

# Agenda – Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 2 – Senedd

Meeting date: 21 March 2018

Meeting time: 09.00

For further information contact:

Naomi Stocks

Committee Clerk

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- 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest
  
- 2 Papers to note  
(Page 1)
  - 2.1 Additional information from the Salvation Army in relation to rough sleeping in Wales  
(Pages 2 – 14)
  - 2.2 Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport in relation to making the economy work for people on low incomes  
(Pages 15 – 16)
  - 2.3 Correspondence with the Department for Work and Pensions in relation to making the economy work for people on low incomes  
(Pages 17 – 22)
  
- 3 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting
  
- 4 Inquiry into rough sleeping in Wales – consideration of draft report  
(09.00 – 10.30) (Pages 23 – 79)



**5 Letter from the Llywydd in relation to resourcing for Brexit scrutiny**

(10.30 – 10.35)

(Pages 80 – 85)

**6 Draft letter to the First Minister in relation to human rights in Wales**

(10.35 – 10.45)

(Pages 86 – 90)

The Committee will be undertaking informal focus groups from 11.00 to inform its work on pregnancy, maternity and work.

# Agenda Item 2

## Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

21 March 2018 – papers to note cover sheet

<b>Paper no.</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>Action point</b>
ELGC(5)-10-18 Paper 1	Inquiry into rough sleeping in Wales	Salvation Army	Additional information following the meeting on 8 February 2018
ELGC(5)-10-18 Paper 2	Inquiry into poverty in Wales: making the economy work for people on low incomes	Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport	Additional information following the meeting on 25 January 2018
ELGC(5)-10-18 Paper 3	Inquiry into poverty in Wales: making the economy work for people on low incomes	Correspondence between the Chair and the Department for Work and Pensions	Response to the Chair's letter dated 11 October 2017

## Case Study Preformat

**Title of the case study/ Project Name: Reconnection 1/12/17**

MN – Successful Reconnection to LA

**Key contact: Name, Job Title, Name, Email Address and Telephone Number**

**What did you do?**

*Provide a brief outline/overview of an individual case study (detail the background and what the intervention was)*

- MN was referred to the Reconnection Service after it was established that he had no local connection to Cardiff.
- We carried out an assessment of individual need and risk, where his housing history was ascertained.
- It became evident that his local connection was in Bridgend where he had been living with his mother.
- Reconnection Team worked with MN to establish his background history and it quickly became evident that he had left due to unresolved differences with his mother, where she issued him with an eviction order.
- We established that MN departed his mother's property on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and made his way to the City of Cardiff.
- We further liaised with **Bridgend Council (Homeless Team)** to ascertain whether MN had presented to them and to get an accurate address history to date.
- It transpired that MN had received a housing assessment, but this was closed as he had taken up residence with his mother.
- MN was advised he was referred to us in Reconnection for help and support, he can make the choice to return to his local authority and we would support him to establish contact and a travel warrant.

- MN opted to return to **his local authority**.

#### What resources were used?

*Provide a brief outline/overview of financial, staff, partnership, in-kind resources required to undertake the project*

- MN Supported to access a food parcel from the Huggard Kitchen for his journey back to Bridgend as he hadn't eaten and stated he was hungry.
- MN supported by reconnection staff by offering light snack and hot drink. Whilst he was being assessed.
- Reconnection staff supported MN to the train station to collect his tickets and direct him to the appropriate platform.
- Reconnection liaised with HANR Outreach team for a "travel warrant", enabling MN to return to Bridgend.
- MN was supported to complete a "feedback questionnaire" for the reconnection team.

*Joint working with any other agencies etc*

- Reconnection team supported MN to contact **Bridgend Council** to ascertain information in relation to his housing situation / address history.
- MN Supported to access a food parcel from the **Huggard Day Centre** for his journey back to Bridgend as he hadn't eaten and was hungry.
- MN supported by Reconnection staff by offering light snack and hot drink
- Reconnection liaised with **HANR Outreach** staff for a travel warrant, enabling MN to return to Bridgend.
- MN was supported to complete a "feedback questionnaire" for the Reconnection team.

#### What has changed as a result of the project?

*What has been the benefit? What difference has it made to the individual?*

- MN was re-directed back to his **local authority** in Bridgend Council for a "housing assessment", this being his preferred choice.
- Contact made with Bridgend Housing Team who informed us MN has presented.
- MN presented on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2017, where he **was assessed and given a 73 duty**, he was allocated a place in a "backpacker's hostel" in the Bridgend Borough.

