

[Claimant 01]

Subject: As we near completion of the OPEN DWP pilot - please support national rollout

Dear [Chelmsford Job Centre Manager],

I'm writing as a Universal Credit claimant who has taken part in the **OPEN DWP pilot**, which is now **nearing completion**.

I want to thank you for giving me the chance to participate - and I also want to say plainly: **this has worked**. It has worked in a way I didn't expect, because it didn't just "support" me - it changed how I function week to week. It gave me structure, confidence, and evidence of progress.

Before the pilot, my weeks blurred into each other. Not because I didn't care, but because the pressure and uncertainty made it hard to plan, hard to explain myself, and hard to believe I was moving forward. I also did things that helped others: family support, neighbour help, community bits and pieces, but it felt invisible. If it wasn't paid, it didn't seem to count, and over time that knocked my self-esteem.

OPEN DWP gave me something I'd been missing: **a consistent rhythm, clear recording, and a way to turn effort into a usable record**.

What changed for me

1) Weekly rhythm and human support

The **weekly workshop** and the **telephone/video support** made a bigger difference than I can put into a single sentence. Having a set cadence, and knowing I could speak to someone without feeling judged, helped me stop spiralling and start planning. My week became: "What am I doing next?" rather than "What's the point?"

2) My contributions were treated as real

OPEN DWP helped me **legitimise community benefit**. I could record practical contributions and personal-development steps without trying to exaggerate them or apologise for them. I was treated like a person with agency.

3) I became more organised and more objective

I didn't realise how much I'd lost the habit of objective reasoning. The pilot helped me build **organisation, critical thinking, and practical decision-making**. I learned how to describe problems without getting stuck in emotion, and how to break time into actions I could actually do.

4) The tools removed friction and anxiety

- The **time recording tool** let me capture daily activity simply, and it produced clear weekly outputs - **UC-ready reports** that are consistent and evidence-based. It reduced the anxiety of trying to remember everything in an appointment.
- The **CV tool** was a turning point. I could **input a job spec** and get back a starter **CV and cover letter** that didn't pretend I was someone else, but also didn't undersell me. It helped me apply more consistently and with less stress.

A note on the Shareout and the “benefit fear”

I want to be honest about the part that people worry about: When I first heard about the **PHC Shareout**, a small pot primed by Order Efficiency, with an open request for local businesses to contribute, my immediate emotional response was fear: **“Will this affect my UC?”**

That fear is emotional, not logical but it’s real, and I think it’s a key reason many people stay stuck.

In the pilot, we didn’t ignore it. We discussed it openly and objectively. The Shareout is transparent and proportionate to recorded effort, not a gimmick and not a hidden wage. And crucially, OPEN DWP isn’t attractive to people who are trying to game the system: the programme requires **visible effort, honest recording, and accountability**, so people who aren’t serious simply don’t stay.

That combination (support + structure + transparency) helped me make a mental shift: **I can’t be terrified of progress and still expect my life to improve**. The pilot helped me move from fear to forward motion.

Why I’m writing to you now

Because we are approaching the end of the pilot, I feel strongly that you should hear this directly from a participant.

My recommendation is that **OPEN DWP should now be extended and rolled out nationally**, so that this same chance is available to **everyone on Universal Credit, all 8.5 million of us**.

I know “national rollout” is a serious statement. I’m not making it lightly. I’m making it because the pilot has demonstrated something practical:

- It turns vague effort into **evidence**.
- It reduces anxiety and improves the quality of claimant communication.
- It builds transferable skills and employability through repeatable weekly routines.
- It increases accountability in a way that is supportive rather than punitive.
- It naturally filters out “gaming” behaviour without confrontation.

From a claimant’s perspective, the pilot didn’t feel like another programme that talks at you. It felt like a framework that helps you rebuild yourself.

Thank you again for letting me be part of it. I hope you’ll support the next step, because if you had 200 letters like this on your desk, one from each participant, they would all say the same thing in different words:

“Please take what worked here, and give it to everyone.”

Yours sincerely,

[Claimant 01]

Universal Credit claimant and OPEN DWP pilot participant