays-for-new-claims-to-universal-credit.

Analysis of claims to Universal Credit that were due a first payment in April 2018 and received their Universal Credit entitlement late showed:

• More than a third had not completed their Claimant Commitment or verified their identity on time.

• Half had another form of verification outstanding, for example completing the Habitual Residence Test, verifying capital or submitting self-employed earnings.

• In other cases, the claim was assessed as having zero entitlement on the payment due date, however information received later meant that the calculation of entitlement was subsequently revised.

For claimants that received part payment of their Universal Credit entitlement on time, the most common reasons for full payment not being made on time were late verification of housing costs and late verification of details of children on the claim.

11 Oct 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 176264

Date tabled: 08 Oct 2018 | **Date for answer:** 11 Oct 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Oct 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Phillipson, Bridget | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the preparedness of digital systems to respond to a potential increase in the volume of universal credit claims during the process of managed migration.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Managed migration will begin in 2019, with small-scale testing to ensure that our process works well, before we increase the volume of migration in 2020. The Department is committed to ensuring that Universal Credit Full Service is rolled out safely and responsibly, which includes taking the appropriate time to test and learn to minimise risks in delivery and service. The IT system currently supports and pays over 1 million people each month, increasing in size fivefold over the course of the last year as we have expanded our services across the country.

The Universal Credit Full Service system achieved 99.997% availability for claimants in the last year, rivalling the performance of other leading digital services. We are building an agile, adaptable system, fit for the 21st century, to help people to transform their lives through work - while supporting those who cannot work and are most in need.

11 Oct 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 176263

Date tabled: 08 Oct 2018 | **Date for answer:** 11 Oct 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Oct 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Phillipson, Bridget | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to pages 8-11 of the report entitled Rough Justice, published by the Child Poverty Action Group in August 2018, what assessment she has made of the appropriateness of monthly assessments for the Work Allowance element of Universal Credit in circumstances in which a claimant receives their Universal Credit payment on the last working day of each month and receives their monthly pay from their employer twice within a single assessment period.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Universal Credit (UC) seeks to take earnings into account in a way that is fair and transparent. The amount of UC paid reflects, as closely as possible, the actual circumstances of a household each monthly assessment period, including any earnings reported by the employer during that assessment period, regardless of when they were paid or which month they relate to. Monthly reporting allows UC to be adjusted on a monthly basis, which ensures that if a claimant's income falls, that they will not have to wait several months for a rise in their UC award.

11 Oct 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 176261

Date tabled: 08 Oct 2018 | **Date for answer:** 11 Oct 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Oct 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: McCarthy, Kerry | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish an updated schedule for the next stage of the roll-out of Universal Credit.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The schedule for the migration onto Universal Credit has been published and can be found at

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-transition-to-full-service.

Rollout to all Jobcentres will be completed by December 2018.

The next stage of the rollout is managed migration. The regulations to enact managed migration will come before Parliament in the autumn and are subject to parliamentary approval. During 2019 we will test and refine our processes on a small scale to ensure they are working well before we take on larger volumes from 2020 onwards, and complete the process in 2023.

11 Oct 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 176051

Date tabled: 08 Oct 2018 | **Date for answer:** 11 Oct 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Oct 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: McCarthy, Kerry | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that Universal Support is available to claimants in advance of the managed migration stage of the roll-out of Universal Credit.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Universal Support has been in place for a number of years. DWP has made funding available to Local Authorities (LAs) to help deliver Universal Support and the Department's current funding arrangements with LAs will continue until March 2019.

Earlier this month, we announced a new partnership with Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland to deliver a new approach to Universal Support, initially up to March 2020. Our new partnership will ensure that all those who need to make a claim and need extra support can access it.

We are considering with stakeholders and partners what additional support might be needed to assist people through the managed migration process.

11 Oct 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 176050

Date tabled: 08 Oct 2018 | **Date for answer:** 11 Oct 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Oct 2018

- Universal Credit: Disability

Asked by: Baroness Thomas of Winchester | **Party:** Liberal Democrats

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to assess whether the first phase of the managed migration to Universal Credit is being managed effectively for disabled claimants.

Answering member: Baroness Buscombe | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

We are working closely with stakeholders and other parties to design the best possible process for the migration of our customers to Universal Credit. The draft Regulations have been out for consultation with the Social Security Advisory Committee and we look forward to their detailed advice which we will consider alongside the other stakeholder contributions we receive. The regulations will come before Parliament in the autumn, and during 2019 we will test and refine our processes to ensure they are working well before we take on larger volumes from 2020 onwards, and complete the process in 2023. The regulations also include additional transitional protection arrangements for all approximately 500,000 claimants eligible for a Severe Disability Premium.

Our focus will be on safeguarding claimants and ensuring a smooth transition with uninterrupted support. We will have a comprehensive and well-supported preparation period for claimants. This will include a variety of communication formats, including face-to-face, internet and postal notification, to ensure claimants are aware of the managed migration process. There is flexibility to extend that period if necessary for claimants; and a process to ensure that, before the existing benefits are stopped, our staff will check for evidence of complex needs or vulnerability or disability and act accordingly to support the claimant. Additionally, if a claimant misses their deadline to claim there are provisions in the draft Regulations that will allow DWP to back-date their claim.

19 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL10285

Date tabled: 11 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 25 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 19 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Baroness Thomas of Winchester | **Party:** Liberal Democrats

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that an adequate number of work coaches are in post to manage any increase in caseloads as a consequence of the managed migration to Universal Credit.

Answering member: Baroness Buscombe | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Our plans for managed migration include a range of measures to ensure work coaches are fully prepared to deal with volumes of migrating cases. Resource levels will also be reviewed as part of the planning process to ensure there are sufficient work coaches in place to handle the anticipated volumes.

During 2019 we will test and refine our approach to ensure it is working well. This will include testing work coach preparation and resourcing before we take on larger volumes from 2020 onwards, and complete the process in 2023.

19 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL10282

Date tabled: 11 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 25 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 19 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Simpson, David | **Party:** Democratic Unionist Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the planned timescale is for the transitional protection period for universal credit.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Transitional Protection will not be awarded for a fixed period, but will remain in place until the underlying Universal Credit entitlement increases, which will bring claimants' entitlement into line with that of those making new claims. Transitional Protection will end, however, if the claimant has a significant change of circumstance.

Subject to Parliament approving the necessary legislation, which we have announced will be brought forward in the autumn, we will be starting managed migration of existing benefit claimants to Universal Credit in 2019 and plan to complete this process in 2023. It is estimated this legislation will bring in £2.6 billion of transitional protection by 2023 (OBR Welfare Trends report January 2018) boosting the incomes of around 1 million Universal Credit households. The regulations also include additional transitional protection arrangements for all approximately 500,000 claimants eligible for a Severe Disability Premium.

19 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 170753

Date tabled: 05 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 10 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 19 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Lord Bassam of Brighton | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect the roll out of Universal Credit to be completed; and what steps they are taking to ensure that data collected on access to free school meals is reliable.

Answering member: Baroness Buscombe | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Universal Credit will be available for all new claims by the end of December 2018. The Managed Migration of current benefit claimants to Universal Credit will begin in 2019 and is due to be completed in 2023.

