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1 December 2016

Paul Gray  
Chair, Social Security Advisory Committee  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
London SW1H 9NA

*Dear Paul,*

**The Universal Credit (Housing Costs Element for claimants aged 18-21) (Amendment) Regulations 2016**

Thank you for your letter of 16 November confirming that the Committee decided not to take the above draft regulations on formal reference. I have now read the minutes from the Committee's meeting on 9 November at which the regulations were considered.

It was encouraging to learn that the thorough and measured way with which officials worked with relevant stakeholders was the main factor in how the Committee reached its decision. From the outset of shaping and developing this policy, I was always very clear that such a collaborative approach was vital if we were to deliver the proposals in a fair and rational manner, both protecting the most vulnerable and delivering on the Government's commitment.

With that in mind, I am only too happy to support your suggestion of conducting a short targeted consultation of appropriate stakeholders in the health sector, who will provide expert input on health issues affecting 18-21 year-olds, particularly mental health issues. My private office has already been in contact with officials leading this work to make clear that I very much support this proposal.

Turning to your second concern – the increasing expectations placed on Work Coaches. You are right to be mindful of the pressures placed on Work Coaches. I would suggest this is an issue that requires a corporate

response from the Department and I have therefore asked officials to consider this in the round.

With regard to the specific guidance for the 18-21 policy, I have been reassured by the officials leading this work that they are very much committed to sharing draft guidance with the Committee and indeed welcome this ongoing partnership with you.

As ever, I am grateful for your, and the Committee's, significant contribution in helping the Government deliver its welfare agenda.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, Caroline Nokes, Robert Devereux and Jeremy Moore.

*Yours sincerely*  
*David*

**Lord Freud**  
**Minister of State for Welfare Reform**