- MN was also given a **support worker** who will work with him to find suitable accommodation
- Information received that MN is now waiting to view a “studio flat “within **the Bridgend Borough**.
- MN will receive ongoing support from his **local authority**.

### Feedback and Evaluation

*Please include a quote(s) or a range of feedback from participant(s) / Partnership agency / your own feedback.  
Lessons learned.*

- It was clear that on assessment that MN was clearly affected by the altercation between mother and son as MN stated that it had a profound effect on his mental health causing him stress.
- MN stated that he knew he needed to make positive changes and that maybe this was a start and the way forward.
- MN was made aware that he will be supported by his local authority who will work with him, helping and supporting to enable him to make informed choices and have more control over his future / housing options.
- MN expressed his gratitude to the Reconnection staff and completed a feedback questionnaire, contained within feedback annex.

Reconnection to LA

LH



- LH presented at HOC April 2017 and was referred to us in Cardiff Reconnection Service
- LH local connection was clearly identified as Wolverhampton. He has been residing in PRS in
- Wolverhampton as a lodger from six years. It was also the area he was born and brought up in.
- LH had been advised to leave his private tenancy by the Police as his landlord had been charged and arrested for keeping illegal animals in the property. The property was in a very poor condition.
- LH had come to stay in Cardiff with a friend instead of taking the advice of the police.
- It was established that LH suffered from anxiety and depression which had worsened after the loss of his tenancy.
- Cardiff Reconnection Service contacted LH's local authority, to confirm that support and accommodation would be made available to him if he was to return. They were aware of the incident due to previous police contact.
- LH was supported by Cardiff Reconnection Service to attend a GP, to acquire medication for his mental health and a sick note.
- LH was advised and supported by Cardiff Reconnection Service to consider his options in terms of attempting to access private rented accommodation in Cardiff, or to return in a supportive and planned way to Wolverhampton, where his local authority, have already agreed to help him.
- LH was supported to attend the train station, a checked was purchased as he return to Wolverhampton. Reconnection Service, sought confirmation that he had presented to Wolverhampton local authority.

## Case Study Proforma

**Title of the case study/ Project Name:**

GN- Positive Other – Successful Reassessment

**Key contact: Name, Job Title, Name, Email Address and Telephone Number**

**What did you do?**

***Provide a brief outline/overview of an individual case study (detail the background and what the intervention was)***

- This gentleman was referred to Reconnection service today; after it was felt that he had no local connection.
- We conducted an initial assessment of individual need, where his housing history in particular was considered.
- In consideration of his risk, we sourced information from probation services in Ebbw Vale; we ascertained
- Client has a history of sex offences/ convictions, he has also been placed on the sex offenders register for 7 years.
- We further liaised with Gwent probation so we were able to ascertain a more descriptive picture of the offences to date
- GN was given Reconnection Service EOS on Huggard floor space, all risk elements was shared with GN's consent, and he was worked with two staff to ensure safety measures and risk.
- It transpired that GN had a local connection in Ebbw Vale Gwent, but was unable to return to the matrimonial home he once shared because of his arrest for sexual offences involving children.
- Phone call made by us in reconnection to his local authority and it was given consideration and they agreed he would be accepted by them.
- GN would not have returned without our advice and contact with his local connection to establish accommodation for him, he needed **our support to** establish his rights.
- The address history was documented, submitted as third party evidence and GN was supported to be reassessed in his local area.
- Many phone calls to his local authority to challenge their initial thought on the duty for him

- This reassessment was successful and now GN has been given temporary accommodation (hostel) within his local authority.
- GM will not receive ongoing support in his local area.

#### What resources were used?

##### *Joint working with any other agencies etc*

- GN was given printed city map and free food provision print outs, for in and around the City of Cardiff from the Reconnection Team.
- Reconnection advised of the **Salvation Army Bus Project**.
- Referral to Gateway to allocate Floor space in **Huggard Hostel** for the night and continuing nights.
- GN was supported to access **Wallich Night Shelter, Solutions** drop in service, for shower and toiletries
- Supported/advised to visit **Jenny (Huggard Advocate)** for help/advice to apply for benefits.
- Liaised with **PPU** to inform them of assessment/outcome, keep them up-to-date (networking).

