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Northern Ireland
Executive



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
Westminster
London
SW1A 2AA

01 October 2021

Dear Prime Minister

We are writing to call on you, with the utmost urgency, to reverse your Government's short-sighted decision to withdraw the £20-per-week uplift to Universal Credit.

Your Government is withdrawing this lifeline just as the country is facing a significant cost-of-living crisis. This winter millions of people are facing an untenable combination of increases to the cost of food and energy, rising inflation, the end of the furlough scheme, and an imminent hike to National Insurance contributions.

There is no rationale for cutting such crucial support at a point when people across the UK are facing an unprecedented squeeze on their household budgets.

Within the last month, an overwhelming majority of elected members in Holyrood, the Senedd, Stormont and Westminster have voiced their opposition to this cut to Universal Credit, as have the four social security committees of each parliament. The four Children's Commissioners of each nation, numerous charities and faith groups have also expressed their grave concerns as have millions of people who face additional and unnecessary hardship because of this cut to Universal Credit against the backdrop of a winter of hardship.

We note your Government's announcement of a Household Support Fund – an acknowledgment that too many people will be unable to make ends meet this winter. Unfortunately, a £500 million fund handed out on a discretionary basis is wholly inadequate to making up the £6 billion shortfall in social security expenditure that will result from the cut to Universal Credit.

Your Government has repeatedly refused to conduct any impact analysis on the biggest overnight reduction to the basic rate of social security for more than 70 years.

As such, it is important that we draw your attention to the growing body of evidence and analysis about the harm this cut will inflict. Research by the Resolution Foundation and the Trussell Trust has highlighted the significant and devastating impact the cliff-edge withdrawal of the £20-a-week uplift to Universal Credit will have on family incomes, with an associated rise in food insecurity. The Legatum Institute has produced sobering analysis highlighting that the £20-per-week uplift has kept 840,000 people, including 290,000 children, out of poverty in Q2 of 2021. It makes no sense at all to knowingly pursue a policy that will result in this immense and needless rise in child poverty and we ask you to consider the lasting harm and costs of this cut accordingly.

It is important to note that this will increase poverty and hardship without delivering any tangible social or economic benefits. The UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights said – when calling upon you to reverse this cut – that for a healthy and well-qualified workforce to emerge, your Government must provide adequate levels of social protection. Years of a freeze on benefits means Universal Credit has not kept pace with rising living costs. Further to this, rising inflation means that a basic rate of Universal Credit after this cut will hold less purchasing power than it did in March 2020.

To support a meaningful recovery from this pandemic we must first ensure the needs of our most vulnerable are met. This cut threatens to undermine the recovery by diminishing the capacity of six million people to make ends meet.

It is not too late for you to reverse the decision to take money out of the pockets of the poorest in society at a time when they are facing a serious cost of living crisis.

We, with the full support of the Northern Ireland Executive and the Scottish and Welsh Governments, urge you to consider the moral, social and economic harms of this cut, and do the right thing and reverse your decision to withdraw this lifeline.

A copy of this letter is being sent to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and relevant Secretary of States for the devolved nations.

Yours sincerely



Nicola Sturgeon
First Minister of Scotland



Paul Givan
First Minister of Northern Ireland



Mark Drakeford
First Minister of Wales



Michelle O'Neill
Deputy First Minister