

# MSP calls for U-turn on Universal Credit

Edinburgh Northern and Leith MSP Ben Macpherson has renewed calls for an immediate halt to Universal Credit after it was revealed that Edinburgh council is spending millions of pounds to undo the damage of what he describes as a 'failed Tory policy'.

A series of Freedom of Information requests discovered that local authorities in Scotland have spent more than £24 million to mitigate the harmful effects of Universal Credit, which has faced huge backlash since its introduction.

The City of Edinburgh Council has set aside £3 million for spending related to UC, but since the associated costs are tied up in wider service improvements, UC's financial impact on the council is likely to be higher.

Universal Credit is being rolled out across Edinburgh from this week, but recipients will have to wait until the New Year to receive their first benefit payment.

One of the UK's biggest housing associations said that more than 100,000 children could face hardship over Christmas because of this five week wait, and the Trussell Trust has warned that they are preparing for their busiest month ever – after a 15% rise in foodbank use in Scotland in the past year.



Ben Macpherson – SNP –  
Edinburgh Northern and  
Leith Photo – Andrew  
Cowan/Scottish Parliament

SNP MSP Ben Macpherson said: “Universal Credit is currently a broken system – it’s leaving people destitute, driving children into poverty and forcing families to rely on foodbanks.

“And these latest eye-watering figures show that the City of Edinburgh Council has had to put aside £3 million to mitigate the effects of this disastrous Tory UK Government policy, which is being imposed on Scotland. That is fundamentally unfair.

“The UK Government should do the right thing and immediately halt their disastrous rollout of Universal Credit, until they can fix this broken policy. Or, better still, all welfare powers should be put in the hands of the Scottish Parliament, so that we can make alternative and better decisions on all aspects of social security, based on the principles of dignity, fairness and respect.”