DWP works closely with the Department for Education, electronically verifying Universal Credit claimants who meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals.

18 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL9912

Date tabled: 04 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 18 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 18 Sep 2018

- Social Security Benefits

Asked by: Morris, Grahame | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department retains the capacity to revert to the legacy benefit systems.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Reverting to legacy benefits would not only create massive disruption for claimants, but would leave them trapped in a complex and confusing system of multiple and overlapping benefits. The legacy benefits system consists of 6 different benefits, each with separate rules and criteria, interacting in complicated ways, creating perverse incentives and confusion, and additional administrative costs.

Our staff have been trained in the more flexible and tailored Universal Credit system, which the projections in our published Universal Credit Full Business Case expect to put 200,000 more people into work in the UK. Our new system, will for the first time benefit people in work looking to progress, and enables us to provide extra personalised support and stronger work incentives to help people out of poverty and into work faster.

As the National Audit Office noted in their recent report, as the changes have become increasingly embedded across the department, it would be both complex and expensive to revert to legacy benefits at this stage.

18 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 172595

Date tabled: 10 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 12 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 18 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Field, Frank | **Party:** Independent (affiliation)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many working households in receipt of tax credits will receive (a) a lower award and (b) no award at all, under the capital rules for universal credit.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

As announced on 7 June 2018, for claimants with capital exceeding £16,000 who are moved onto Universal Credit by the Department, any capital which exceeds the limit will be disregarded for 12 months, which means they are entitled to Universal Credit. This protection period for claimants is contingent on parliamentary approval of the required legislation.

Our most recent estimate for the number of tax credit claimants with capital in excess of £16,000 likely to be managed migrated, across Great Britain, is around 50,000. Analysis shows that approximately 80% of these are estimated to have capital over £20,000, with approximately 50% estimated to have capital greater than £40,000.

18 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 172441

Date tabled: 10 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 12 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 18 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Morris, Grahame | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will lower the 40 per cent debt recovery level for people in receipt of universal credit that have children.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The Department recognises the importance of safeguarding the welfare of claimants who have incurred debt. However, there are no current plans to lower the maximum deduction rate.

The Department always considers individual circumstances when applying debt repayment thresholds and seeks to recover debt without creating undue hardship. If a claimant is in financial difficulty as a result of the level of deductions, where it relates to benefit debt, a Social Fund loan or rent arrears, they can request that a reduction be considered. If a claimant is having difficulty repaying a benefit overpayment, they can request a reconsideration of the amount that is being taken where it can be shown that it would have an impact on any dependent children. Any reduction will be based on the individual circumstances of the claimant rather than the amount of the overpayment, which helps to ensure that a sustainable repayment plan based on affordability is put in place.

14 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 171355

Date tabled: 06 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 10 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 14 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Morris, Grahame | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the criteria is for placing a person in the Universal Credit Limited Capability for Work category without attending a work capability assessment.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The Centre for Health and Disability Assessments (CHDA) advises DWP Decision Makers on whether a claimant has limited capability for work. CHDA can make its assessments based on scrutiny of available written information, including a questionnaire that the claimant is asked to complete, giving details of how their health condition or disability impacts on their day-to-day activities.

Claimants are only asked attend a Work Capability Assessment where CHDA finds the available written information is inconclusive and is unable to advise, based on that evidence, how the claimant's condition may impact upon their capability for work.

14 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 171353

Date tabled: 06 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 10 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 14 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit: Housing

Asked by: Simpson, David | **Party:** Democratic Unionist Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to reduce waiting times for payments of universal credit to help ensure that tenants do not fall into rent arrears.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Research carried out by the National Federation of ALMOs shows over three quarters of their tenants come onto Universal Credit with pre-existing rent arrears.

Arrears are usually temporary and the majority of claimants do succeed in paying their rent, managing their monthly payments and clearing their arrears over time. However, this year following the Autumn 2017 Budget, we have abolished waiting days and now provide 2 weeks of extra housing support to claimants moving to Universal Credit from Housing Benefit.

The assessment period and payment structure of Universal Credit is integral to the overall design, which requires an assessment period of a month to assess earnings. Support is available in the first assessment period through the system of advances. We have also made changes to improve advances, and they can now be repaid over a course of 12 months and can consist of up to 100 per cent of the indicative monthly award from day one.

Around 80 per cent of new claims are paid in full and on time. In many cases where full payment is not made on time, it is due to unresolved issues such as: claimants not accepting their Claimant Commitment or passing identity checks, or having outstanding verification issues, such as housing costs and self-employed earnings. Whilst their verification is on-going, many claimants receive a part payment for those elements of the claim that have been resolved.

14 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 170751

Date tabled: 05 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 10 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 14 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit: Self-employed

Asked by: Lloyd, Stephen | **Party:** Liberal Democrats

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she has made an estimate of the cost to the public purse of extending the start-up period for recipients of universal credit who are newly self-employed from 12 months to (a) 18 months and (b) 24 months.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The Government recognises the need for claimants who are setting up a business to be given time to establish themselves and develop their business and customer base. However, different businesses and individuals will take different periods of time to reach profitability. The intention of the start-up period is to give claimants the breathing space they need to work out how to support themselves while running their business - including identifying other sources of income or investment - while not subsidising claimants indefinitely to pursue unsustainable activities. This strikes a sensible balance between support for new business, not trapping claimants in welfare dependency, and protecting public funds.

Extending the start-up period beyond one year could diminish the incentive effect of the Minimum Income Floor (MIF), which is to encourage claimants to grow their earnings, whether through self-employment, combining that with other work, or moving to one of the over 800,000 current job vacancies. It would also add complexity, with no guarantee of better outcomes for either the claimant or the taxpayer. The government therefore has no current plans to reform the MIF or to extend the start-up period for self-employed claimants in Universal Credit.

In their January 2018 report, the Office for Budget Responsibility estimated the impact of the MIF on the public purse – their analysis is summarised in their welfare trends report http://obr.uk/wtr/welfare-trends-report-january-2018/

With regards to the estimate of the cost to the public purse of extending the start-up period for recipients of universal credit who are newly self-employed from 12 months to (a) 18 months and (b) 24 months, a formal assessment has not been made.

13 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 172583

Date tabled: 10 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 13 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 13 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Phillipson, Bridget | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of jobcentre closures on the ease with which vulnerable people can manage their Universal Credit claims.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

We are committed to retaining an extensive Jobcentre network, and continuing to support claimants across the country to make sure they can access the services they need. We continue to maintain the same level of service to claimants during any changes to the location of their Jobcentre. This includes taking into account their individual circumstances, including any health conditions, disabilities or caring responsibilities. We have robust procedures in place if visiting the Jobcentre becomes difficult, including the offer of home visits. We provide outreach services in partnership with national and local organisations to deliver Jobcentre services in a partner's premises. Local jobcentres have the flexibility to work alongside organisations to help meet the needs of their communities, helping our most vulnerable, at risk, claimants to access the support they need.

Vulnerable claimants who are affected by Jobcentre closures remain supported by their Work Coach to ensure services are bespoke to the individual. A freephone telephone helpline and Universal Support is also available for claimants to make and manage a Universal Credit claim.

