

Will Quince MP – Minister for Welfare Delivery

Weekly Note - Week commencing 21st September

Dear Thérèse,

I've had several more meetings on our Spending Review bids this week. By the time you read this note, I'd imagine we would have sent off our final bids to HMT!

I am sure this will have reached you. NR and I are happy to combine the Help to Claim, advocacy and financial inclusion SR bids given it makes sense from a narrative perspective. Justin and I are still concerned there's an assumption the Help to Claim contract to Citizens Advice will roll-over as is for a third year. We're waiting on commercial advice on the viability of the national virtual service commercial process starting this autumn so it can go live in autumn 2021 – it would be good to meet to discuss further.

I hosted my mini UC programme board. We will commence a full programme board next month. In the meantime, I know there's a number of things lined up for the UC programme pipeline, but I am keen to move the changes to the repayment of advances to go-live sooner. We currently have said the repayment period would be extended to 24 months and the maximum deduction rate reduced to 25% in October 2021, but I am keen for this to be done sooner.

Minister Tolhurst and I had our first bilateral. She is getting up to speed on her brief and has committed to work closely with us on social housing. They are yet to draft their white paper on social housing but will share a draft for us to comment on when it is ready.

I have read your draft letter to the PM on tackling poverty. I completely agree with you; the focus should certainly be about policy priorities. As I've mentioned before, my policy priority is maintaining the £20 increase in Standard Allowance in perpetuity. This would solve a lot of our issues – it helps with costs of living, is a huge incentive for people to naturally migrate, significantly turns the dial on poverty and politically would be toxic for us to remove it in April. Working across Whitehall is also key, we alone cannot tackle poverty, it is something we need all departments to feed into.

I had a helpful meeting with Become, a care leavers charity – we discussed setting up a roundtable with Vicky Ford to hear the experiences of care leavers and their suggestions for DWP and DfE. I have also asked for a review of the support care leavers receive in JCPs as a few stakeholders have suggested there may be some inconsistency based on different areas. I'll keep you posted.

Thanks,
Will

→ I'd like to discuss the prioritisation with you.