

**The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP**

Prime Minister

10 Downing Street

London

SW1A 2AA

2 September 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to collectively urge you not to go ahead with the planned £20-a-week cut to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit at the beginning of October.

Many of us provide frontline support in communities up and down our country and see first-hand the importance of our social security system. Life is full of crises that we cannot plan for, such as job loss or illness, and periods of lower earnings or caring responsibilities. We all need the security and stability of a strong lifeline, not just during a national crisis, but every day.

Imposing what is effectively the biggest overnight cut to the basic rate of social security since World War II will pile unnecessary financial pressure on around 5.5 million families, both in and out of work.

At the start of the pandemic, the Chancellor rightly said that he was introducing the £20 increase to “strengthen the safety net” – a tacit admission that a decade of cuts and freezes had left it unfit to provide the support families need. We all strongly supported this crucial improvement in support.

We are at risk of repeating the same mistakes that were made after the last economic crisis, where our country’s recovery was too often not felt by people on the lowest incomes. The erosion of social security support was one of the main drivers of the rise in in-work and child poverty, and contributed to a soaring need for food banks, rising debt and worsening health inequalities.

We deeply regret that the Department for Work & Pensions has not published its assessment on the impact of cutting Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit. However, the latest independent analysis from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) shows it risks plunging 500,000 people into poverty, including 200,000 children. It will take the main rate of out of work support down to its lowest levels in real terms since around 1990.

This is not a question of having to choose between a recovery based on getting people into jobs or investing in social security, in fact most families impacted by this cut to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit are already in work. The reality of the UK

labour market means that to improve living standards, we need to both improve job quality and strengthen the social security system. We also must never lose sight of the need to provide adequate support to families who are not able to work so they can meet their needs with dignity.

Six former Conservative Work & Pensions Secretaries believe previous cuts to social security spending went too far and oppose this cut, and your own Conservative MPs are warning that it will have deep and far-reaching effects in their constituencies.

Recent analysis from JRF shows that 413 parliamentary constituencies across Great Britain will see over a third of working-age families with children hit by the planned cut to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit on 6 October 2021. Of these 413 constituencies, 191 are Conservative – 53 of which were newly won at the last general election or in a subsequent by-election.

This looming cut would fundamentally undermine the Government's mission to level up. Citizens Advice has identified that people are one and a half times more likely to claim Universal Credit in places the Government has prioritised for levelling up investment. They also found for every £1 that could be invested from the Levelling Up Fund in England, £1.80 would be taken from these local economies if the Government presses ahead.

Furthermore, it is unacceptable that legacy benefits, such as Employment and Support Allowance, Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support, continue to be excluded from this crucial improvement in support, mostly impacting people who are sick, disabled or carers.

We are rapidly approaching a national crossroads which will reveal the true depth of the Government's commitment to improving the lives of families on the lowest incomes.

We all want a social security system that supports families to escape poverty rather than pulling them deeper into it. However, this cut risks causing immense, immediate, and avoidable hardship. A strong social security system is a crucial first step to building back better. We strongly urge you to make the right decision.

Yours sincerely,

Action For Children

Advice NI

APLE Collective

The Association of Charitable Organisations

Become

Bevan Foundation

The Big Issue

Bright Blue

The British Association of Social Workers

British Psychological Society

Business in the Community

Carers UK

Caritas Social Action Network

Centre for Cities

Centrepoin

Child Poverty Action Group

Children England

Christians Against Poverty

Church Action on Poverty

Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice Scotland

Citizens UK

Communities that Work

Crisis

Disability Benefits Consortium (a network of over 100 disability organisations)

Employment Related Services Association (ERSA)

End Child Poverty Coalition

End Furniture Poverty

The Equality Trust

The Faculty of Public Health

Family Fund

Feeding Britain

The Food Foundation

Generation Rent

Gingerbread, the charity for single parent families

Greater Manchester Poverty Action  
The Health Foundation  
Homeless Link  
The Hygiene Bank  
Independent Food Aid Network  
Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)  
Joseph Rowntree Foundation  
Jubilee Debt Campaign  
Learning and Work Institute  
Little Village  
Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales  
Macmillan Cancer Support  
Mental Health Foundation  
Mind  
Money Advice Trust  
The MS Society  
National AIDS Trust  
National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)  
National Children's Bureau  
National Education Union  
National Housing Federation  
National Residential Landlords Association  
National Survivor User Network  
Neighbourly  
New Economics Foundation  
North East Child Poverty Commission  
Northern Housing Consortium  
Octavia

One Parent Families Scotland  
Oxfam GB  
PlaceShapers  
Policy in Practice  
The Poverty Alliance  
The Poverty Truth Community  
Rethink Mental Illness  
RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)  
RNID  
The Robertson Trust  
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health  
Royal College of Psychiatrists  
Royal Society for Public Health  
The Runnymede Trust  
The Salvation Army  
Save the Children  
Scope  
Scottish Out of School Care Network  
Shelter  
St Mungo's  
Standard Life Foundation  
StepChange  
Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming  
SVP Northern Ireland  
Transforming Lives for Good (TLG)  
The Trussell Trust  
Trust for London  
TUC (Trades Union Congress)

Turn2us

UCL Institute of Health Equity

UK Women's Budget Group

Women's Regional Consortium Northern Ireland

Working Families

Young Lives vs Cancer

Young Women's Trust

Z2K

4in10 London's Child Poverty Network

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