

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

20th March 2019

Dear Constituent,

RE: UNIVERSAL CREDIT – ‘5 WEEKS TOO LONG’ CAMPAIGN.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of Universal Credit (UC) and the ‘5 Weeks Too Long’ Campaign; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

I am committed to having a strong safety net where people need it. There are many reasons why people use food banks. That is why the Department for Work and Pensions has committed to a test and learn approach to delivering UC and has made improvements where necessary, such as through removing seven waiting days and introducing 100 percent advances.

All UC claimants are subject to an initial assessment period, regardless of the circumstances that have led to a claim. Assessment periods allow for UC awards to be adjusted on a monthly basis, ensuring that if a claimant's income falls, they do not have to wait several months for a rise in their UC award.

I am glad that UC has been designed with accessibility in mind. Where a claimant requires assistance to complete the initial application process, support is available via the Universal Credit helpline, face to face in the Jobcentre, or in exceptional circumstances, through a home visit. If a claimant needs more intensive or specific support to make their claim, face-to-face and other help is available through the Universal Support Assisted Digital Service.

I also welcome advance payments which are worth up to 100 percent of someone's indicative award and are available from the date of their claim. Around 60 percent of eligible new claims to UC received an advance in October 2018. This shows that people are being made aware of advances and are getting help when they need it. I would add that if a claimant is in financial difficulty as a result of the level of deductions being made, they can request that a reduction be considered.

I hope that this helps to clarify the support available to people claiming UC when they struggle with financial difficulty, and I will continue to support improvements when necessary.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE