

From: Daphne Hall <daphne.hall@nawra.org.uk>

Sent: 11 July 2018 14:25

To: meghilliermp@parliament.uk

Subject: PAC evidence session with Neil Couling and Peter Schofield 9 July 2018 - 'listening to stakeholders'

Dear Ms Hillier

I don't know if you remember me but I gave evidence recently to your Committee on behalf of NAWRA relating to the errors made migrating claimants from incapacity benefit to ESA.

Not surprisingly, NAWRA has been collating evidence relating to the roll-out of universal credit from its members, and we listened to your evidence session with Neil Couling and Peter Schofield on 9 July 2018 with great interest.

In particular we noted the section from Q160 onwards around the Department's view that lobbying from some stakeholders was about policy rather than the implementation of universal credit. We believe that that is a stance that is frequently taken incorrectly by the Department and I refer you to a series of correspondence between NAWRA and Mr Couling (initially to David Gauke as then Secretary of State but passed to Neil Couling) - <http://www.nawra.org.uk/index.php/letter-to-secretary-of-state-for-work-and-pensions-on-major-problems-within-the-operation-of-universal-credit-failure-by-dwp-to-act-within-the-legislation/>

You will note that the initial letter is headed '**Major problems within the operation of universal credit – failure by DWP to act within the legislation**' and the second sentence of the letter says '**I should stress that these are not policy issues but operational issues where the legislative processes within universal credit are not being correctly followed and are causing extreme hardship.**'

Mr Couling's last letter to us simply refuses to acknowledge our evidence that problems are occurring, and asks that we bring the correspondence to an end. Our final reply on 16 February sets out our disappointment at his refusal to listen and engage. We have heard nothing since.

NAWRA is planning to write again to Mr Couling on problems claimants are experiencing migrating from ESA to universal credit and the regulations not being followed correctly. We hope that following his assurances to your Committee he will be more receptive. We would be happy to keep your Committee updated with our progress if that would be of interest to you?

Best wishes

Daphne

Daphne Hall
Vice Chair, National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers