Write to your MP

The purpose of writing is simply to try and influence your elected representative. You don’t need to be an expert to tell your MP what you think.

Writing to your MP for the #Universal Dis-Credit campaign

• Introduce yourself by name, and let your MP know you are their constituent.
• Tell them you are writing to them about Universal Credit and the benefits system.
• Tell them, while it isn’t enough, you are pleased there has been a £20 increase to Universal Credit, but that you are shocked people on other benefits have been left behind.
• Tell them why you are writing – make your letter as personal as possible. They will find it hard to ignore how the benefits system hurts their constituents and their families.

Write about what it is like to manage on such a small amount of money, and how it makes you feel.

• There are many problems with Universal Credit – you might also like to write about another specific aspect you feel strongly about: e.g. the 5 week wait, or the benefits cap.
• Ask clearly if they support the £20 increase to Universal credit being made permanent, and being extended to those on other benefits.
• Tell them you look forward to receiving their response.
• End with your full name, address and postcode.

Tips for contacting your MP

• Be polite – don’t give them an excuse to ignore your letter.
• Keep it simple: be brief & concise.
• Ask at least one question – this shows you expect an answer.
• Follow up – if you are not satisfied with your MP’s answer, say so; write again – or even phone and ask for a conversation.
• Encourage family, friends and colleagues to get involved. The more people your MP hears from, the harder it is to ignore.

How to find your MP

If you don’t know who your MP is, you can find out their name and contact details at the Find Your MP website. Alternatively, you can google your MP to find contact details.

SOME USEFUL FACTS AND FIGURES

Even with the £20 increase, Universal Credit (UC) is only worth 1/6th of the average weekly wage at £94 per week. If UC was paid at 80% of the real living wage, it would be £260 per week. (TUC, 2020)

The Trussell Trust found that foodbank use increased by a third in areas where Universal Credit had operated for a year and by 40% or more in areas where it had operated for longer. (2019)

In one recent Citizens Advice survey, over 50% of those claiming UC for the first time in lockdown, experienced hardship, and many were “too scared” to take out a DWP advance loan. (2020)

Those waiting for five weeks face destitution and were unable to eat properly, pay bills and fell into rent arrears. (Russell Trust, 2019)

On applying the UC £20 increase to those on legacy benefits week, the Government’s own Social Security Advisory Committee state: “We are of the strong view that it is increasingly untenable for this group of claimants to be excluded and to continue to have a lower level of income than those in receipt of Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit” (1st June, 2020)