

Text of letter from 1100 church leaders to the Prime Minister – 28 Sept. 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

We stand together as church leaders from across the UK to urge you to think again about cutting Universal Credit payments by £20 a week from the start of October.

If the Government persists with this cut, it would be the single biggest overnight reduction in the basic rate of social security since the welfare state was established in the 1940s. Millions of low income households will be swept further into poverty as a result.

As Christians, we are compelled by the gospel imperative to prioritise the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable.

As church leaders, we must speak up, because of the impact this will have on our poorest neighbours and church members.

We urge the Government to choose to build a just and compassionate social security system that our whole society can have confidence in.

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, poorer people in communities all over the country were suffering because the lifelines they needed from our social security system and vital neighbourhood services were not strong enough. Analysis by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has shown that the cut will particularly hit the north of England, the West Midlands, Wales and Northern Ireland. Rather than levelling up the UK, this will compound existing inequalities.

The loss of £1,040 a year will be devastating for many families at a time when energy bills and other household costs are increasing. Instead we can make sure our social security system brings stability, and opens up options and opportunities for people whose income is too low or insecure to make ends meet.

The cut has already been opposed by community groups up and down the country, charities, six former Conservative Work and Pensions Secretaries, and many MPs from all parties. This is an opportunity for the Government to send a message that it listens, and recognises the pressure faced by those on the frontline.

Universal Credit has been a vital lifeline throughout the pandemic. For the sake of millions of families, it must be retained at its current level, and we therefore reiterate the calls for the planned £20 a week cut to be withdrawn.

Yours sincerely