- Reconnection staff further liaised with **Blaenau Gwent Housing/ Homeless Team** to ascertain local connection/duty and to collate accurate address history.
- Liaised with **HANR Outreach** team for travel warrant to relocate back to local authority.
- Reconnection team Supported to complete a “feedback questionnaire.
- We followed up on his **new accommodation** and he moved in and settled with no issues
- . Case closed – positive outcome.

**What has changed as a result of the project?**

- GN was re-directed back to his local authority in Blaenau Gwent, where he was provided with temporary accommodation, placed in a hostel.
- Full maximised entitlement to benefits giving him choice’s of services required.
- A sense of identity and purpose living back within his local community.

- Assigned to a support worker for help with his preferred needs.
- A chance of a new start!

### **Feedback and Evaluation**

GN was very cooperative throughout the process of his engagement with the reconnection team; he showed respect and gratitude to all staff.

At first point of contact GN was very apprehensive on returning to his local authority, saying, "he didn't think he could return," due to his difficult circumstances and seemed very doubtful, but after engaging with the reconnection team who worked/supported GN to make informed choices, he was then given an option to return and, felt that this was in his best interests - long term.

GN has now been accommodated in a hostel on a temporary basis, where he continues to make steady progress, until he can be further re-assessed and hopefully move into alternative accommodation to suit his needs/requirements.

GN happy to reconnect with his local authority and thanked Reconnection staff for all their help and support.

## Case Study Performa

**Title of the case study/ Project Name: Cardiff Reconnection Service Q3 17/18**

SB - Positive Other – Successful Reassessment

**Key contact: Name, Job Title, Name, Email Address and Telephone Number**

### What did you do?

*Provide a brief outline/overview of an individual case study (detail the background and what the intervention was)*

- SB was referred to the Reconnection Service after it was felt he had no local connection to the Cardiff Area.
- We conducted an initial assessment of individual need and risk, where his housing history in particular was considered.
- In consideration of his risk we sourced information from Probation Services in Cardiff, Norwich and Bath. SB has a history of mental health and alcohol related issues, he has also been placed on the sex offenders register for previous convictions.
- We further liaised with the Cardiff Public Protection Unit in order to ensure SB's safety and the safety of others. SB was also given Reconnection Service EOS on Huggard floor space. All risk was shared with SB's consent and he was worked with by two staff at all time in Reconnection Service due to his risk.
- Reconnection Team worked with SB and PPU to establish a more accurate address history for SB. It quickly transpired that his life has been very transient and that he had not held any stable accommodation in many years. This process took several days as SB was very guarded and reluctant to disclose information about him.
- The address history was documented, submitted as third party evidence to the local authority and SB was supported to be reassessed.
- This reassessment was successful and SB is now accommodated as a non-priority individual, and will transition into a hostel in Cardiff when one becomes available.

## What resources were used?

*Provide a brief outline/overview of financial, staff, partnership, in-kind resources required to undertake the project*

- SB was given printed **city map** and **free food provision leaflets**, for in and around the City of Cardiff from the **Reconnection Team**.
- SB was supported to access **clothing** items as on interview he appeared to be wet and cold – this provision was offered with liaison with **HANR Outreach** staff time.
- **Floor space** was booked in **Huggard Hostel** for the night and continuing nights.
- SB was supported to access **Wallich Night Shelter, Solutions** drop in service, for **shower and toiletries**
- Was supported to register with the **GP, Kay Saunders** – Doctor for the homeless, **Butetown Medical Centre**.
- Supported to contact **Department of Work and Pensions** to ensure **maintenance of Universal Credit payments**.
- **Reconnection Team** accessed **risk information** and **address history** from **Norwich and Bath Probation Services** and **Cardiff Public Protection Unit**, this was crucial to ensure the safety of SB and others around him and the success of his reassessment.
- SB was **supported by two members of staff at all times** due to history of sexual assault against females and aggression towards staff

*Joint working with any other agencies etc*

- SB was supported to access **clothing** items as on interview he appeared to be wet and cold – this provision was offered with liaison with **HANR Outreach** staff time.
- **Floor space** was booked in **Huggard Hostel** for the night and continuing nights.
- SB was supported to access **Wallich Night Shelter, Solutions** drop in service, for **shower and toiletries**
- Was supported to register with the **GP, Kay Saunders** – Doctor for the homeless, **Butetown Medical Centre**.
- Supported to contact **Department of Work and Pensions** to ensure **maintenance of Universal Credit payments**.
- Day to day contact was maintained with **Jenny Buckley Day Centre Advocate** and **Rachel Woods Huggard EOS Advocate** in order to **monitor SB's behaviour and manage concerns**.
- **Reconnection Team** accessed **risk information** and **address history** from **Norwich and Bath Probation Services** and **Cardiff Public Protection Unit**, this was crucial to ensure the safety of SB and others around him and the success of his reassessment.

