

Y Gwir Anrh/Rt Hon Mark Drakeford AC/AM
Prif Weinidog Cymru/First Minister of Wales

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Y Dirprwy Weinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol
Deputy Minister for Housing & Local Government



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

secretaryofstate@dwp.gov.uk

17 April 2020

Dear Secretary of State

The Covid-19 (coronavirus) crisis has created unprecedented challenges both within Wales and across the UK. We welcome the close working that has been rapidly put in place between officials in the UK and Welsh Governments. We acknowledge the many changes to the UK social security system which you have been able to put in place quickly to help those suffering most financial hardship during this crisis.

We are seeing increasing numbers of people seeking urgent financial support and assistance, particularly to our Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF). One of the reasons we are seeing over a doubling of requests to our DAF is the increased number of claimants seeking support from Universal Credit who are not able to wait for the five weeks for their first payment of Universal Credit. We are particularly concerned that your department has not been able to make changes to the five week wait for the receipt of a first payment of Universal Credit, and therefore the continued reliance on advanced payments as a solution in this crisis. According to the latest statistics released from your department as between 1 March 2020 and 7 April 2020 there has been an increase of 82,500 new applications for Universal Credit in Wales.

We would like to see the following changes implemented as a matter of urgency that:

- there should be a reduction to the five-week wait for the first payment of Universal Credit for a new claimant by introducing a shorter and more flexible assessment period, and also by offering a one-off non-repayable grant at the start of the claimant's application for Universal Credit;
- all Universal Credit claimants to be offered an informed choice on the frequency of their payments of Universal Credit, for example, weekly, fortnightly or monthly;

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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.


- all Universal Credit claimants to be offered an informed choice regarding the payment of the housing costs element of Universal Credit (where applicable) direct to their landlord; and
- all Universal Credit claimants to be offered an informed choice regarding the split payment for Universal Credit as opposed to one household payment.

I attach our written evidence on the impact of the five week wait for Universal Credit which we have also copied to the Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP, Chair of the UK Parliamentary Committee on Work and Pensions, to contribute to their current inquiry on this matter. We are also copying both this letter and our written evidence to the Secretary of State for Wales.

Yours sincerely



MARK DRAKEFORD



HANNAH BLYTHYN