



Dr Thérèse Coffey MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

27 January 2022

Dear Dr Coffey

Re: Help to Claim service from April 2022

Following your Minister's written statement¹ on 26 January 2022 about the new Help to Claim service that will be in place from April 2022, we are writing on behalf of NAWRA members to express our concern about the support that will be available for vulnerable people who need or want to claim universal credit. The statement says -

From April 2022, the support will be provided through telephony and digital channels. For those individuals who are unable to access support via these channels, they will be able to go to their local jobcentre, where jobcentre staff will identify the right support to meet their needs.

The current Help to Claim service², while offering advice by phone or online, also crucially offers support face-to-face. For those who struggle to make a universal credit claim online or by phone, or may not even have access to a computer, tablet or phone, this is essential.

The Minister says that these vulnerable people will instead be directed to go to the jobcentre. **Please can you clarify what kind of support the jobcentre staff will be identifying.**

It is essential that prospective claimants have access to independent, quality advice. This is particularly important as the DWP steps up its voluntary Move to UC campaign. The DWP has repeatedly assured stakeholders that during this campaign jobcentre staff will not advise people to claim universal credit because a decision whether or not to move is very complex and could result in that person losing out financially. **Please can you clarify what independent advice will be available to people who are unable to access the new Help to Claim service.**

¹ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-26/debates/22012644000008/HelpToClaim>

² <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit/claiming/helptoclaim/>

NAWRA believes that the new Help to Claim service is not fit for its purpose of supporting vulnerable people to make a claim for universal credit and asks that consideration be given to resourcing and funding independent advice not only to make a claim, but also to maintain a claim.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Markey, Chair NAWRA
Daphne Hall, Vice-Chair NAWRA

cc Stephen Timms MP, Chair Work and Pensions Committee