Sir Mark Sedwill

Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service

c/o Rosebery Court

St Andrews Business Park

Norwich

NR7 0HS 29th May 2019

Dear Sir Mark

**Formal complaint about breach of Civil Service Code by**

**Department for Work and Pensions**

I am writing to you as head of the Civil Service to ask that you investigate the actions of senior civil servants in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in promoting a recent coverage in the local and national press and television about Universal Credit. I attach a copy of an internal DWP memo dated 2nd May 2019.

Putting aside concerns about the accuracy of what is being alleged in this publicity, I believe it should be of concern to you that the internal memo shows that senior DWP staff deliberately decided to deceive the public at large by deciding not to mention DWP as the source and author of these articles. The internal memo from DWP states: “**The feature won’t look or feel like DWP or UC – you won’t see our branding, and this is deliberate. We want to grab the readers’ attention and make them wonder who has done this ‘UC Uncovered’ investigation**.”

It is of further concern that this activity took place during the purdah periods for the European elections, and the launch was actually the day before the vote for MEPs. Universal Credit is a politically controversial issue and featured in campaigns by parties.

Civil servants of course are perfectly within their rights to attempt to put a positive tone on government policy. What is not acceptable is to produce or articles, especially about controversial subjects, which are designed to deceive the public and make the reader think they are not sourced from within the DWP. It is fundamentally misleading and is surely a breach of the Code’s requirement for honesty and not to deceive other people?

I would therefore be most grateful if you could investigate this in your capacity as Head of the Civil Service.

Yours sincerely

**Neil Bateman**