

Fixing Universal Credit

Some constituents have sent me copies of a national campaign email wanting the government to stop the roll out of Universal Credit, and expressing worries about it. I am pleased to report that when I visited our local Benefit Centre I was told that introducing it for new claimants had gone smoothly, and the system was liked by both staff and recipients who thought it superior to the multiplicity of benefits with different requirements under the old system. I have had very few constituency cases about it, and no pattern of systemic failures or major issues.

The government is going slowly over transferring existing benefit recipients onto it, and has promised people should not normally lose over it. The government is going to undertake a pilot and is ready to make changes if problems emerge. There has been understandable concern about the speed of receipt of first payments when going on to the system. I have lobbied on this with others, and some improvements have been made. I repeated this wish in the Commons during the Statement his week on UC.

I am also concerned about the treatment of housing costs, understanding that people cannot easily move into a smaller property when the benefit system says they no longer qualify for full rental assistance owing to the size of their home. I also raised this, and will follow up with the Minister who did not give a clear answer.