## What has changed as a result of the project?

*What has been the benefit? What difference has it made to the individual?*

- SB was re-directed to through **Cardiff Council Housing Options** in order to have a new housing assessment with a more accurate address history.
- SB was then given a **local connection** to Cardiff.
- Contact made with Bath Probation to inform them SB **has now secured emergency accommodation** and the ability to access transitional hostel accommodation in Cardiff.
- SB continues to engage effectively with all required agencies including Huggard EOS Rachel Woods and PPU.
- He will transition into a hostel placement when one becomes available.
- Case closed as – Positive Other – **Successful Reassessment.**

## Feedback and Evaluation

*Please include a quote(s) or a range of feedback from participant(s) / Partnership agency / your own feedback. Lessons learned.*

- SB has been very polite and co-operative with all Reconnection staff; he continues to make steady progress in his EOS placement and will shortly transition into a hostel.
- SB is aware that he will now be supported by other services will continue to work with him, helping and supporting with a desire to empower him to make the best choices and to have more control over his future.
- Please see Annex – Client Feedback Surveys attached.

**TSA Cardiff Reconnection Service  
Statistical Reporting  
Q3, Q4 2015/2016, Q1 - Q4 2016/2017 & Q1, Q2, Q3 2017/2018**

	Qtr 3 (Nov-Dec)	Qtr 4 (Jan-Mar)	Qtr 1 (Apr-Jun)	Qtr 2 (Jul-Sept)	Qtr 3 (Oct-Dec)	Qtr 4 (Jan-Mar)	Qtr 1 (Apr-Jun)	Qtr 2 (Jul-Sept)
Number of clients referred to Reconnection Service	32	43	23	23	29	52	54	52
Number of clients who chose to engage with the service	28	36	19	22	26	43	51	50
Number of clients who did not present to the service	4	7	4	1	3	9	3	2
Number of potential Reconnect clients referred or engaged with via Huggard, Bus Project, Breakfast Run, or other outreach surgery	Not recorded	Not recorded	Not recorded	35	57	88	89	81
	Qtr 3 (Nov-Dec)	Qtr 4 (Jan-Mar)	Qtr 1 (Apr-Jun)	Qtr 2 (Jul-Sept)	Qtr 3 (Oct - Dec)	Qtr 4 (Jan - Mar)	Qtr 1 (Apr-Jun)	Qtr 2 (Jul-Sept)
Number of clients reconnected to friends and family	6	10	5	7	5	6	9	7
Number of clients reconnect to make presentation at own LA	5	5	5	5	6	9	11	14
Number of clients supported to move into private rented accommodation	2	2	0	1	1	3	12	4
Number of clients offered other supported accommodation via waiver/reassessment/other	5	9	6	5	8	10	6	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>40</b>
Other - prison/hospital	1	0	1	0	1	4	2	2
Case ongoing, into next quarter	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Did not engage to reconnection stage	9	10	2	4	5	7	10	8
	Qtr 3 (Nov-Dec)	Qtr 4 (Jan-Mar)	Qtr 1 (Apr-June)	Qtr 2 (Jul-Sept)	Qtr 3 (Oct - Dec)	Qtr 4 (Jan - Mar)	Qtr 1 (Apr-Jun)	Qtr 2 (Jul-Sept)
Number of wavers submitted	2	6	5	4	1	3	3	5
Waver Outcome – Accepted Indefinitely	2	5	4	2	0	2	1	0
Waver Outcome – Accepted Temporarily	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	5
Waver Rejected	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0

Qtr 3 (Oct-Dec)	Total
39	347
31	306
8	41
62	412
Qtr 3 (Oct-Dec)	Total
12	67
7	67
1	26
4	68
24	228
1	12
4	
2	57
Qtr 3 (Oct-Dec)	Total
0	29
0	16
0	10
0	3

Ken Skates AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport

Agenda Item 2.2

Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh GovernmentJohn Griffiths AM  
Chair  
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

7 March 2018

Dear *John,*

I am writing following the scrutiny session of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> January to provide further information on the following points which I will address in turn:

- The activity across Welsh Government in its approach to securing commitments from employers in return for sectoral support;
- The role of women in households receiving Universal Credit, following consultation with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Minister for Housing and Regeneration.

