25 February 2019

Rt Hon Frank Field MP
Work and Pensions Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Frank,

Thank you for your letter to my colleague Melanie Pope regarding setting tests for the managed migration phase of Universal Credit.

Universal Credit has the potential to help people move into and progress in work, provide low-income families with financial security and simplify the benefits system. However, we are clear that significant improvements are required to enable this to happen.

As we embark on the final and biggest phase of Universal Credit rollout, it's right that Government is proceeding with an initial pilot phase with 10,000 claimants. This will be a crucial step in shaping the process for managed migration in order that all claimants are able to successfully move over from legacy benefits to Universal Credit.

We recognise the need for Government to ensure readiness for carrying out this pilot. It is equally important that Government has clear measures as part of the pilot to establish whether the right systems and processes are in place to undertake the process of managed migration, and to understand what the impact will be on different groups of claimants moving on to Universal Credit.

Below are a series of areas that Citizens Advice feels Government should look at during this pilot to determine how to best provide support for claimants going through managed migration.
Outcomes for claimants

Integral to determining the effectiveness of managed migration will be assessing whether it delivers successful outcomes for the claimant. The pilot needs to look at the end-to-end process for moving on to Universal Credit in order to establish what a good claimant journey should look like. This should include a focus on:

- **Payment timeliness**: The extent to which claimants in the pilot are paid on time, and receive their full entitlement.
- **Financial and emotional hardship**: The extent to which claimants experience financial and emotional difficulties during the process of managed migration, across areas such as debt, rent arrears and emotional wellbeing.
- **Understanding of availability of additional support**: The extent to which claimants are aware of, and take up, additional support to help them cope financially as they move on to Universal Credit, including advance payments and alternative payment arrangements.

Processing capacity for managed migration

Creating a process for managed migration that works for claimants will require having the right type, and level, of resources across the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and local JobCentres.

During the pilot, Government needs to establish what systems and processes need to be in place to ensure managed migration delivers the right outcomes for claimants, but importantly, that these resources can be scaled up effectively ahead of full rollout of the benefit. This should include things such as:

- Work coach to claimant ratio
- Waiting times for calls to the helpline and responses to online journal messages
“Vulnerable” claimants and testing of different approaches

The pilot needs to involve a range of claimant groups in order to ensure that managed migration meets the needs of all individuals moving on to the benefit.

There will be large number of “vulnerable” claimants moving on to Universal Credit, such as disabled people and people with long-term health conditions, which will be significantly different to the cohort of claimants who have already moved on to the benefit. It is critical that the pilot is designed in a way that reflects this, not only in terms of the groups of claimants involved, but also with the approaches tested for managed migration.

Claimants will have up to three months to make a new claim on receiving a migration notice (unless they are granted an extension). However, we know “vulnerable” claimant groups are more likely to struggle with making an application for Universal Credit, which is due to a number of reasons such as difficulties with gathering evidence for a claim and being less likely to have had recent engagement with the DWP. Ensuring these claimants are able to successfully move on to Universal Credit will be of particular importance.

In order to understand what support “vulnerable claimants” need to ensure a smooth transition to Universal Credit, the pilot needs to explore different approaches for the process of managed migration. This needs to include:

- Testing the automatic transfer of claims from the legacy benefits system to Universal Credit as far as possible
- Effectiveness of different channels and forms of communication to claimants about managed migration
- Demand for, and access to, non-digital routes for making an application, e.g. over the phone or through a home visit

On-going support for claimants going through “managed migration”

The Help to Claim service that Citizens Advice will be providing from April 2019 will support people making a new claim for Universal Credit. As it is yet to be determined how managed migration will work, Help to Claim has not been funded to support claimants going through this process.
Government has not yet set out the support offer for managed migration. It’s vital that Government uses the pilot to establish an appropriate level of support for claimants moving on to Universal Credit via this route. At the same time, the pilot must contain adequate safeguards that no claimants participating in the pilot will lose access to financial support, particularly “vulnerable” claimants.

**Transparency during the pilot phase**

To date, there has been limited detail into how the pilot for managed migration will work. Building upon engagement to date with external stakeholders (such as charities, housing associations and food banks) in shaping the process for managed migration, it’s important Government continues to consult with these organisations in a meaningful way during the design of the pilot.

This needs to include information on things such as which claimant groups will be involved and where they are based, the complexity of cases, and the way in which they will move on to Universal Credit (i.e. who will move via the non-mandatory trial that Government has indicated). Having this insight will also enable organisations providing information, support and advice to respond to any changes in demand for their services as a result of the pilot.

I hope that the above is useful in response to your questions regarding tests for managed migration. We feel that a focus on the areas listed above during the pilot would put Government in a stronger position to establish a successful process for managed migration.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you like to discuss any of this further.

Yours sincerely,

Kayley Hignell
Head of Policy (Families, Welfare and Work)