



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

12th February 2021

Dear Confront,

RE: CENTREPOINT'S 'CHANCE TO MOVE ON' CAMPAIGN

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of Centrepoint's 'Chance to move on' campaign about the Universal Credit standard allowance for those under 25 years of age; your comments upon which I have read with interest.

First, I'd like to commend the good work that Centrepoint is doing during the unprecedented national crisis that is the Coronavirus pandemic. Your points about the challenges faced by some young people are moving.

Universal Credit was designed to simplify the benefits system with a focus on helping people into work and supporting their in-work progression. Having a simplified benefits system has been hugely beneficial during this crisis and has allowed much of the focus to be on bolstering the existing system, not trying to reinvent it. Differential rates are paid according to people's individual circumstances and age, although I would emphasise that the Department for Work & Pensions has temporarily increased the standard allowance of UC for all claimants. I would also add that additional amounts which provide for specific needs, such as children or disability, are paid at a standard rate in addition to the standard allowance, irrespective of age.

Universal Credit claimants can also get support with housing costs which can help to pay private landlords, local authorities, or interest payments on a mortgage. In response to COVID-19, the Local Housing Allowance rates for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claimants have been increased to the 30th percentile of local rents, providing additional financial support for private renters. If people need further support with rent, Discretionary Housing Payments are available, while a £500 million Hardship Fund provides Council Tax relief to vulnerable people in England.

That being said, I share your concern to ensure that young people are supported through the Coronavirus emergency. Benefits, however, are only one part of that support. I know my colleagues in Government have been working hard to protect jobs, while the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-employment Income Support Scheme are helping to keep people in their roles throughout an uncertain period. Keeping young people in jobs and close to the labour market must be our priority.

I hope this reassures you that supporting young people is a key priority and is certainly something I will continue to champion in Parliament.

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