

Press release: Government proposal to move claimants on 'legacy' benefits to Universal Credit: consultation announced

The Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) has today launched a public consultation on proposals for moving all existing claimants of a working age income-related benefit to Universal Credit.

From next year DWP will begin the process of moving claimants in receipt of one or more of the following benefits to Universal Credit:

- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit

The wide-ranging draft legislation, which was presented to the committee for scrutiny at its meeting on 20 June 2018, sets out the government's proposals on:

1. requirements for claimants on existing benefits to make a claim for Universal Credit (including the deadlines for doing so) and arrangements for ending their existing benefit
2. the calculation, award and ongoing treatment of transitional protection

The task of safely moving around 3 million claimants (in around 2 million households) from legacy benefits to Universal Credit raises important questions about the delivery challenge facing the department and the potential impact on claimants.

SSAC has therefore decided to examine this draft legislation, and the impacts that flow from it, in more detail. To help inform this work, the committee would welcome evidence from a broad range of organisations and individuals who have good insight into and/or experience of the following aspects of these proposals:

- the overall migration timetable
- arrangements for contacting claimants and inviting claims from them
- issues associated with making a claim, and ending legacy benefit claims
- the calculation of transitional protection (including the treatment of earnings and capital)

- the impact of proposed transitional protection (including how easily it will be delivered and the degree to which it will be understood by claimants)
- the impact on workers, including the self-employed
- equality impact (whether there will be particular effects for different groups and how these can best be addressed), for example are there any groups that will not be covered by transitional protection?
- monitoring and evaluation

The committee would welcome responses to ensure that its advice to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is informed by a range of perspectives. The committee would welcome real or hypothetical case studies or specific examples as part of that evidence.

Paul Gray, the committee's Chair, said:

The planned rollout of Universal Credit is now reaching its most critical and challenging stage. The government's draft proposals involve major issues on both detailed entitlement rules and delivery logistics, and are due to be debated in Parliament later this year. SSAC is keen to ensure that the scrutiny report it submits to ministers and Parliament is as well informed as possible, and we therefore strongly encourage all organisations and individuals with relevant evidence to take part in this consultation process.

Please note that we are not consulting on the government's overarching Universal Credit policy, which is enshrined in primary legislation following Parliamentary scrutiny during the passage of the Welfare Reform Act 2012. Comments on this will not be considered.

Responses should be submitted to the Committee Secretary by no later than 10am on Monday 20 August:

The Committee Secretary
Social Security Advisory Committee
5th Floor
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Alternatively responses can be emailed to – ssac.consultation@ssac.gsi.gov.uk

SSAC is an independent advisory body of the Department for Work and Pensions. The committee's role is to give advice on social security issues; scrutinise and report on social security regulations (including tax credits) and to consider and advise on any matters referred to it by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions or the Northern Ireland Department for Communities.

The committee's Chair is Paul Gray. Its membership comprises: Bruce Calderwood, David Chrimes, Carl Emmerson, Chris Goulden, Philip Jones, Jim McCormick, Grainne McKeever, Dominic Morris, Seyi Obakin, Judith Paterson, Charlotte Pickles, Liz Sayce and Victoria Todd.

Most social security regulations come before SSAC for scrutiny, the only significant exceptions being regulations which go to other advisory bodies or set benefit rates. When SSAC has considered regulations which it has asked to be formally referred, its response is made in the form of a report to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. That report must be presented to Parliament when the regulations are laid with a statement from the Secretary of State showing what has been done (or is intended to be done) about the SSAC's recommendations (section 174(1) and (2) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992).

Further enquiries should be directed to Denise Whitehead, Committee Secretary, on 020 7829 3354.