

Universal Credit “is hitting the most vulnerable in Wales”

Rebecca Evans said:

“Foodbank use in areas where Universal Credit has been rolled out has increased by 30% according to National Audit Office statistics, compared to a 12% increase in non-Universal Credit areas. This is extremely worrying.

“A Universal Credit claimant survey from Esther McVey’s own department shows that four in ten claimants were experiencing financial difficulties, and that 46% of new Universal Credit claimants need help to make their claim online.

“I have asked the Secretary of State to make Universal Support for people who claim Universal Credit available as widely as possible to help those people who are experiencing difficulties in managing their finances, and for those who are struggling with digital access.

“The recent National Audit Office report was clear; local authorities, housing associations and landlords are all seeing an increase in rent arrears since the introduction of Universal Credit.

“This chimes with many concerns raised and reported to me by the housing sector in Wales.

“The National Audit Office highlighted that the system is lacking in ways to identify vulnerable people, which makes it difficult to see how they are getting the right support, from the outset when they apply for Universal Credit. I have asked the Secretary of State to explain how she plans to rectify this.

“People who are more vulnerable can be offered alternative payment arrangements through Universal Credit, but we are seeing real inconsistencies in the way this is offered to claimants; the Department of Work and Pensions’ own claimant survey indicated that as many as 48% of those surveyed had to request this themselves, rather than being offered it proactively.

“I am deeply concerned about the flaws of Universal Credit, and its impact on the most vulnerable people in Wales, and I will continue to press the UK Government on addressing these.”