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Councillor Colin P Smith  
Leader of the Council  
London Borough of Bromley  
Room P15, Old Palace, Civic Centre  
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18 DEC 2017

*Dear Mr Smith,*

Thank you for your letter of 20 November to the Secretary of State about Universal Credit. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this area of the Department's work.

We have listened to recent concerns about Universal Credit and have now announced a number of further improvements to Universal Credit. These will begin to be delivered over the coming months. This package of measures not only addresses concerns raised around the first assessment period and the budgeting issues faced by some claimants at the start of their claim, but also supports the vast majority of claimants transitioning onto Universal Credit.

We are making advances in Universal Credit more generous in three key ways. We are increasing the repayment period to 12 months from the current six months, increasing the maximum amount people can claim up to 100 per cent of their estimated monthly entitlement and making advances available to apply for online. This will make it even easier for claimants to receive the support that they need.

We are also removing the seven-day waiting period that some claimants have at the start of their Universal Credit claim. In addition, for claimants already receiving support towards their housing costs, we are providing an additional payment of two weeks of their Housing Benefit to support them as they transition onto Universal Credit.

From April 2018, we will also change how claimants in temporary accommodation receive support for their housing costs. This will ensure local authorities can recover more costs and can therefore continue to offer

this valuable support to the most vulnerable. In addition, from December 2017, there will be new guidance for our staff to ensure we offer managed payments to landlords for claimants in the Private Rented Sector, who already receive this for their Housing Benefit.

It is also important to mention that the Department's research shows that the majority of people claiming Universal Credit are comfortable managing their budget and Jobcentre work coaches discuss budgeting support with all claimants in their very first work search interview.

Finally, we recognise that there are areas for improvement in the service, but with every release of new software and every new office that goes live with the Universal Credit full digital service, enhancements are made that improve the experience for claimants.

If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

*Sincerely*

*Damian Hinds*

**Damian Hinds MP**  
**Minister for Employment**