12 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 169332

Date tabled: 03 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 05 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 12 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Killen, Ged | **Party:** Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the implications are for her policies of the finding in the June 2018 NAO report Rolling Out Universal Credit which questioned her expectation that most claimants would have enough money to manage over the initial waiting period.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Some claimants at the start of their Universal Credit claim an income, such as final earnings, to help them manage until their first payment. However, for Universal Credit claimants not in this position, advance payments have always been available in order to prevent financial hardship.

The Department had previously estimated 49% of Universal Credit claimants would apply for a new claims/benefit transfer advance (what the NAO report refers to as "most claimants not needing support"); however as the NAO report showed the actual figure is 60%. This clearly shows that claimants are being made aware of advances, that our advance system is being utilised and is working, and consequently that people are getting help when they need it.

Personal Budgeting Support (PBS) is also offered to Universal Credit claimants from the outset of their claim. PBS helps claimants as they transition to Universal Credit and adapt to the financial changes that Universal Credit brings. PBS can be online, telephone or face to face support. Face to face support is delivered through local authorities via Universal Support.

We constantly review the working of Universal Credit in line with our test and learn approach, and we have already implemented policy changes to address many of the concerns raised in the report. This includes the package of measures announced at the Autumn Budget 2017, such as making advances of up to 100% of the indicative award available and increasing the repayment period to 12 months, removing the 7 waiting days, providing an additional payment of 2 weeks of Housing Benefit to support claimants when they transition to Universal Credit, and changing how claimants in temporary accommodation receive support for their housing costs. People can claim advances as soon as they make their claim, so no-one needs to experience hardship when claiming Universal Credit or waiting for their first payment.

12 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 168081

Date tabled: 24 Jul 2018 | **Date for answer:** 04 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 12 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Moore, Damien | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department is taking into account the experiences of recipients of universal credit for formulating future policy.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Universal Credit has a comprehensive evaluation framework which sets out the strategy for all evaluation including analysis of the claimant experience and how evaluation is used to formulate future policy:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-evaluation-framework-2016

Since publication of the framework the Department has continued to build evidence on the experiences of claimants on Universal Credit, through a number of pieces of research and evaluation. For example, the Universal Credit Full Service Claimant Survey published in June 2018 explored areas such as claimants' experiences of registering a claim and understanding of Universal Credit, their job search activity and attitudes to work, and their experiences of budgeting and sanctioning:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-full-service-claimant-survey

Similarly, the Universal Credit Test and Learn Evaluation: Families, published in September 2017, consisted of qualitative and quantitative research into the experience of families in order to provide timely and operationally relevant evidence to support the continual improvement and further rollout of Universal Credit. And to provide early evidence on whether the policy intent is understood and is being met, and on whether labour market behaviours (and outcomes) are affected:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-test-and-learn-evaluation-families

11 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 169858

Date tabled: 03 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 05 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Eagle, Ms Angela | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to introduce (a) modifications and (b) improvements to the administration of universal credit in relation to monthly pay arrangements for claimants who are not paid on the same date in each month.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Universal Credit has been designed to take earnings into account in a way that is fair and transparent. The assessment period and payment structure of Universal Credit is crucial in creating and maintaining the strong work incentives at the heart of Universal Credit and provides the flexibility to adjust when claimants move in and out of work regularly.

DWP has produced guidance to help ensure claimants, staff and representatives are aware of the importance of reporting accurate dates and the impact on payment cycles: this is available online https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-different-earning-patterns-and-your-payments/universal-credit-different-earning-patterns-and-your-payments-payment-cycles.

Where people have potential income volatility because of their payment cycles, they can discuss the implications of this with their case managers and work coaches and can be referred to Personal Budgeting Support to help them manage their budgeting.

The Real Time Information (RTI) system is working well with over 99% of individual employment records now being reported in real time. In April 2018 over a million separate RTI notifications were used in Universal Credit awards. Of those, the DWP RTI Dispute Team received under 3000 disputed earnings referrals – a query rate of less than 0.3%. Many of these queries are resolved by an explanation of how Universal Credit works. We continue to work with employers to ensure that they use the most appropriate payment practices and comply with RTI guidelines to prevent issues from occurring.

11 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 169084

Date tabled: 03 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 05 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit: Disability

Asked by: Thewliss, Alison | **Party:** Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what reasonable adaptations are available for people with disabilities to apply for universal credit online.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

We are committed to providing personalised support for all claimants, including vulnerable groups. Where our claimants require assistance to access our services and information, we make reasonable adjustments to meet their individual needs. This includes communicating with claimants in a variety of different formats such as braille, audio, large print, through third party interpreters or by arranging for a member of staff to visit the customer in their home.

Face to face and telephony support is in place for those vulnerable claimants who cannot self-serve online; the Universal Credit telephone helpline is now a free phone number. In certain circumstances, where a claimant is unable to manage their own affairs, an appointee can act on their behalf, taking responsibility for making and maintaining any benefit claim.

Universal Support provides Universal Credit claimants with additional help to use a computer to make or maintain their claim (Assisted Digital Support), help in managing their monthly Universal Credit payment and possible advice on their finances (Personal Budgeting Support).

11 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 169461

Date tabled: 03 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 05 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Field, Frank | **Party:** Independent (affiliation)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to prevent excessive deductions being taken from universal credit payments to repay debts.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The Government recognises the importance of safeguarding the welfare of claimants who have incurred debt. Universal Credit already has procedures and regulations in place to protect claimants from excessive deductions. The maximum rate of deductions will not normally exceed an amount equal to 40% of the Universal Credit standard allowance. However, where it is in the best interest of vulnerable claimants, to protect them from being made homeless or having their fuel disconnected, deductions in excess of the 40% standard allowance may be applied. This is only for 'last resort' third party deductions for arrears of service charges, rent, gas and electricity. When we take deductions for gas and electricity arrears, we will also take them for the on-going monthly cost of these utilities.

Claimants' circumstances are always taken into account when applying debt repayment thresholds and to avoid undue hardship. If a claimant is in financial difficulty as a result of the level of deductions, where it relates to benefit debt, a social fund loan or rent arrears, they can request that a reduction be considered. Similarly, if a claimant is having difficulty repaying a benefit overpayment, they can request a reconsideration of the amount that is being taken. Any reduction will be based on the individual circumstances of the claimant rather than the amount of the overpayment, which helps to ensure that a sustainable repayment plan based on affordability is put in place.

11 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 169060

Date tabled: 03 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 05 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Field, Frank | **Party:** Independent (affiliation)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what financial support her Department provides to claimants of universal credit for (a) travelling to job interviews; (b) clothing for job interviews; (c) travelling to a new job in the first few weeks of employment; (d) clothing and lunch in the first few weeks of employment and (e) other costs incurred while seeking work.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The Flexible Support Fund (FSF) is available to provide financial assistance to claimants to support them as they move into work. It is a discretionary fund and awards are non-repayable.

A FSF award is offered as a means of removing barriers both in terms of finding and retaining employment as well as customer up-skilling. It can cover a variety of potential barriers such as; travel, childcare, clothing and training. The funding, therefore, is tailored to the individuals needs, increasing their chances in gaining a positive outcome.

In addition to this, budgeting advances are available to claimants and provide valuable access to interest free payments for one-off expenses that may arise.

