

New statistics show Universal Credit in 'total disarray' – Debbie Abrahams MP

New data published today by the Department for Work and Pensions shows that Universal Credit is in 'total disarray' and urgently needs to be paused.

The data shows that:

- One in four new claimants are now having to wait longer than six weeks to receive payment. This has deteriorated from one in five claimants, driving many into debt and arrears.
- 42 per cent of families in arrears under Universal Credit state that it is due to the waiting times to receive payment, support being delayed or stopped, or administrative errors in the system.
- Half of families in arrears under Universal Credit have said that their rent arrears started after they made their claim.
- Half of new Universal Credit claimants need a DWP loan to cover the six week wait for their first UC payment being enforced by this Government. This suggests that the Department accepts that half of new recipients are unable to go six weeks without UC support. However, the advance loan requires rapid repayment, exacerbating the high levels of debt and arrears among Universal Credit claimants.

This new evidence appears to confirm the findings of a report by Citizen's Advice, published this week, which shows that Universal Credit is increasing debt among low income families. For 79 per cent of those asked, having priority debts such as rent or council tax is "putting them at greater risk of eviction, visits from bailiffs, being cut off from energy supplies and even prison." This figure is up 10% compared with those on legacy social security payments such as Jobseekers' Allowance. The same report also found that 2 in 5 have no money to pay creditors as their monthly spend on essential living costs is more than their income.

Debbie Abrahams MP, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, said:

"The Government's flagship Universal Credit programme is in total disarray. It is unacceptable that one in four claimants are waiting more than six weeks to receive support, alongside mounting debts and arrears among recipients.

"I have written to the Secretary of State requesting that he immediately halt the roll out of Universal Credit to contain the misery being caused by the disastrous mishandling of this programme.

"In our manifesto we set aside £10bn for reform of the social security system, including transforming Universal Credit, to ensure that, like the

NHS, it is there for us all in our time of need.”