

Therese Coffey MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

19 July 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

Universal Credit Uplift

I am writing to you regarding the £20 Universal Credit uplift that was introduced by the UK Government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The decision to introduce the uplift was one that the Poverty Alliance, Scotland's anti-poverty network, strongly welcomed: it was a decision that recognised that the impact of the pandemic was, and continues to be, felt most by people living on low incomes. The uplift has acted as a lifeline for many people and families in Scotland and across the rest of the UK, who would otherwise have been pulled even deeper into hardship.

We are, therefore, deeply concerned by your recent confirmation that the uplift will be withdrawn in September. We must be clear about what this decision will mean if implemented. It will mean more people being forced to food banks, more people forced to choose between heating their home and paying their rent, and more children seeing their lives and life chances damaged due to poverty. At a time of rising hardship, this cannot be the moment to pull away a lifeline that has kept so many people afloat. To do so, at a time when we are looking to rebuild our society, would be an injustice that would serve only to tighten the grip of poverty on people's lives.

On 27th May, we submitted a Freedom of Information request to your department, requesting any analysis that you have undertaken on the potential impact on poverty of withdrawing the £20 uplift. The response from your department cited section 35(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. This meant that we were denied the disclosure of information and told that it was not in the public interest for it to be released.

However, we believe that it is clearly in the public interest to know whether this decision will deepen poverty for thousands of people across our country. We urge you to sanction the release of this analysis so that the public understand the likely impact of this decision.

There is still time for the UK Government to change course, and we urge you to listen to the voices of people struggling to stay afloat across the UK, and to do so.

We would be happy to meet with you to discuss this issue in more detail at a time of your convenience, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the end of the name.

Peter Kelly

Director, Poverty Alliance