

Rt. Hon. David Gauke
Secretary of State for Work & Pension
Department for Work & Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London SW1H 9DA

13 October 2017

Dear Secretary of State,

London Borough Enfield - Proposed Rollout of Universal Credit November 2017

It is with dismay that I am advised that the DWP is proposing to commence the rollout of Universal Credit in the London Borough of Enfield from November 2017.

DWP staff have described a staged rollout over a four month period, starting in postcodes EN1, EN2, N9 and N13 concluding in February 2018.

The start of the rollout in November means that families claiming Universal Credit for the first time **will be left without benefit payments in the run up to Christmas.**

We have estimated that almost 250 households per month will be hitting a trigger to claim Universal Credit. Those switching over to Universal Credit from other benefits will also risk disruption to benefit income at an extremely challenging time of year for low income households.

By Christmas, we are anticipating 500 households will be making the transition to Universal Credit or making a fresh claim. Over time 24,000 Enfield residents will be transferred over to Universal Credit, many living in the private rented sector.

The volatile nature of Enfield's private rented sector is evidenced by Ministry of Justice figures which reveal that Enfield had the highest recorded number of possession orders – 2,314 – awarded during 2015/16. Enfield also has one of the highest number of local families living in temporary accommodation, with most households becoming homeless having been evicted from a private sector tenancy.

We have real concerns that the time taken to process Universal Credit claims, results in difficulties for advocates and claimants to get through to the processing centre with avenues of representation being severely restricted. This will have a negative impact on our local residents.

We strongly believe that the rollout of Universal Credit in Enfield must be undertaken in a way that allows local landlords to retain confidence in letting their property to those who receive benefit.

You will be aware that many statutory and voluntary services are closed or operating at a reduced level over the Christmas period and the assistance for local families, who are in financial difficulty, will be limited.

We are therefore asking you to urgently reconsider the decision to commence rollout of Universal Credit in November 2017 and consider a revised date no earlier than February 2018.



Doug Taylor
Leader of the Council



Cllr Joanne Laban
Leader of the Opposition