



Public Accounts Committee

Peter Schofield CB
Permanent Secretary
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9DA
By email: psa@dwpp.gov.uk

19 January 2023

DWP Treasury Minute responses

Dear Permanent Secretary,

Thank you for the evidence you provided at our 12 December 2022 session about the Restart scheme.¹ Towards the end of that session, we talked about some of the recommendations we have made in our recent reports and the Government's Treasury Minute responses, and I am writing to follow up on that.

It is vital that we understand how Government responds to our recommendations, and the progress that Government makes in response. We all want to make practical and helpful recommendations that will improve public services and help to achieve better value for money for the taxpayer.

We note that, recently, recommendations made by this Committee to your Department have been less likely to be accepted than recommendations we have made to the rest of Government. In the current financial year, you have so far responded via Treasury Minutes to 26 recommendations made by this Committee, accepting 17 and rejecting 9 - an acceptance rate of 65%, compared to 92% for the rest of Government over the same period.

We also note that, in some of the responses where you have accepted a recommendation and you have claimed it has been implemented, it is not always clear what your Department has changed to justify that statement. For example:

- In your Treasury Minute response to our Ninth report of Session 2022-23, on Child Maintenance², you said the Department had implemented a recommendation to develop a plan to 'assess, tackle and monitor' the 'take-up gap' between the number of separated parents that would benefit from using its statutory child maintenance service scheme and the number that actually use it. But the detail of your response gives no indication that a plan to assess, tackle and monitor the 'take-up gap' is in place.
- In your Treasury Minute response to our Thirty-Ninth Report of Session 2021-22, on the Kickstart Scheme³, you accepted a recommendation which included the Department ensuring

¹ Public Accounts Committee, [Oral evidence: The Restart Scheme for long-term unemployed people](#), HC 733

² Public Accounts Committee, [Child Maintenance- Ninth Report of Session 2022-23](#), HC 255

³ Public Accounts Committee, [DWP Employment Support: Kickstart Scheme- Thirty-Ninth Report of Session 2021-22](#), HC 655



Public Accounts Committee

that it can, and does, claw back funding it provided to employers for employment support costs, where the employer did not actually provide suitable employment support for the young person. However, the substance of your response only stated that you were "considering options for recovery of misspent funds" and we have not had an update on whether you did intend to claw back funding.

When you respond to future recommendations by this Committee, we ask that you look to focus your response on the substantive point of the recommendation we have made, explain clearly what has changed or will change as a result of the recommendation, and what the impact of this has been or will be. We are not looking for very lengthy responses, it should be possible to do this clearly and concisely. If you feel you must reject a recommendation, please set out clearly why you disagree with the substantive point of the recommendation, and set out what else you can do to address the concerns highlighted.

If you do ever find yourself uncertain about the substance of the recommendation, please seek clarification from the Committee clerks before submitting your Treasury Minute response.

I am copying this letter to the Comptroller and Auditor General, and to the Treasury Officer of Accounts.

Yours Sincerely

Dame Meg Hillier
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts