

How Wirral Foodbank Are Campaigning to “Guarantee Essentials”

30/10/2024

Trussell is a community of foodbanks across the country, of which Wirral Foodbank is one. Trussell’s main campaign currently is a call to “guarantee essentials”, something we at Wirral Foodbank are backing wholeheartedly. In this, we are recognising that the standard rate of Universal Credit, is not enough to cover their essentials needed to live.



The Trussell website explains:

“The basic rate of Universal Credit should at least cover the cost of essentials like food, household bills and travel, but it is not currently set according to any objective assessment of what people need.”

Trussell have subsequently set up a petition to campaign for the Government to uplift Universal Credit to match what is needed for clients to afford the essentials, in doing so alleviating the need for food support.

So far over 150,000 people have signed this petition that calls for the principle that Universal Credit provides the minimum needed to afford basic essentials and for this to be “enshrined in law”.

Taking on board the average costs for essentials found* by Trussell, where for a single person food cost accumulated to £39 per week, travel to work (or other essential travel) cost £16, water and energy per person cost £33 in total and mobile phone charges £9, at the minimum amount required for these essentials. This means going without extras such as replacing old clothes or household toiletries.

Chris**, a client of Wirral Foodbank was recently let go from his employment and applied for Universal Credit whilst looking for another role. He spent all this Universal Credit at basic rate in five days and then had to rely on family and friends to cover the cost of extras such as those

** Name changed for anonymity purposes

***Taken from latest figures on the Government website

**** [The scale of the challenge: JRF's pre-election cost of living tracker | Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)

above. Chris is not in a unique position, because the basic rate of Universal Credit is around £93 per week, (if you are single and over twenty-five) most people receiving the standard amount of Universal Credit are in budget deficit.

Findings from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation**** in December 2023 – May 2024, found that “86% of families on Universal Credit were still going without essentials”. This showed “no change in the proportion going without essentials” this figure since they last completed a survey in October 2023. Their findings found that whilst “benefit rates have increased” they still “lag” behind “inflation and earnings’.

We are campaigning with Trussell to call on the UK government to put in place an essentials guarantee for Universal Credit. There should be a measure in place whereby the standard rate of Universal Credit always matches the actual cost of living. This includes, food, water, energy, wifi, phone, transport, clothes, toiletries, medicines, cleaning products, council tax etc.

We will hold an event at Birkenhead Townhall later this month and will participate in upcoming Trussell campaigning activities.

October 2024, Molly Bostock, Wirral Foodbank Campaigner Volunteer

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