The Rt Hon AMBER RUDD MP  
Secretary of State for Work & Pensions

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

Dear Frank,

Thank you for your letter dated 13th June 2019 and for your interest in ensuring that the managed migration pilot regulations come into force as soon as possible. I am responding to your letter around SDP provisions in the regulations separately.

As you are aware, aspects of the draft pilot regulations were quashed recently by a High Court Judgment and I have been considering options in order to respond to the Judgment. I will ensure that I inform you as soon as there are developments related to the regulations.

The Department is prepared for all eventualities, but is not currently expecting a delay to the pilot. Therefore, in accordance with recommendation two of your report on managed migration and with due regard to the consequences of delays to managed migration for claimants, the Department is continuing its preparations for the managed migration pilot for the scheduled start date in the summer. I think that we can agree that it is important that regulations are in place to ensure that the pilot begins as scheduled and so that former SDP claimants can be paid the transitional payment. As I stated in my previous letter, I am steadfast in my resolve to ensure that the Department delivers on its commitments.

The current ‘Help to Claim’ service is designed to support anyone making a new Universal Credit claim or those who are moving from a legacy benefit to Universal Credit following a change of circumstances. The present grant agreement with Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland is operating on a pilot basis until March 2020. We will be beginning an evaluation of the ‘Help to Claim’ pilot towards the end of this year and this evaluation will inform the future design of the service.

The ‘Move to UC’ pilot approach will initially focus on testing with those claimants who have a relationship with the Jobcentre, before considering how we might work with local partners, which will include Citizens Advice. In the meantime, the dedicated project teams in DWP, Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland are working

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closely together to monitor progress of the new ‘Help to Claim’ service, including ensuring demand for the service is in line with the assumed take-up rate.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are already available to help support recipients of Housing Benefit and the housing element of UC with their housing costs, including those that move to UC from Housing Benefit. There is no prescribed resource test, and the payments are awarded at the Local Authorities’ discretion. In addition, claimants in receipt of Housing Benefit are already entitled to a two-week run-on of that benefit when they move to UC.

I can confirm that the Government response to recommendation 5 of the Committee’s report about the Discretionary Hardship Payments (DHaPs) remains accurate. As stated in the response, the power for the DHaP is broad and could be used to pay the equivalent of the two-week out-of-work benefit run on to those who move as part of the pilot phase and who are in hardship on account of the absence of the run on.

As you know, I have said that I will not bring forward legislation to continue managed migration after the pilot until I can make personal assurances that the process is effective and provides the right support for claimants. Therefore, monitoring and the evaluation following the pilot has been a priority for me. UC analysts are currently developing reporting mechanisms to facilitate the sharing of information. There will be a checkpoint on the progress of the pilot once 100 claimants have been moved to UC. Further checkpoints will be scheduled as the Department makes preparations for each new phase and I have been assured that I will be updated regularly as the pilot moves between phases.

Thank you for your recent report entitled ‘Universal Credit: tests for managed migration’. We have now responded after carefully considering your recommendations.

I must thank you again for taking the time to engage so positively with what the Department is trying to achieve.

With best wishes,

The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS

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