

# Tories must halt Universal Credit roll-out

## TORIES MUST HALT UNIVERSAL CREDIT ROLL-OUT

Scottish Labour deputy leader Alex Rowley has today demanded that Tory plans to roll-out Universal Credit are halted. Alex has written to Conservative Work and Pensions Secretary David Gauke, amid growing concerns that families are being pushed into poverty and debt. He has also challenged Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson to get behind our campaign.



Universal Credit, which will replace six existing benefits, is supposed to make access to social security payments less complicated. It has been rolled out in parts of Scotland and is due to be introduced in full across the country by the end of 2018 – starting this October. But there are particular concerns about the six-week waiting period for payments at the start of the process.

Since Universal Credit was introduced, Citizens Advice Scotland evidence in initial roll-out areas shows:

- A 15 per cent rise in rent arrears issues compared to a national decrease of 2 per cent.
- An 87 per cent increase in Crisis Grant issues compared to a national increase of 9 per cent.
- Two of five bureaux in impacted areas have seen a 40 per cent and a 70 per cent increase in advice about access to food banks advice, compared to a national increase of 3 per cent.

A Labour government would act immediately to end the worst excesses of the Tory government's changes, and would rebuild and transform our social security system.

Scottish Labour's summer campaign, For The Many, will this week focus on tackling inequality. You can read more about the campaign [here](#)

Read Alex's letter to David Gauke MP in full:

*Dear Secretary of State,*

I am writing to you regarding the accelerated roll-out of Universal Credit. I have been in contact with organisations in my area, and have met with many constituents at local job clubs and heard first-hand some of the issues around the roll-out of Universal Credit. There is a very real concern that the system as it is operating is leaving many in poverty and debt. The intention behind Universal Credit is supposedly to make access to social security less complex, and to further support people into work. This cannot be the case if it is leaving people without the vital support they need and drives some to have to rely on foodbanks simply to survive. Of particular concern is the six week waiting period for payments at the start of the process. This is resulting in people ending up with rent arrears, increased reliance on crisis grants and relying on foodbanks for the very basic necessity of feeding themselves. The evidence to show all of this is now available from the pilot roll out areas as highlighted by Citizens Advice Scotland in a recent publication. People have also reported that they are finding the process particularly complicated, which is resulting in more time spent ensuring that the bureaucratic process has been followed to avoid sanctioning, and less time actually available to look for work, or to develop the skills needed for work. There are also serious problems with individuals struggling to manage their claims online due to lacking digital skills or access to a computer. It is for these reasons that I am asking that the accelerated roll-out of Universal Credit be halted until these problems can be resolved. If the system as it is operating puts more people in poverty or debt, or even increases the risk of these, then it should not continue in that form. Universal Credit must operate in a manner that helps individuals who need that support. Surely it cannot be right or acceptable that it hurts the very people it is designed to help. Any changes to social security must be designed and implemented to support those individuals who rely on it. It can't simply be a rigid administrative process, it must look beyond the process itself and see what impact it is having for the lives of those that use it. With this roll-out of Universal Credit we are seeing the impact it is having on people's lives, and it is raising serious concerns. I look forward to your response on how the DWP intend to resolve these worrying problems and I do hope in the meantime you will delay the roll out until assurances are in place that these concerns which are driving people into poverty are resolved.

Yours sincerely,  
Alex Rowley MSP