



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Minister for Welfare Delivery
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01 March 2021

Dr Stephen Brien,
SSAC Chair

Dear Stephen,

The Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for State Pension Credit) (Amendment) Regulations 2021

Thank you for your letter concerning the above which raises some interesting issues. The regulations were described at the Committee as addressing a lacuna, as although the Savings Credit element of Pension Credit was removed in 2016 new claimants have continued to receive an addition to their Housing Benefit to compensate for this. This transitional period was introduced to enable new claimants to adjust to the change. Therefore, people reaching state pension age since April 2016 have continued to benefit.

We have also adopted qualifying criteria for couples that mean only one partner will be required to reach state pension age before April 1st 2021 for entitlement to the higher rate of Housing Benefit to continue.

Maintaining the Savings Credit Uplift indefinitely for younger partners would however be inconsistent with the policy intent and extend the transitional period in the current regulations. It would represent a significant change in policy and a departure from the treatment of couples in other areas. There would also be significant challenges for local authorities in administering this proposal which would include changes to the Local Authority IT systems.

Having carefully considered the policy and operational implications of the Committee's suggestion we will therefore not be further extending entitlement to the Savings Credit uplift beyond the scope of these regulations.

On your second observation around the timing of the removal of bereavement protection, this protection sits within existing HB regulations and is not specific to the policy change in question. There are no plans to change this rule currently but we have noted your point on timing and will ensure this consideration feeds into any future policy development.

Discretionary Housing Payments can be paid to those entitled to Housing Benefit who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs. There is no limit to the length of time over which a Discretionary Housing Payment award may be made. It may be awarded for a short period to give a claimant time to deal with their financial circumstances or for an indefinite period until their circumstances change. The start and end dates of an award are decided by local authorities on a case-by-case basis.

I appreciate the Committee's interest in the potential for the regulation scrutiny to impact broader policy making.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Quince', written in a cursive style.

Will Quince MP

Minister for Welfare Delivery