

Cut to Universal Credit comes into effect from today despite opposition

The move to reverse the uplift of £20 a week which was added to Universal Credit at the beginning of the pandemic has been condemned by many in Scotland, particularly those in the government.

Social Justice Secretary Shona Robison has expressed dismay at the withdrawal of the £20-a-week Universal Credit uplift which comes into effect on Wednesday.

Ms Robison said: “This is a sad and disappointing day. It is a cruel irony the £20-a-week uplift to Universal Credit is being withdrawn in a week in which we are being asked to Challenge Poverty.

“The move has already been condemned by the First Ministers and Children’s Commissioners of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, countless charities and campaigners, the United Nations’ poverty envoy and even former Secretaries of State for Work and Pensions.

“People are bracing themselves against soaring food and fuel costs, the end of the furlough scheme, and imminent increases in National Insurance contributions.

“Millions of people, and their communities, will be negatively impacted by the withdrawal of these lifeline payments. The

Scottish Government have set out a range of ambitious actions to tackle child poverty, but this undermines so much of what we want to achieve.”

Last week The Scottish Parliament voted overwhelming to support cancelling the Tory UK Government’s planned £20 a week cut to Universal Credit.

Gordon MacDonald MSP for Edinburgh Pentlands also raised the matter with Ms Robison seeking information on what representations The Scottish Government has made to the UK Government.

Ms Robison confirmed that the Scottish Government had written to the UK Government on eight separate occasions since March 2020 to ask it to retain the £20 uplift. In addition on 30 August, Ms Robison joined colleagues from Wales and Northern Ireland to write to the UK Government to urge it to retain the uplift. They are yet to receive a response.

Mr Macdonald said: “The Scottish Parliament overwhelmingly spoke and demanded the Tory UK Government halts their plans to scrap the uplift to Universal Credit. Sadly, we also witnessed every single Tory MSP failing to stand up to their Westminster bosses in opposing the £20 a week cut – the biggest welfare cut since the 1930s at the worst possible time. Even former Scottish Tory leader, Ruth Davidson and six former Tory DWP Secretary of States, opposed the cut.

“I am standing up for the 32,022 households impacted across Edinburgh, but the Tory Government at Westminster has now implemented their plans that will rip more than £1,000 a year out of the hands of the most vulnerable at a time when they need it most.

“I am quite frankly shocked, but not surprised, that the Scottish Tory MSPs not only voted to back the Universal Credit cut which will condemn thousands of families to poverty, but actively defended it – the Nasty Party is well and truly back.

“History will remember them for this – Scottish Tory MSPs are letting down thousands of families and children with this callous cut in favour of propping up their Tory chums in the UK Government who are imposing these policies on the people of Scotland.

“This demonstrates once again how the people of Scotland cannot afford to continue to suffer under Westminster control. We need to have the option of choosing a different path in a referendum which can give us the full powers of independence where we can build a fairer Scotland.”

Scottish Greens social security spokesperson Maggie Chapman MSP said: “People across the country are in dire financial straits. As household energy bills soar, national insurance is hiked, and runaway inflation means prices are outstripping wages it is shameful that Boris Johnson’s government has chosen this moment to inflict the largest cut to social security since the welfare state was first introduced.

“At a conference sideshow this weekend Scottish Tory leader Douglas Ross laughingly claimed that his is the party of the working class. He has previously claimed they are the party of “family values”. Well, they’ve got a funny way of showing it. This ideological attack on Scotland’s working class will plunge thousands more working-class families into extreme poverty. Scotland can, and must, choose a different path.”

Earlier in the week, the Midlothian MP, Owen Thompson, urged the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, to do the right thing and make a U-turn on the proposed cut. Mr Thompson said: “It’s not too late for the Tories to do the right thing and reverse this senseless cut to the income of the poorest households. Around 8,500 in Midlothian are set to be hammered by this cut, at a time when the cost of living is soaring.

“During Challenge Poverty Week, the Conservatives have it in their gift to prevent thousands more people being pushed into

poverty by reversing this cut. I call on them to listen to the united voices from across civic society, and across the political spectrum, urging them to do so.

“The wealthy Ministers in this Conservative government may be far removed from the reality of life on the breadline, but even two thirds of their own supporters see this as a cut too far. It represents the biggest overnight reduction to a basic rate of social security for over 70 years.

“It comes at a time when the UK is already suffering from the highest levels of in-work poverty this century.

“It is not only morally reprehensible to cut this lifeline support, it cannot be justified on economic terms either.

“The UN’s rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights pointed out that for a healthy and well-qualified workforce to emerge, the government must provide adequate levels of social protection.

“If we want to rebuild a fairer country, we must start by reversing this decision.”

Save the Children

The charity Save the Children say that between now and early November, over 360,000 families – from nearly 250,000 households in Scotland, who are in receipt of Universal Credit will have their payments reduced– by £87 a month or £1,040 a year, that more than 103,000 families in Scotland with children on Universal Credit have a child of primary school age or younger, and that 20,000 more children in Scotland will be pushed into poverty as a result of the cut.

Claire Telfer, Save the Children’s Head of Scotland said: “The UK government’s decision to go ahead with this cut will devastate families in Scotland. Over the next month, over 360,000 children will be affected with a further 20,000 pushed

into poverty.

“People we work with tell us they’ve been relying on this £20 lifeline to buy essentials like food and clothing for themselves and their children. Without it, tens of thousands more children are facing a cold and hungry winter. And we know the impacts of childhood poverty can last a lifetime.

“It’s astonishing that UK Government ministers have chosen to inflict the most significant social security cut in memory at the same time that families are grappling with a cost-of-living crisis; Inflation, increases in energy prices, fuel shortages and tax hikes are all taking their toll on family finances. For many, this will be a significant catastrophe of falling income and rising costs. The UK Government has a duty to protect families from hardship and not add to it.

“The UK Government must change course. In his budget announcement later this month, the chancellor should reinstate the £20 lifeline. Children will be affected immediately by this change as well as throughout the course of their entire childhoods and beyond.”

If you are affected by this cut please get in touch to tell us your story. Tell us more [here](#).