



Department
for Work &
Pensions

**James Wolfe, Director of
Poverty, Family and
Disadvantage Directorate**
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Tothill Street
London
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Social Security Advisory Committee

30 March 2026

Dear Stephen,

The Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Jobseekers Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance (Claims and Payments) (Amendment) Regulations 2026

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your letter dated 27 January 2026 and for the Committee's full and thoughtful engagement both ahead of, and during, the scrutiny meeting on 21 January 2026.

I appreciated the constructive nature of the discussion and the opportunity to provide further clarity on the rationale for removing the sunset clause, as well as to outline the Department's ongoing evaluation activity. I am particularly pleased that the additional detail shared on the day regarding our engagement with a wide range of sources to monitor the impacts was helpful to the Committee.

I am grateful for the Committee's careful consideration of the detailed proposals and supporting evidence, presented by the Department, and welcome your confirmation that the Committee does not intend to take the Regulations on formal reference. We appreciate your support in allowing the Regulations to proceed as planned.

The Committee's advice and recommendations are that the Department:

- **Continues to monitor** the impacts of the policy, including any differential effects on lone parents and the children in their care.
- **Retains flexibility** in applying mitigations where individual circumstances may justify adjustments
- **Keeps under review** how the policy aligns with the Government's wider child-poverty objectives and Article 14 considerations.
- **Ensures clear signposting** through the Child Maintenance Service to debt advice and other appropriate support services, with provision of clear guidance on the treatment of child maintenance within debt-advice assessments.

The Government considers it important that parents contribute to the support of their children and recognises the positive impact that child maintenance payment can have to the receiving household. Prioritising the child maintenance deduction within the regulated order of deductions helps, in part, to support households that are dependent on receiving this vital payment.

The Department sets out its response to the recommendations below:

Recommendation 1: Continues to monitor the impacts of the policy, including any differential effects on lone parents and the children in their care.

Accepted

The Department will continue to monitor the impacts of the policy.

Our monitoring activity will include:

- Reviewing levels and themes of customer contact.
- Assessing customer complaints.
- Consider advice sought by the affected claimants, including lone parents, and their representatives.
- Monitor relevant Parliamentary Questions.
- Engage with and review feedback from external stakeholders.

We are confident that this comprehensive monitoring approach will provide robust and reliable insight into the policy's impact and ensure that any emerging issues are identified and addressed promptly.

Recommendation 2: Retains flexibility in applying mitigations where individual circumstances may justify adjustments.

Accepted in part

The Universal Credit deductions policy includes a range of flexibilities designed to support customers who may experience financial hardship due to the rate or speed of recovery of certain types of debt.

These include:

- Advances
- Benefit overpayments
- Social Fund loans
- Rent arrears

The introduction of the child maintenance deduction has not altered or extended any of the existing Universal Credit deduction flexibilities.

It is not possible to apply new specific mitigations or adjustments to a child maintenance Deduction from Benefit because the rate is fixed in legislation in Schedule 1, paragraph 4 of the Child Support Act 1991 and cannot be negotiated or altered on a case-by-case basis.

The Department will therefore use its existing levers outlined above to support customers who are experiencing financial hardship.

Recommendation 3: Keeps under review how the policy aligns with the Government's wider child-poverty objectives and Article 14 considerations.

Accepted

The Department will continue to keep under review how the policy aligns with the Government's wider child-poverty objectives. Routinely this will be done through our normal monitoring channels, for example, internal management information (MI), monitoring the receipt of Child maintenance payments from Universal Credit (UC) paying parents and monitoring of customer contact. We estimate that, due to this policy change, an additional 20,500 children are benefitting from the regular child maintenance payments to which they are entitled. This policy will also be considered as part of the wider child poverty strategy monitoring and evaluation to ensure it continues to have a positive effect.

As part of our reviewing and monitoring the policy, in relation to its impacts, we will examine how they interact with Article 14 considerations to ensure the policy abides with the considerations. If evidence shows that the policy is not aligned with those considerations, we will seek legal advice with regards to the appropriate next steps.

As previously communicated to the Committee, and with specific reference to Article 14 considerations, to fully understand all the impacts of the policy, in relation to how each of the different groups are affected, would require bespoke social research at a level of granularity that would not represent value for money for the taxpayer. Therefore, we will rely on the evidence gathered from our monitoring approach, as set out in our response in recommendation 1.

Recommendation 4: Ensures clear signposting through the Child Maintenance Service to debt advice and other appropriate support services, with provision of clear guidance on the treatment of child maintenance within debt-advice assessments.

Accepted

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) remains committed to providing comprehensive support to customers experiencing financial hardship, while also reinforcing that the child maintenance payment is recognised as a priority financial obligation.

In delivering this support, CMS staff will continue to engage with customers empathetically and constructively, ensuring they understand both their responsibilities and the options available to help them manage their situation. This includes proactively signposting individuals to appropriate national and local independent debt-advice organisations, enabling them to access support tailored to their personal circumstances.

In summary, the Department will continue to engage with the Social Security Advisory Committee and share a final update of the ongoing monitoring of the policy, with the date to be confirmed, in due course.

Yours sincerely,

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

James Wolfe, Director of Poverty, Family and Disadvantage Directorate