

6.153. As the uplift could be implemented quickly, it helped to provide financial assistance to those who needed it, whilst other schemes such as Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) were put in place.

6.154. The rationale for uplifting Universal Credit and Working Tax Credits as opposed to other benefits was that the people most significantly experiencing financial disruption caused by the pandemic were those newly unemployed or experiencing reduced incomes and therefore new to the benefits system. In the early months of the pandemic, new benefit claimants were mostly claiming Universal Credit (which is now the only option for new working age claimants seeking means-tested social security assistance).

6.155. The Government announced a comprehensive package of measures to protect jobs and incomes during the pandemic. The Universal Credit uplift was part of this package to support those who most needed it.

Design

6.156. The Inquiry has asked for details of how the uplift was designed.

6.157. On 3 March 2020, an email from the then Deputy Director for Employers, Health, and Inclusive Employment (EHIE) at the DWP commissioned officials to establish how quickly rates of benefits could be temporarily changed. At this stage, this included consideration of changing the rates of both Universal Credit and legacy benefits (such as Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA IB), and Income Based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA IB). **[Please see NC/M9-1/68 - INQ000653745, which is an email from the then Deputy Director for Employers, Health, and Inclusive Employment (EHIE)].**

6.158. As the pandemic hit, there was an urgent need to provide financial support to assist those who had lost or were at risk of losing employment or significant income due to the newly introduced COVID-19 restrictions. Therefore, the