11 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 169053

Date tabled: 03 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 05 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Field, Frank | **Party:** Independent (affiliation)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what her Department's policy is on the roll-out of the Landlord Portal for universal credit; and if she will make a statement.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Following the successful pilot of the Landlord Portal Service, DWP is enrolling more landlords in stages, in tandem with the expansion of Universal Credit Full Service. Priority has been placed on enrolling the largest landlords that are eligible where possible in order to maximise the number of UC claimants that can be handled via the portal.

When we look at enrolling landlords, we will consider things such as whether Universal Credit has rolled out in their area, the size of the landlord, and the properties that they own. We will then have discussions with landlords that are suitable for enrolling onto the portal. As of last month more than 70% of rent verifications in the social rented housing sector were made via the landlord portal.

Additionally, whilst there is no formal process for landlords to bid for the portal, interested landlords can liaise with their local Universal Credit Partnership Team regarding potential enrolment.

The list of landlords enrolled on the Landlord Portal is available in the House of Commons library at the following link:

http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-0635/Universal_Credit_Landlord_Portal_-_Updated.pdf

11 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 169052

Date tabled: 03 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 05 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Field, Frank | **Party:** Independent (affiliation)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to assist claimants of universal credit claimants submit evidence of their (a) childcare and (b) housing costs.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Since February 2018, Universal Credit claimants have been able to upload digital copies of their childcare cost receipts or invoices through their online Universal Credit account. We also offer extra support to enable parents to pay upfront childcare costs or deposits; for example, claimants may be eligible to receive an advance of their future Universal Credit entitlement, which is interest free.

In 2017 we started rolling out a 'landlord portal' to social landlords to make it easier and quicker to verify people's housing costs. We have also listened to feedback and built processes into the system to improve verification for tenants in the private rented sector.

11 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 169051

Date tabled: 03 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 05 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Field, Frank | **Party:** Independent (affiliation)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, from what point her Department measures the waiting time for first payment of a claim for universal credit.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The Department measures the waiting time for a first payment of a Universal Credit claim from the payment due date of the first assessment period. The payment due date is one week after the assessment period end date.

11 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 169049

Date tabled: 03 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 05 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Field, Frank | **Party:** Independent (affiliation)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing an automatic interim payment for claimants that do not receive universal credit payments on time.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The Department has no plans to implement a system of interim payments. We have a well-established system of advance payments which are available to all Universal Credit claimants who need them as part of a package of support to manage their transition to Universal Credit.

It is also important to consider that around 80 per cent of new claims are paid in full and on time. In many cases where full payment is not made on time, it is due to unresolved issues such as: claimants not accepting their Claimant Commitment or passing identity checks, or having outstanding verification issues, such as housing costs and self-employed earnings.

We have taken steps to improve verification processes. For example, we have listened to feedback and built processes into the system to make it easier and quicker for people to verify their housing costs, for example through the landlord portal.

Whilst their verification is on-going, many claimants receive a part payment for those elements of the claim that have been resolved. We published an ad hoc statistical release on 9 July which showed, for new claims due a payment in February 2018, 95% were paid in full within five weeks of the payment due date: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/length-of-payment-delays-for-new-claims-to-universal-credit.

11 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 169048

Date tabled: 03 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 05 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Rowley, Danielle | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will list all the changes made to universal credit since it was introduced.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Universal Credit operates a 'test and learn' strategy aimed at ensuring continuous improvement, whilst the Universal Credit Full Service is updated every two weeks to improve and enhance its functionality.

In the last year, changes like those announced in the Autumn Budget have: abolished waiting days; introduced 100% advances and extended the repayment period from 6 months to 12 months; and introduced Freephone telephone numbers.

We have listened to feedback from claimants and stakeholders, and will continue to make changes to ensure the Full Service can meet their needs. The Universal Credit Managed Migration and Transitional Protection Regulations we will be placing before Parliament this Autumn propose further protections for claimants who are moving, or have moved onto Universal Credit.

11 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 169742

Date tabled: 03 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 05 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 11 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Timms, Stephen | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to identify (a) disabled people and (b) other vulnerable groups that will require additional support to make a new claim for universal credit during the managed migration.

Answering member: Alok Sharma **|** **Party:** Conservative Party **|** **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

We are working closely with stakeholders to discuss the best solution to protect all claimants through the managed migration process. The draft Regulations have been out for consultation with the Social Security Advisory Committee and we look forward to their detailed advice which we will consider alongside all the other stakeholder contributions we receive. The regulations will come before Parliament in the autumn, and during 2019 we will test and refine our processes on a small scale to ensure they are working well before we take on larger volumes from 2020 onwards, and complete the process in 2023.

Our plans already include a process to ensure that, before the existing benefits are stopped, agents will check for evidence of complex needs or vulnerability or disability to safeguard these claimants.

10 Sep 2018 **|** Written questions **|** Answered **|** House of Commons **|** 170661

Date tabled: 05 Sep 2018 **|** **Date for answer:** 10 Sep 2018 **|** **Date answered:** 10 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Timms, Stephen **|** **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Explanatory Memorandum to the draft Universal Credit (Transitional Protection) (Managed Migration) Amendment Regulations 2018, what methodology her Department used to estimate the number of claimants that will move from legacy benefits to universal credit through managed migration.

Answering member: Alok Sharma **|** **Party:** Conservative Party **|** **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

To estimate the number of claimants that will move from legacy benefits to Universal Credit through managed migration, the Department uses a complex dynamic micro-simulation model, called INFORM.

This is based on taking a sample of the current benefit caseload, and estimating the likelihood of various changes of circumstances occurring each month, to project future volumes of Universal Credit claims and natural migrations.

The managed migration volumes are based on the numbers of people who we expect will not have had a change of circumstance, and therefore not have left their current benefit or naturally migrated to Universal Credit.

10 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 170659

Date tabled: 05 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 10 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 10 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Abrahams, Debbie | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the draft Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) (Managed Migration) Regulations 2018, which criteria her Department used to calculate the proposed flat rate of £80 per month to cover the shortfall to claimants' income moving from Employment Support Allowance to universal credit.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

As outlined in the Explanatory Memorandum submitted to Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC), the £80 per month flat rate payment is an additional transitional payment to support people who have a disability and who live alone. In setting the rate for this additional payment, we have had regard to the rates of Severe Disability Premium, and also have taken into account whether the claimant receives additional support through being in the Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity Group (LCWRA) as part of their Universal Credit award.

This is due to the policy design of Universal Credit, and the LCWRA payment, which is set at a much higher rate than its Employment and Support Allowance equivalent to ensure financial support, is available for those who are severely disabled.

Full details on the method of calculation can be found in the documents sent to the SSAC at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/moving-claimants-to-universal-credit-from-other-working-age-benefits

We are committed to ensuring severely disabled claimants have transitional protection during their migration from the legacy system. These changes and the protection proposed in the Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) (Managed Migration) Amendment Regulations 2018, will be subject to Parliamentary approval.

10 Sep 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 170315

Date tabled: 04 Sep 2018 | **Date for answer:** 10 Sep 2018 | **Date answered:** 10 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Lord Hylton | **Party:** Crossbench

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to introduce any improvement to Universal Credit in order to protect vulnerable groups, including people with mental health problems, and families with children under school age.

