



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

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Caroline Lucas MP  
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Our ref: MC2021/18931

26 March 2021

Dear Caroline,

As you may know, your email of 24 February to the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been passed to this Department. You wrote requesting an increase in legacy benefits. I am replying as the Minister for Welfare Delivery and I apologise for the delay.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Government's priority has been to protect lives and people's livelihoods. That is why the Chancellor announced in the recent Budget that the Government is extending the temporary £20 a week increase in Universal Credit for a further six months, until the end of September, taking it well beyond the end of this national lockdown. Eligible Working Tax Credit claimants will receive a one-off payment of £500. It is right that the Government should now shift its focus to supporting people back into work and we have a comprehensive Plan for Jobs which the Budget builds upon.

Legacy benefits were increased by £600 million from April 2020 and we will invest a further £100 million from April 2021 as part of the Government's annual up-rating exercise. Claimants on legacy benefits can make a claim for Universal Credit if they believe they will be better off. The Government encourages anybody to visit the Government website: GOV.UK and use one of the independent benefit calculators to check carefully their eligibility. This is because, on applying for Universal Credit, their entitlement to legacy benefits will cease and they will not be able to return to them in the future. Neither the Department for Work and Pensions nor HM Revenue and Customs can advise individual claimants whether they would be better off moving to Universal Credit or remaining on legacy benefits.

Since July 2020, a two-week run-on of Housing Benefit, Income Support and income-related Employment and Support Allowance and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance is paid to eligible claimants to provide additional support to move to Universal Credit.

In addition, we invested nearly £1 billion to increase Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of local market rents in 2020. We are maintaining this support at the same cash level this year.

This Department continues to support vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, through a series of easements aimed at simplifying and improving their interaction with the benefit system. For Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants we have launched the New Style ESA online portal which allows the majority of people who need to claim New Style ESA to do so online. Everyone infected with Covid-19, or who is required to self-isolate in line with Government guidelines, will be treated as having Limited Capability for Work in ESA without the requirement for fit notes or a Work Capability Assessment. In Universal Credit, basic eligibility checks for New Claims Advances can be done remotely, allowing access to advances without being seen face-to-face at jobcentres. Statutory Sick Pay is also available for employees from the first day of absence where they are ill, self-isolating or shielding due to Covid-19.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Will', is positioned below the text 'Kind regards,'.

**Will Quince MP**

**Minister for Welfare Delivery**