The Economic Contract is central to the delivery of the approach to economic development as set out in the Economic Action Plan. We will use the Economic Contract to frame a new and more dynamic relationship with business which will recognise those businesses already taking steps to adopt responsible business and employment practices and where we encourage and support others to take a similar path.

Through the Contract, we will not only influence what business does, but also challenge ourselves to work differently and have more meaningful and dynamic interactions with the business community on wider issues like health and skills in the workplace, decarbonisation and fair work.

A dialogue with businesses and others is ongoing to determine the full nature of the Economic Contract and in particular to arrive at a definitive position on what we mean by each criteria and importantly the ways in which a business can demonstrate compliance. We want to build as much consensus as we can into this process and prior to launching the Economic Contract early in the new financial year.

One of the specific enquiries related to families who were eligible for Universal Credit, and whether there had been any correspondence from the Welsh Government to the UK Government on the importance of women being the default recipients of Universal Credit.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NACanolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400[Gohebiaeth.Ken.Skates@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Ken.Skates@llyw.cymru)  
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The Welsh Government has repeatedly and strongly expressed its concerns to the UK Government, calling for a halt to the roll out of Universal Credit until such time as the many and significant issues have been addressed. These major flaws are having a widespread adverse impact on vulnerable people.

The Welsh Government has not specifically raised the issue of women being the default recipients of Universal Credit. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) welfare benefit rules do not distinguish between different genders. Universal Credit is normally paid monthly into one bank account of the claimant's choice, however, there is an option for claimants who are a couple to request split payments via Alternative Payment Arrangements. The Welsh Government is keen to see all Universal Credit claimants being proactively offered an informed choice of how they receive their Universal Credit payment, through the DWP's Alternative Payment Arrangements.

Rebecca Evans AM, the Minister for Housing & Regeneration has already written to Esther McVey MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions seeking her consideration on how Universal Credit claimants can be better informed of the payment options available to them. A partnership working group is to be established between Welsh Government and the DWP looking at how individuals and families who require extra help can best be supported with Universal Credit.

*Yours ever,*

*Ken*

**Ken Skates AC/AM**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport

ELGC(5)–07–18 Papur 3/ Paper 3

David Gauke MP  
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

11 October 2017

Dear Secretary of State

## Universal Credit

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the National Assembly for Wales' Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee.

As part of an inquiry looking at [making the economy work for people on low incomes](#), we recently took evidence from Dr Sharon Wright, University of Glasgow and Dr Lisa Scullion, University of Salford on the role of welfare benefits in supporting people on low incomes. Both academics are also involved in the Welfare Conditionality: Sanctions, Support and Behaviour Change Project.

A large part of the session was spent exploring the impact of the roll-out of Universal Credit so far. We heard that in its current form Universal Credit is 'not likely to meet'<sup>1</sup> some of its objectives. In particular, that while people will be pushed toward work, it will be into work which is not likely to lift people out of poverty and therefore in-work poverty will continue to rise.

Aside from this fundamental point of concern, we also heard of some operational issues, which cause us concern about the continued roll-out of the programme.

<sup>1</sup> ELGC Committee, Record of Proceedings (RoP) 21 September 2017, Paragraph [18]



The issues raised by the witnesses included:

- Delays in payments being received after the initial application is made. We heard that people can be waiting up to 10 weeks before payment is received. While advance payments may be made, these are in the form of loans, so people who are already living on the margins of affordability are immediately in debt, before they receive Universal Credit. Following your announcement this week about the availability of advance payments, could you clarify at what rate the loan will have to be paid back. How is the availability of the loan being publicised to claimants?
- Linked to the above, is that housing benefit payments are now included in the personal income payment. This is particularly problematic when there are delays of up to 10 weeks before payments are received. We also heard that increases in sanctioning (see below) could lead to increases in rent arrears, and ultimately eviction. We heard that while the housing payment is not subject to sanction, if an individual's living allowance is sanctioned, they are placed in an impossible position of having to choose between paying their rent or covering other essential costs, such as food. As a result, eviction and homelessness are 'new risks brought in within universal credit'.<sup>2</sup>
- The joint claiming process means whole households can now be sanctioned. Joint claims particularly disadvantage people in abusive relationships. The witnesses suggested to us that payment should go to the main carer rather than the main earner, which would mean that the financial needs of children and their main carer are prioritised.
- The extension of sanctioning to people who are in work. We heard that people who are in work, are still expected to go to the Job Centre. In some cases, people have been sanctioned when they have been unable to rearrange appointments, which they cannot attend because they are

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<sup>2</sup> ELGC Committee, RoP 21 September 2017, Paragraph [8]



working. We heard that the intensification of conditionality, combined with the requirement to be looking for a job 35 hours a week is incredibly difficult and stressful.

- Administrative issues around sanctions. We heard that sanctions are often imposed unexpectedly, and people only discover that they are subject to a sanction weeks or months after the relevant event. This can then make it difficult for people to challenge the sanction. We are also concerned that sanctions will apply to some of the most vulnerable groups. While we are aware that there are a number of groups who cannot be sanctioned, we are concerned that there will be people within the three groups that can be sanctioned who may be considered vulnerable.
- Problems inherent in the delivery of the programme, for example the digital by default claims process. While we heard that there is some provision for people who may not be able to claim digitally, we know this is of limited availability. Additionally, the phone line number is charged at a premium rate. The witnesses told us that a simple, but very helpful, action would be if the number was made a free number to call, this is a call we strongly support.
- Moving easements out of formal provision into guidance, which means they have become more discretionary. This introduces more variability into the system, and places the most vulnerable at risk.
- The very tight financial margins people are operating in while moving in and out of work. We heard that in some cases, as earnings increase, up to 63% of the increase is taken away through the system.

In light of this, and other concerns that were raised during the session, we would like to add our voices to the growing list of those who have called for you to pause roll-out while some of these operational issues are dealt with. We are concerned that as the roll-out starts to reach more complicated cases, that if



these issues are not addressed, there could be significant increases in hardship, deprivation and poverty.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John". The letters are cursive and connected.

John Griffiths AM

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.





Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

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John Griffiths AM  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Our ref: POS(2)5025/12

01 NOV 2017

*Dear John,*

Thank you for your email of 11 October to the Secretary of State about Universal Credit. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this area of the Department's work.

There are no plans to pause the rollout of Universal Credit. It is already delivering big improvements to people's lives, with more people finding work under Universal Credit, people spend longer looking for work and people take up jobs they would not have previously considered. We continue to roll out Universal Credit in a careful and coordinated way, to ensure that improvements can be made along the way.

Our recently published figures show that the vast majority of Universal Credit claimants receive their money in full and on time. If we are unable to completely verify a Universal Credit claim, many claimants receive part-payment. Universal Credit work coaches make new claimants aware of advances, if they need money to tide them over. New claimants can receive up to 50 per cent of their first payment, interest-free, and repay over six months. If claimants are in significant need, this can be extended to nine months.

The main route to access Universal Credit is through digital channels. We actively encourage people to use the service in a digital manner in every instance but we understand there are circumstances in which this may not be possible. Flexible and tailor made support will be provided by work coaches to assist people who do not have access or the IT skills to complete an online application. Claimants can also phone the Universal Credit helpline, for which the Department provides controlled access to

telephones for people who require support for their job search or benefit enquiry.

All jobcentres across the country have Wi-Fi and computers available, including 6000 additional computers installed to support the introduction of Universal Credit. This provides access to digital channels in every Jobcentre for claimants to use when they do not have access at home. A telephone helpline and face to face support are also available for claimants to make and manage a Universal Credit claim. Advice, assistance and support from Jobcentre Plus or local partners to help Universal Credit claimants with managing their claim, which includes accessing and using online services, is also available.

In April 2016, the Universal Credit taper reduced from 65p to a more generous 63p. A single taper of 63 percent per £1 is applied as earnings rise and some claimants will also receive a work allowance depending on their circumstances. This single taper enables the household to clearly see the benefit of increasing its working income and means that support does not suddenly stop when claimants start work or increase their incomes. This measure is part of a package of changes announced in the Summer Budget 2015 such as the increase to the personal tax allowance and introduction of the national living wage.

If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

*Tours en*  
*D*

**Damian Hinds MP**  
**Minister for Employment**

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# Agenda Item 5

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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# Agenda Item 6

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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