Answering member: Baroness Buscombe | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

We are fully committed to providing personalised support for all claimants, including vulnerable groups. Each individual's circumstances are different and therefore their barriers to work and the support required must be tailored to their needs.

Work coaches are supported in building a strong relationship with their claimants through a comprehensive training and accreditation programme which includes support to identify and help claimants with complex needs. All work coaches delivering Universal Credit receive training on supporting claimants with health conditions. We are developing additional training in mental health that will be available to work coaches to build their expertise and provide the most effective support. The Department has also increased the numbers of Disability Employment Advisers who provide additional support to the work coaches.

On 7 June we announced additional transitional protection for those moving onto Universal Credit via managed migration to protect people who receive a Severe Disability Premium. We also announced changes to make sure the protection we offer people that we move on to Universal Credit is not affected by them taking on a job, earning more or claiming childcare.

The Government is also committed to providing additional support for working families, so we have increased childcare funding from 70 per cent of eligible costs in Tax Credits to 85 per cent in Universal Credit.

25 Jul 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL9431

Date tabled: 11 Jul 2018 | **Date for answer:** 25 Jul 2018 | **Date answered:** 25 Jul 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Slaughter, Andy | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the draft Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) (Managed Migration) Amendment Regulations 2018, for what reasons universal credit claimants with limited capability for work and work related activity will receive a transitional payment of £80 per month; and what assessment he has made of the value of this payment in comparison to changes in those claimants' income as a result of transitioning to universal credit.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The Department is unable to provide precise detail or timetables related to the Severe Disability Premium proposals until the Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) (Managed Migration) Amendment Regulations 2018 is debated and agreed by Parliament.

Further detail on the proposed rates can be found in the explanatory memorandum and letter sent to the Social Security Advisory Committee at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/moving-claimants-to-universal-credit-from-other-working-age-benefits

23 Jul 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 165511

Date tabled: 18 Jul 2018 | **Date for answer:** 23 Jul 2018 | **Date answered:** 23 Jul 2018

- Universal Credit: Disability

Asked by: Lord Beecham | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, following the High Court ruling that Universal Credit unlawfully discriminates against claimants transferring from legacy benefits resulting in the loss of Disability and Severe Disability Premium, they intend to change that guidance so that transfer to Universal Credit will not be effected until transitional protection is given.

Answering member: Baroness Buscombe | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The court found in the Department’s favour on three of the four points raised by the claimant. We will be applying to appeal on the one point that the court found against the Department.

On 7th June, prior to the judgment, we announced changes that would help people who receive the Severe Disability Premium. These changes will form part of the Universal Credit Managed Migration and Transitional Protection Regulations which we intend to bring forward in the Autumn. The intention is that once legislation has passed, people on legacy benefits who get the Severe Disability Premium will stay on their legacy benefits until they can be managed migrated to Universal Credit, at which point transitional protection will be in pace. We will also consider retrospective protection for people previously in receipt of Severe Disability Premium who have already moved onto UC.

16 Jul 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL9125

Date tabled: 02 Jul 2018 | **Date for answer:** 16 Jul 2018 | **Date answered:** 16 Jul 2018

- Low Pay: Means-tested Benefits

Asked by: Field, Frank | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has assessed the potential merits of extending in-work progression services to all low-paid workers in receipt of means-tested benefits and not just universal credit.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Universal Credit is replacing six key in-work and out-of-work benefits. Universal Credit supports and encourages claimants who are in low-paid work, or in low-income households, to earn more. It does this by removing the financial cliff edges of the legacy benefit system and replacing them with a single, smooth taper rate of 63%. This means that claimants will always be £37 better off for every £100 net increase in their earnings. Claimants on existing legacy benefits whose circumstances have not changed will begin to migrate over to Universal Credit from 2019 as part of DWP's Managed Migration process and will be subject to the new entitlement conditions.

We are developing the evidence base to help us understand how best to support people in work to reach their potential, to progress, and to be more productive. We recently completed the delivery of a large-scale Randomised Control Trial, for which the final evaluation will be published in the autumn and will inform any further policy development.

29 May 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 145556

Date tabled: 18 May 2018 | **Date for answer:** 22 May 2018 | **Date answered:** 29 May 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Field, Frank | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what transitional protections are in place to ensure that claimants of employment and support allowance retain their severe disability premium when they move on to universal credit.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

We will start to move legacy benefit claimants to Universal Credit as part of our Managed Migration process from 2019. At this point, claimants will receive transitional protection if their overall Universal Credit entitlement would be less than under the old system, provided that their circumstances remain the same.

Currently, claimants only move from existing benefits to Universal Credit through natural migration when they experience a change in their circumstances that triggers a new claim to benefit. Their entitlement is then calculated on the rules of their new benefit. This is a long-established principle which we maintain for Universal Credit. In the case of claimants currently in receipt of the Severe Disability Premium, we will continue to reflect on the matter.

23 May 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 144203

Date tabled: 15 May 2018 | **Date for answer:** 17 May 2018 | **Date answered:** 23 May 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Timms, Stephen | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what transitional protection is provided to claimants with disabilities who lose their entitlement to disability premiums when they transfer to universal credit.

Answering member: Sarah Newton | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Transitional protection will be there for those with existing premiums who are moved over to Universal Credit as part of the managed migration process, whose overall Universal Credit entitlement would be less than under the old system, provided that their circumstances remain the same. This means at the time they move, their financial situation remains steady. We will be starting managed migration of existing benefit claimants to Universal Credit from 2019 and this will be completed by 2022.

08 May 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 139927

Date tabled: 01 May 2018 | **Date for answer:** 08 May 2018 | **Date answered:** 08 May 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: Field, Frank | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the difference in weekly benefit income is for a claimant who is migrated to universal credit from an employment and support allowance claim which entitles them to Severe Disability Premium.

Answering member: Alok Sharma | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

For legacy benefit claimants in receipt of Severe Disability Premium, any difference in entitlement under Universal Credit depends on the claimant's individual circumstances.

Claimants currently only move from existing benefits to Universal Credit through natural migration when they experience a significant change in their circumstances that triggers a new claim to benefit. Their entitlement is then calculated on the rules of their new benefit.

When we start to move legacy claimants to Universal Credit from 2019 as part of the managed migration process, they will receive transitional protection if their overall Universal Credit entitlement would be less than under the old system, provided that their circumstances remain the same.

28 Mar 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 134085

Date tabled: 23 Mar 2018 | **Date for answer:** 28 Mar 2018 | **Date answered:** 28 Mar 2018

- Universal Credit: ICT

Asked by: Field, Frank **|** **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of ensuring that the Universal Credit IT system automatically links to a prior employment and support allowance claim and awards any components contained in that claim.

Answering member: Alok Sharma **|** **Party:** Conservative Party **|** **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

We have made changes to smooth the transition onto Universal Credit for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants. We have streamlined the process, with more information from ESA assessments now being passed on to Universal Credit. Universal Credit is replacing ESA and will be available for new claims in every Jobcentre by December 2018. We will begin the managed migration of existing ESA claims to Universal Credit in July 2019. Integrating with this system would mean that other important Universal Credit features would need to be delayed in order to implement this.

27 Mar 2018 **|** Written questions **|** Answered **|** House of Commons **|** 133233

Date tabled: 19 Mar 2018 **|** **Date for answer:** 21 Mar 2018 **|** **Date answered:** 27 Mar 2018

- Universal Credit

Asked by: George, Ruth **|** **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people who have lost access to transitional protections through natural migration to universal credit were in receipt of (a) enhanced disability premium, (b) severe disability premium or (c) enhanced and severe disability premiums at the time of their migration.

Answering member: Alok Sharma **|** **Party:** Conservative Party **|** **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

We have always said that claimants who move over to Universal Credit as part of the managed migration process will not see a cash loss as a result of the change. This is provided that their circumstances remain the same. We will be starting managed migration of existing benefit claimants to Universal Credit from July 2019 and this will be completed by March 2022.

Claimants who naturally move to Universal Credit will do so because they have had a change of circumstances. In such cases claimants will continue to have their new welfare support entitlement calculated on the rules of their new benefit.

DWP continues to evaluate this policy as it is delivered.

12 Mar 2018 **|** Written questions **|** Answered **|** House of Commons **|** 130771

Date tabled: 02 Mar 2018 **|** **Date for answer:** 06 Mar 2018 **|** **Date answered:** 12 Mar 2018

2.3 Oral Parliamentary Questions

Universal Credit Roll-out

Asked by: Angela Crawley (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP) | **Party:** Scottish National Party

The Minister mentioned single parents. As she will be aware, 91% of lone parents are women. Does she agree that the new conditionality requirements for lone parents under universal credit will have a hugely disproportionate impact on women? Will she make representations to the Department for Work and Pensions about that?

Answered by: Sarah Newton | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Women and Equalities

I thank the hon. Lady for her question, but I simply do not agree with her. As I said, the relationship that a claimant builds up with their work coach is a personal one, and the support is tailored to that individual. We ensure within universal credit that women or, indeed, men who are bringing up children are able to balance their desire to work with their caring responsibilities. It is not until the youngest child in a family starts school that the job coach begins a conversation about the journey to work. It is not until the youngest child in a family is three that those conversations about getting into work begin to happen.

13 Sep 2018 | Oral questions - Supplementary | Answered | House of Commons | House of Commons chamber | 646 c856

Date answered: 13 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit Roll-out

Asked by: Gillian Keegan (Chichester) (Con) | **Party:** Conservative Party

Work coaches are critical to the success of the roll-out of universal credit, and the team in Chichester are brilliant, but can my hon. Friend outline what training is available specifically to help work coaches to support women and to spot the underlying issues that victims of domestic violence may be suffering from?

Answered by: Sarah Newton | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Women and Equalities

I thank my hon. Friend for her question and for visiting her jobcentre. I strongly urge all those who are calling for the halting of the roll-out of universal credit to go to their jobcentre and meet the work coaches, to see the excellent work they are doing and the personalised support they are able to offer all their customers. We have worked closely with Women's Aid and ManKind to ensure that it is a mandatory part of every work coach's training to identify potential victims and to help them get the support they need.

13 Sep 2018 | Oral questions - Supplementary | Answered | House of Commons | House of Commons chamber | 646 c856

Date answered: 13 Sep 2018

- Universal Credit: Rollout

Asked by: Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope (LD) | **Party:** Liberal Democrats

My Lords, does the Minister agree that the NAO universal credit report will serve to heighten the fears of those means-tested legacy claimants who will be automatically transferred within a 12-month period on to universal credit? In the autumn, when the universal credit managed migration regulations are published, will she personally ensure that the transitional protection arrangements within those regulations are adequate for the purpose, will be automatically available to claimants and will serve in future to reduce further financial distress?

Answered by: Baroness Stedman-Scott | **Party:** Conservative Party

My Lords, we do not want people to be distressed in any way.

Answered by: Baroness Stedman-Scott | **Party:** Conservative Party

I know noble Lords do not like it but I can say to them that out there is a band of work coaches who are doing an amazing job. One of their jobs is to take people on a journey, help them, guide them and mitigate stress, and I have every confidence that they will be doing that. On the noble Lord's point about transitional protection, I will talk to officials to make sure that when I tell him yes, I am doing it with confidence.

20 Jun 2018 | Oral questions - Supplementary | Answered | House of Lords | House of Lords chamber | 791 c2023

Date answered: 20 Jun 2018

2.4 Government Statements

- Universal Credit

Today we publish a summary of the Universal Credit Full Business Case, signed off by HM Treasury, which shows that when fully rolled out, Universal Credit is forecast to incentivise 200,000 more people to take employment than would have under the previous system and deliver £8bn of benefits to the UK economy per year.

Universal Credit is the biggest change of the welfare system since it was created. It is a modern, flexible, personalised benefit reflecting the rapidly changing world of work.

It has brought together the six main benefits, including tax credits, providing support in and out of work and assisting career progression. The Government has used a 'test and learn' approach as it rolls out across the country.

The Government has already made a commitment that anyone who is moved to Universal Credit without a change of circumstance will not lose out in cash terms. Transitional protection will be provided to eligible claimants to safeguard their existing benefit entitlement until their circumstances change.

Today I am announcing four additions to these rules to ensure that Universal Credit supports people into work, protects vulnerable claimants and is targeted at those who need it.

In order to support the transition for those individuals who live alone with substantial care needs and receive the Severe Disability Premium, we are changing the system so that these claimants will not be moved to Universal Credit until they qualify for transitional protection. In addition, we will provide both an on-going payment to claimants who have already lost this Premium as a consequence of moving to Universal Credit and an additional payment to cover the period since they moved.

Second, we will increase the incentives for parents to take short-term or temporary work and increase their earnings by ensuring that the award of, or increase in, support for childcare costs will not erode transitional protection.

Third, we propose to re-award claimants' transitional protection that has ceased owing to short-term increases in earnings within an assessment period, if they make a new claim to UC within three months of when they received the additional payment.

Finally, individuals with capital in excess of £16,000 are not eligible for Universal Credit. However, for Tax Credit claimants in this situation, we will now disregard any capital in excess of £16,000 for 12 months from the point at which they are moved to Universal Credit. Normal benefit rules apply after this time in order to strike the right balance between keeping incentives for saving and asking people to support themselves.

The process of migrating claimants on legacy benefits will begin in July 2019 as previously announced. In order to make the changes to the system it will be necessary to extend the completion of UC to March 2023. As throughout UC roll out, we will keep the exact timetable under review to do what is sensible from a delivery and fiscal perspective.

These changes will form part of the Universal Credit Managed Migration and Transitional Protection Regulations which we intend to bring forward in the Autumn.

This Government is committed to delivering a welfare system that supports claimants and is fair to taxpayers.

07 Jun 2018 | Written statements | House of Commons | HCWS745

Member: Esther McVey

Department: Department for Work and Pensions

- Welfare Reform

This Government is committed to providing young people with the support they need to get started with their working lives. We do this through providing financial support when it is needed, and support to either 'earn or learn' – delivered through the simplified Universal Credit (UC) benefits system. In line with this aim, I am today announcing that the Government will amend regulations so that all 18-21 year olds will be entitled to claim support for housing costs in UC.

