



Department
for Work &
Pensions

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Mr Rick Burgess
Outreach and Development Lead
Greater Manchester Disabled Peo-
ple's Panel (GMDPP)

30 March 2026

Dear Mr Burgess,

Thank you for your email of 17 March on behalf of several organisations, about people moving from income related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA(IR)) to Universal Credit (UC).

Universal Credit requires the customer to make a new claim to establish their entitlement. The department needs to verify the identity of customers before payment in all cases, to ensure that the benefit is paid accurately to the right people. DWP has some data sharing powers, but they are very strictly controlled and cannot be used to assess a new Universal Credit claim.

Up to December 2025 the department had issued migration notices to 878,000 household in receipt of ESA(IR) of which 848,000 had made a claim to UC. Of these who have received a migration notice, over 9,000 households have not yet reached their deadline date.

Support for customers moving to Universal Credit

The department recognises that people have different support needs, so a range of assistance is in place to help customers through the transition. This includes a dedicated DWP telephone number, the Move to UC Helpline, clear information on gov.uk, and independent support through the Help to Claim service delivered by Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland.

In addition, the department delivers an Enhanced Support Journey (ESJ) for customers who have not engaged with the DWP, twelve weeks after they have been sent a Migration Notice, which includes tailored support for ESA(IR) customers nearing their deadline. The ESJ includes contacting the customer by phone, and, where needed a home visit, with the ESJ tailored to the individual needs and circumstances of each customer.

As we move closer to the completion of Move to UC, the ESJ is now in place for all remaining customers, to ensure the small number of customers remaining on ESA(IR) are provided with additional support to claim Universal Credit as early as possible.

This support continues even if legacy benefits are terminated without a claim to Universal Credit during the 'grace period'. All Move to UC customers have a one month 'grace period' to claim UC and automatically have their UC claim backdated to the end of their legacy benefits, and do not lose entitlement to any transitional protection if they claim during this period. If the customer makes contact within the grace period, all efforts are made to support the customer to successfully claim UC.

The ESJ was developed with safeguarding in mind to provide a safety net for our most vulnerable customers receiving Income Support and ESA(IR). The department has continued to work closely with a variety of organisations through the development, informing and shaping the approach. If a safeguarding concern is identified where there is a risk of harm, abuse or neglect, all frontline staff have clear access to existing guidance, escalation and support, and can refer customers to local statutory safeguarding partners.

Visiting Officers

When a visit is booked, the visiting officer will attempt to book by phone in the first instance, having a conversation with the customer to introduce themselves and advise they will be coming to their home address. If preferred, a female visiting officer, can be requested as part of this initial conversation. Where a customer cannot be contacted by the visiting officer, the customer will instead receive a letter advising of the visiting officer's name so the customer can verify with them on the visit. Again, should the customer prefer a female visiting officer, they can contact DWP to make that request at this point. In both instances, their records can be updated for future reference.

Learning from Move to UC

DWP has undertaken research and published a number of insight documents that consider the customer experience with the Move to UC. Findings have been used throughout Move to UC to learn, iterate and improve the approach to processes. Below are the links to the latest two published reports:

[Completing the move to Universal Credit: Completing the move for households previously on Employment and Support Allowance - GOV.UK](#)
[Move to Universal Credit DWP Legacy Benefit Customers Qualitative Research - GOV.UK](#)

Completing Move to UC

In April 2025 DWP successfully completed the move of tax credit customers to Universal Credit. That allowed HMRC to abolish Working Tax Credits and Child Tax Credits. Income Support and (income based) Jobseekers Allowance will be abolished on 1st April 2026.

I am continuing to assess with DWP officials a safe time to close ESA(IR) and Housing Benefit for working aged people, excluding those in temporary and supported housing. Ensuring safe transition of these final groups to UC, to allow for the two remaining benefits to be abolished, is a priority for all involved in the transition.

For many people, engaging with Universal Credit is a very different experience to ESA. ESA customers often had little or no interaction with DWP. A number of customers who were able to manage their ESA claim have stated they require an appointee to manage their UC claim. The Move to UC activity has also highlighted changes for appointees as well.

I intend to exempt any customers who require time to find an appointee from the initial abolition date. Instead, DWP will provide customers with the additional time needed whilst a personal appointee is found, or a corporate appointee is agreed; and then give the new appointee a minimum of three months to make a claim to UC on behalf of the customer.

To make this exception easy for all customers, appointees and stakeholders to understand, all appointee cases will be exempt from the initial closure date. This does not mean that ESA will continue indefinitely for customers with appointees. A final closure date for those remaining on this exemption will be determined at a later date.

Your letter raised a number of concerns relating to specific customers. I would like to look into these cases and would welcome you contacting the Move to UC Stakeholder engagement team via email at universalcredit.engagementteam@dwp.gov.uk so they can investigate on my behalf.

Please do not hesitate to write again about this, or any other matter.

With all best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Timms', with a horizontal line above the name.

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