



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

Minister for Welfare Delivery  
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Alan Markey, Chair  
Daphne Hall, Vice-Chair  
National Association of Welfare  
Rights Advisers (NAWRA)

11<sup>th</sup> April 2022

Dear Mr Markey and Ms Hall,

### **Help to Claim service from April 2022**

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of State, dated 27<sup>th</sup> January 2022, which focuses on the recently published Written Statement regarding the 'Help to Claim' service. I apologise for the delay in replying.

Before I address the issues raised in your letter, I thought it may be helpful to make clear Help to Claim is designed to be accessed after someone has decided to apply for Universal Credit (UC). It is not intended to help someone decide whether UC is right for them.

Anyone who requires support to make a new claim to UC - whether they are claiming benefits for the first time, have had a change of circumstance on legacy benefits which has initiated a move to UC, or have chosen voluntarily to move to UC - will be able to access the 'Help to Claim' support provided by Citizens Advice (CA) and Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS).

The service is delivered via telephone and online following successful use of these channels while face to face support was suspended during the pandemic.

Help to Claim can be accessed from the new claim and reclaim declaration stage until receipt of their first full payment of UC. It also includes identification and referral of wider issues such as debt and housing to better support people back into work. Advice and support in relation to wider welfare issues is available through the general advice services provided by CA and CAS and a range of other independent organisations.

Turning to your specific questions:

#### **1. Please can you clarify what kind of support the jobcentre staff will be identifying.**

The Department is committed to continuing to provide the best possible support to all our claimants, including the most vulnerable, in both making and maintaining their claim.

Individuals who are unable to access the 'Help to Claim' support via telephone and on-line, will be able to access support at their local jobcentre for help to make or manage their UC

claim. Work Coaches already support individuals who approach the jobcentre directly rather than choosing to access independent support.

Work Coaches undergo a comprehensive tailored training programme designed to equip them with the skills and knowledge required to provide a high-quality service. Specific training and guidance is provided for working with different vulnerable groups and those with complex needs. Staff are also able to refer to specialist provision.

We will be keeping the support under review, including the delivery channels, as we monitor and evaluate 'Help to Claim' during the course of the new grant.

Jobcentres are not able to provide claimants with advice on whether or not they would be better off moving to Universal Credit.

**2. Please can you clarify what independent advice will be available to people who are unable to access the new Help to Claim service.**

Referring to your letter, neither DWP nor HMRC staff will advise individual claimants whether they would be better off moving to UC or remaining on legacy benefits. The Government encourages individuals to check their eligibility for UC by searching 'Universal Credit eligibility gov.uk'. This will signpost them to use one of the independent benefit calculators and to seek independent advice before applying. This is important as on applying for UC, their entitlement to legacy benefits will cease and they will not be able to return to them in the future.

As you will be aware, independent welfare advice is also available from a range of external organisations and charities, including CA and CAS.

We are continuing to work closely with our external stakeholder network, including a number of organisations who regularly provide welfare advice, to ensure the right information is available to claimants in order to support them in making an informed decision about whether a voluntary move to UC is right for them.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Rutley', with a horizontal line underneath.

**David Rutley MP**  
**Minister for Welfare Delivery**