Currently, 18-21 year olds who make a new claim to UC in UC Full Service areas need to meet certain requirements in order to receive housing support. The change I am announcing today means that young people on benefits will be assured that if they secure a tenancy, they will have support towards their housing costs in the normal way.

Young people in return will have a Youth Obligation – an intensive package of labour market support for 18-21 year-olds looking to get into work. We are committed to providing targeted support for young people so that everyone, no matter what their start in life, is given the very best chance of getting into work.

This decision ensures that there are no unintended barriers to young people accessing housing on the basis of their age alone and getting into work, and is in line with the Government's launch of the Homelessness Reduction Act and our commitment to eradicating rough sleeping by 2027.

29 Mar 2018 | Written statements | House of Commons | HCWS611

Member: Esther McVey

Department: Department for Work and Pensions

- Rollout of Universal Credit

The Implementation of Universal Credit continues to make good progress. The full service is now operating in 250 jobcentres and we expect to complete national coverage and be in all jobcentres as planned by December 2018.

Within this timetable, I am announcing today some modifications to reflect local considerations and discussions.

We continue to make progress in delivering a Welsh language capability within the full service. Whilst it has always been possible to speak to DWP in Welsh, either in jobcentres or on the telephone, and to have dialogue in Welsh on online journals, we want to be able to offer full Welsh functionality as soon as we can for those areas of Wales with the highest density of Welsh speakers. In order to increase the chances that functionality will be in place in time with local rollout, we are moving the 13 jobcentres with the highest density of Welsh speakers to December 2018.

In addition, Barrow Council have asked if their rollout date could be changed to December to reflect the fact that they are bringing their Housing Benefit administration back in-house and they would like to sequence that change before Universal Credit rolls out. This is sensible planning and we have agreed to meet that request.

Finally, in order to balance resources more effectively within DWP we are making several other modifications to the rollout timetable, as set out in the table I have attached to this statement.

We will modify the master schedule on gov.uk to reflect these changes. District Managers are contacting local stakeholders about these changes and writing to their local MPs with details.

22 Mar 2018 | Written statements | House of Commons | HCWS577

Member: Alok Sharma

Department: Department for Work and Pensions

- Universal Credit Update

On 8 February 2018, the Work and Pensions Select Committee, published a report into the Universal Credit Project Assessment Reviews. From this publication, the House will be aware that my Department has been involved in a request under the Freedom of Information Act, for the release of the Project Assessment Reviews conducted between March 2012 and October 2015 on the Universal Credit Programme.

Project Assessment Reviews are an assurance tool used to assess major projects and programmes. The reviews are conducted by project professionals and subject matter experts drawn from across the public and private sector. The effectiveness of the reviews relies on confidentiality: information within the reports is non-attributable to encourage candour and a frank exchange of views. The reports act as advice to the Senior Responsible Owner on the delivery aspects of their programme – they are not advice to Ministers. They are intended to give the Senior Responsible Owner a project delivery perspective on their programme, independent of the programme management function. They represent perspectives for the Senior Responsible Owner to consider and not absolute truths. The Senior Responsible Owner, not the review team, is accountable to Parliament.

It should be noted that the reviews I will place in the Library are historic, conducted between March 2012 and October 2015. Come 2018, the Universal Credit Programme is in a very different place since those reports were written. Universal Credit is in every Jobcentre and we are rolling it out safely and securely to all categories of claimant. We are focussing on the continued safe delivery of Universal Credit, so people continue to be helped to improve their lives.

In recognition of the confidential nature of these reports, the Work and Pensions Select Committee viewed the full set of Project Assessment Reviews up to 2017 and published a report on 8 February 2018. The Work and Pensions Select Committee agrees that the historic issues have now been addressed and 'substantial achievements' have been delivered since 2013. In the Committee's report, they commended the Department for running the Universal Credit programme 'more professionally and efficiently with a collective sense of purpose'.

The Universal Credit Programme does not lack scrutiny as the ongoing Work and Pension's Select Committee inquiries demonstrate. Given the Select Committee has seen the reports subject to the Freedom of Information challenge, and commented upon them publically I can see no point in continuing to argue that case. Accordingly my officials will be writing to the Information Commissioner and to the First Tier Tribunal to advise them of my decision to release copies of the requested Project Assessment Review reports to the requestor.

With regard to future reports, I emphasise that the steps I have decided to take today, to disclose the material subject to proceedings, are exceptional. I remain of the view, that it is critical to the effectiveness of the Infrastructure & Projects Authority assurance framework for participants to be confident that their comments will be non-attributable and that review reports will be treated as confidential.

I accept that this House and the wider public has significant interest in government major projects. I support the principle of transparency and the Universal Credit Programme regularly publishes independent research and analysis into the effectiveness of Universal Credit. I believe that there are better ways of addressing this concern, rather than undermining the mechanism that provides Senior Responsible Owners with an independent external perspective on the programmes they are responsible to Parliament for.

Universal Credit is a flexible benefit, which has simplified the welfare system and ensures that people are always better off in work. We know that the legacy system trapped people in benefit dependency. We needed a new approach to reflect the 21st Century work environment. The evidence shows Universal Credit is working, with people getting into work faster and staying in work longer than under the old system.

I am sure this House joins me in recognising the great progress we have made since 2010, with 3 million more people in work and unemployment at a near record low. Universal Credit builds on this success, delivering welfare reform that works for everyone.

08 Mar 2018 | Written statements | House of Commons | HCWS524

Member: Esther McVey

Department: Department for Work and Pensions

2.5 Early Day Motions

- RESTORATION OF WORK ALLOWANCE ELEMENT OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT

That this House notes that one of the founding principles of universal credit was to make work pay; and therefore calls on the Government to return to this original principle by restoring the work allowance element to its original level, before funding for it was cut by around £3 billion a year in the 2015 Summer Budget.

06 Sep 2018 | Early day motions | Open | House of Commons | 1588 (session 2017-19)

Primary sponsor: Lloyd, Stephen | **Party:** Liberal Democrats

Other sponsors: Cunningham, Jim · Campbell, Ronnie · Hobhouse, Wera · Moran, Layla · Russell-Moyle, Lloyd

Number of signatures: 29

Topic: Benefits policy; Benefits administration

- UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND BANKING ID

That this House views with concern the problems currently experienced by many vulnerable universal credit (UC) applicants, particularly those in hostel accommodation and living with mental health problems, providing acceptable ID to banks for the purposes of establishing a bank account which is a condition of receipt of UC; notes that the Statement available on the universal credit website is proving not to be acceptable for these purposes to banks in a way that historical legacy proof of benefit letters were accepted; further notes that the Department of Work and Pensions is aware of these problems but has yet to schedule any remedy; and welcomes the existence of the Payment Exception Service to enable clients to receive cash vouchers with UC payments, but believes that this adds further unnecessary pressure and stress to those in situations who need it least.

10 Jul 2018 | Early day motions | Open | House of Commons | 1505 (session 2017-19)

Primary sponsor: Godsiff, Roger | **Party:** Labour Party

Other sponsors: Hopkins, Kelvin · Edwards, Jonathan · Stephens, Christopher · Glindon, Mary · Martin, Sandy

Number of signatures: 24

- UNIVERSAL CREDIT SPLIT PAYMENTS

That this House notes that the charities Women's Aid, Child Poverty Action Group, Surviving Economic Abuse and the Women's Budget Group have expressed concern regarding paying the combined universal credit payment of a couple into a single bank account; believes that paying recipient couples one joint payment, rather than individually, puts domestic abuse victims at increased risk of financial coercion and may prevent their leaving an abusive relationship; further notes that the current guidance stipulates that split payments are only available in very exceptional circumstances despite domestic abuse being a common occurrence, with 100 calls to police relating to domestic abuse every hour, and calls for universal credit payments to be split between adults in households by default as research by Women's Aid demonstrates that almost 85 per cent of women in abusive relationships feel that requesting a split payment would trigger even greater abuse; has considered evidence that payments for children that are paid to the main carer have a greater likelihood of being spent on the children; and calls on the Government to make split payments the default.

07 Mar 2018 | Early day motions | Open | House of Commons | 1033 (session 2017-19)

Primary sponsor: Whitford, Philippa | **Party:** Scottish National Party

Other sponsors: Gray, Neil · Phillips, Jess · Thewliss, Alison · Blackford, Ian · Brock, Deidre

Number of signatures: 67

2.6 Parliamentary Debates

- Universal Credit (Liverpool) (HC Deb 11 September 2018 cc250-260WH)
- The Secretary of State's Handling of Universal Credit (HC Deb 11 July 2018 cc985-1031)
- Universal Credit (HC Deb 5 July 2018 cc44-503)

- Universal Credit and Terminal Illness (HC Deb 9 May 2018 cc856-868)
- Universal Credit Project Assessment Reviews (HC Deb 5 December 2017 cc930-1003)
- Universal Credit Sanctions (HC Deb 4 December 2017 cc859-868)
- Universal Credit: Terminally Ill People (HC Deb 29 November 2017 cc437-444)
- Universal Credit Roll-out (HC Deb 18 October 2017 cc859-959)

3. Press material

Universal credit rollout delayed yet again

BBC News, 16 October 2016

Universal Credit Is 'Forcing Women Into Prostitution', Says Frank Field

Huffington Post UK, 15 October 2018

Labour confusion on universal credit

The Times, 15 October 2018

Switching millions to universal credit poses real threat of 'poll tax' moment

The Times, 15 October 2018 [available via parliamentary subscription]

Comment article by Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

Nearly two-thirds of PRS tenants claiming Universal Credit in arrears

Inside Housing, 15 October 2018

Millions to lose £52 a week with universal credit, report shows

The Observer, 14 October 2018

A press report of research conducted by the consultancy, Policy in Practice

Universal credit: Theresa May 'should back £2bn extra funding for welfare', says Iain Duncan Smith

Sky News, 14 October 2018

Universal Credit: Chancellor pressured over welfare system

BBC News, 13 October 2018

Universal Credit: Esther McVey buys silence with gag clause

The Times, 12 October 2018

Two Thirds Of Landlords With Tenants On Universal Credit Are Owed Rent Arrears, New Study Shows

The Huffington Post UK, 12 October 2018

This is a press report of a research study published by the Residential Landlords Association on 12 October 2018

Arrears for Welsh housing association tenants on Universal Credit up 150%

Inside Housing, 11 October 2018 [subscription required]

MPs look to grill minister over Universal Credit as criticism mounts

Inside Housing, 11 October 2018 [subscription required]

Esther McVey: Some to be poorer under universal credit

BBC News, 11 October 2018

Plans to cut income tax will be shelved to put more money into Universal Credit

The Telegraph, 11 October 2018 [subscription required; article available via Nexis News]

John Major: Universal credit could repeat poll tax problems

BBC News, 11 October 2018

Universal credit: May faces revolt after McVey admits some will be worse off

The Guardian, 11 October 2018

Universal credit: Brown says benefit rollout could lead to 'poll-tax-style chaos'

BBC News, 10 October 2018

Report on comments made by former Prime Minister, Gordon Brown.

Families lose £200 a month in universal credit switch

The Times, 6 October 2018

Food bank use will soar after universal credit rollout, warns charity

The Guardian, 5 October 2018

Report of a study published by the Trussell Trust

Universal credit has left children so undernourished schools are offering free breakfasts

The Independent, 1 October 2018

Citizens Advice to provide support to Universal Credit claimants

Department for Work and Pensions press release, 1 October 2018

Shadow welfare secretary proposes a benefits overhaul

Public Finance, 25 September 2018

Labour 'likely to scrap universal credit system'

The Guardian, 25 September 2018

Welfare spending for UK's poorest shrinks by £37bn

The Guardian, 23 September 2018

Self-employed 'up to £3,000 worse off each year' under universal credit

The Independent, 17 September 2018

Government must halt Universal Credit rollout, IPSE warns

Politics Home, 17th September 2018

Universal credit 'costs the self-employed thousands of pounds a year'

The Guardian, 16 September 2018

Universal credit IT system 'broken', whistleblowers say

The Guardian, 22 July 2018

Calls to 'sanction' Esther McVey over Universal Credit rejected

BBC News, 11 July 2018

Report on the debate which took place in the Commons Chamber on 11 July 2018.

McVey: Universal Credit is 'great British innovation'

Inside Housing, 22 June 2018

Universal credit savaged by public spending watchdog

The Guardian, 15 June 2018

Press report of the findings of the National Audit report published in June 2018

4. Further reading

4.1 Commons Library briefings

- Commons Library dashboard, Constituency data: Universal Credit roll-out, 27 September 2018
- Commons Library briefing CBP08410, Universal Credit: why are sanction rates higher?, 1 October 2018
- Commons Library briefing CBP08299, Universal Credit roll-out: 2018-19, 14 June 2018
- Commons Library briefing CBP07935, The two child limit in tax credits and Universal Credit, 10 April 2017
- Commons Library briefing SN06547, Housing costs in Universal Credit, 1 January 2018

4.2 Parliamentary publications

- National Audit Office, Rolling out Universal Credit, HC 1123, 15 June 2018

4.3 Government publications

- Department for Work and Pensions, Universal Credit programme full Business Case summary, 7 June 2018
- Department for Work and Pensions, Universal Credit: different earning patterns and your payments (payment cycles), 14 February 2018
- Office for Budget Responsibility, Welfare trends report, Cm 9562, January 2018

4.4 Independent/sectoral research and analysis

- Residential Landlords Association, Investigating the impact of welfare reform on private renting, 12 October 2018
- Full Fact, 200,000 more people in work under Universal Credit? The government can't know the answer, 12 October 2018
- Full Fact, Do new Universal Credit requirements affect women more?, 2 October 2018

- The Resolution Foundation, The benefits of moving: Managing the transition of existing claimants to Universal Credit, 6 September 2018
- Child Poverty Action Group, Rough Justice: Problems with monthly assessment of pay and circumstances in universal credit, and what can be done about them, 1 August 2018
- Association of Retained Council Housing and the National Federation of ALMOs, Carrying the debt – measuring the impact of Universal Credit on tenants and landlords – survey results 2018, 11 July 2018
- National Housing Federation, Universal Credit and rent accounts,
  10 July 2018
- Trussell Trust, Left behind: is Universal Credit truly universal?, 24 April 2018

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