

Universal Credit – why we should act

You will have heard on the news and read in the press about the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) by the Government. The roll-out is slow, but the evidence is that it **causes substantial hardship** to people who are moved onto this new benefit. In areas where it has already been introduced, foodbanks have experienced significant additional demand from people left without money for food as their UC claims are processed. The Methodist Church, alongside other Churches in Britain, are campaigning to pause UC while the flaws are removed so that it helps people out of poverty not make it worse for them.

The design of UC does not reflect the realities of those who will depend on it. The design assumes substantial savings, IT access and literacy as well as monthly salaries. **This is not so** for many people who will have no choice but to rely on UC.

The monetary value of UC has been significantly eroded. 4 in 10 UC claimants report they are in serious financial difficulties. The benefit freeze, cuts to work allowances, cuts to the underlying tax credit rates and a number of other detailed changes have transformed UC from **a poverty reducing measure to a poverty increasing measure**.

We can continue to help by supporting 'One Can' in Wycombe and Marlow and we can also write to our MPs to ask that changes be made to UC before it is introduced in our area – two important changes that are needed are –

- **an end to the five week wait for Universal Credit**
- **an end to the benefit freeze - this is the largest but least dramatic benefit cut - by 2020 it is expected to cost over 10 million families each year £800 each year**

Your MP will be either Steve Baker for Wycombe or Dominic Grieve for Marlow – you can check using the Parliament website – www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/ - and write to them at – House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA – or send an email (details from the same website).

It would be helpful to know whether our MPs are replying and what their responses are, so if you wish to, please send a copy of any reply you receive to –

Neil Manthorpe, (Senior Steward – MMC)
seniorsteward@marlowmethodistchurch.org.uk

For more information do get in touch or see – www.jointpublicissues.org.uk

Thank you for being part of ending poverty in Britain

Rachel Lampard, the leader of the Joint Public Issues Team, and a former Vice-President of Conference is speaking on the subject of poverty at Wesley Methodist Church on Wednesday 27th March at 7.30pm – this is part of a Churches Together in Wycombe series for Lent - <http://www.allsaintshighwycombe.org/cthw.html>