

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

September 2021

Dear Constituent

Thank you for your email about the £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credits.

As I am sure you are aware, this extra support was announced by the Chancellor as a temporary measure in March 2020 to support those likely to be facing the most financial disruption as a result of the public health emergency. Alongside the temporary increase to Universal Credit and Tax Credits, the Government invested over £352bn in measures to create, support and protect jobs and businesses – as well as introduced measures such as mortgage holidays and additional support for renters, and has worked with energy suppliers to protect those struggling with energy bills.

I welcome that, on top of the planned uprating, the Government extended the temporary £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance until the end of September 2021, meaning that the additional support has remained in place well beyond the end of economic restrictions.

In the 10 years prior to the pandemic – employment was at record high levels, thanks to the Government's careful handling of the economy. This allowed the Government to provide an unprecedented response during the past 18 months. Now as we open up and our recovery gathers pace, it's right that focus is switched to getting people back into work and improving their prospects. To support this the Government announced a multi-billion-pound Plan for Jobs and the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, which will help an estimated 11 million adults have the opportunity to gain a new qualification for free.

I know my colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions remain focused on supporting people by helping them get back into work through the Government's Plan for Jobs, which is working.

Member of Parliament for Darlington

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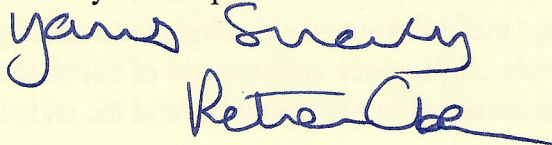
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I am encouraged to hear that the £2 billion Kickstart scheme has already seen over 145,000 vacancies created from a range of different sectors for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit, without thousands of young people already in Kickstart roles. Locally, our phenomenal Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen has been helping small businesses to access it, and he has helped 350 young people sign up. This will give young people across the Tees Valley; indeed, across the country, the practical experience that we know is so crucial in securing sustainable employment. Furthermore, the £2.9 billion Restart scheme, commencing on 28 June 2021 and referrals to providers starting from 12 July, will provide intensive help to over a million jobseekers who have been out of work for over 12 months.

I was glad to learn that as of 13 September, unemployment has fallen for six consecutive months and we have a lower unemployment rate than the US, Canada, France, Italy, Spain, and Australia. It is great to see that more than 85,000 new apprentices have been hired – with 75% under the age of 25. With job vacancies at a record high jobs are available across the country with the recent Office for National Statistics showing that the Government's plans for jobs is working.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter Gibson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

PETER GIBSON MP