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Ms Mo Stewart
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Our ref: MC2025/118873

27 January 2026

Dear Ms Stewart,

Thank you for your email of 5 December 2025, about the health and disability benefits reform. I am grateful you have taken the trouble to get in touch about this, and I apologise for the delay in responding. The Department is actively looking at ways to improve and streamline our correspondence process.

In our Pathways to Work Green Paper, we committed to offering guaranteed work health and skills support to disabled people and people with health conditions on out-of-work benefits to get into work. People affected by benefit changes in April 2026 will be able to access a conversation about their needs, goals and aspirations; offered one-to-one follow-on support, and given help to access additional work, health and skills support that can meet their needs. Already, since August 2025 there have been over 1,000 Pathways to Work Advisers in place in Jobcentres across England, Scotland and Wales providing one-to-one personalised support to disabled customers and those with health conditions to help them move towards, and into, work.

We will continue to monitor the evidence relating to the previous policy changes and learn the lessons from them. The research you mention is pre-publication and undergoing peer review, and we look forward to that process taking its course and seeing a final paper.

It remains the case that the current incapacity benefit system looks significantly different from how it did in 2017, and the volume of customers in Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Support Group or Universal Credit Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity has increased substantially. Similarly, the gap between the benefit levels for those found to have Limited Capability for Work and other means-tested benefit customers. The steps to rebalance payment rates will address this by providing the first sustained, above-inflation increase to the Universal Credit Standard Allowance since it was introduced.

The Office for Budget Responsibility expects the rebalancing measures to lead to a positive impact on employment, and we are investing in additional employment support to help those who can work to find employment. We will continue to monitor the volumes of customers affected by this policy and understand the impacts.

Thank you once again for taking the trouble to write. Please do not hesitate to do so again about this or any other matter.

With all best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephen Timms". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP
Minister of State for Social Security and Disability