



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

### Response to ESA – WRAG changes following Lords amendments

Thank you for contacting me about reforms to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) contained in the Welfare Reform and Work Bill, which has now been approved by both Houses of Parliament.

From April 2017, new ESA claimants placed in the work-related activity group (WRAG) will receive the same rate of benefit as Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). This change only affects new claims after that date and will not affect those already receiving ESA.

Those in the WRAG currently receive additional cash payments but little employment support appropriate for their needs. Instead of spending money on cash payments, which are not having the desired effect of moving people closer to work, the Government wants to invest in additional practical support for people with limited capability for work. This new funding will be worth £100 million by 2020-21.

The amendments made to this policy in the House of Lords would have effectively prevented the Government's proposal from taking place, which is why I could not support them. The amendments would have blocked the reform until the Secretary of State published a report detailing the expected impact on claimants' health, finances and ability to return to work. It would have been impossible for the Government to provide the majority of what was being proposed, because the data available prior to actual implementation does not allow us to make any meaningful estimate of such impacts. What it is possible for the Government to provide in advance of implementation - the estimated financial effect of the reforms - has already been provided, along with other impacts, in the impact assessment that was published on 20 July last year.

The Government made a number of concessions in response to issues raised in both Houses, including an additional £15 million for the Jobcentre Flexible Support Fund to be targeted specifically at people with limited capability for work. The changes have been debated extensively and I think the Government has listened carefully to views expressed in those debates. I do think this reform is the right thing to do, and it has now been agreed by both the Lords and the Commons.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

**Edward Timpson MP**

EDWARD TIMPSON

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR CREWE & NANTWICH

30 VICTORIA STREET, CREWE CW1 2JE

[www.edwardtimpson.com](http://www.edwardtimpson.com) | 01270 501 725