



Department
for Work &
Pensions

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Dear Iain,

Thank you for your email of 27 September on behalf of your constituents about a recent report by the Trussell Trust concerning foodbank usage. I am replying as the Minister for Social Mobility, Youth and Progression.

Please pass on my thanks to your constituents for taking the time to write in raising this issue. I write to you with the latest update and I hope that they will find the following comments to be helpful.

The Government recognises the pressures people are facing and has acted, providing total support of over £94 billion over 2022/23 and 2023/24 to help households and individuals with the rising cost of living. In April 2023 we uprated benefit rates and State Pensions by 10.1 per cent, as well as increasing benefit cap levels by the same amount.

Universal Credit awards are formed of a Standard Allowance, paid according to age and family status, plus help with eligible housing costs, which can then be supplemented with additional elements for groups recognised as having additional needs, such as parents, disabled people, and carers.

The rates of benefit are not determined by individuals' living costs and so it is not possible to provide a breakdown of these amounts by reference to separate amounts for specific items of expenditure, such as the TV licence, gas, electricity, and food.

The Government firmly believes claimants should be free to spend their benefit as they see fit, in line with their individual needs and preferences. We do not consider it appropriate to introduce changes that would prioritise one particular area of household expenditure over the cost of other essential goods and services.

The Government is committed to a sustainable, long-term approach to tackling poverty and supporting people on lower incomes. In 2023/24 we will spend around £276 billion through the welfare system in Great Britain including £114 billion on people of working age and children.

The Government understands the pressures people are facing and are taking action to support them, providing total support of over £94 billion over 2022/23 and 2023/24 to help households and individuals with the rising bills.

Households on eligible means-tested benefits will get up to £900 in Cost of Living Payments, paid in three separate payments of £301, £300, and £299 across the 2023/24 financial year. We have already delivered the first £301 payment to 8.3 million households.

The qualifying period for the second payment of £300 was 18 August to 17 September 2023. Most people who are eligible will be paid between 31 October 2023 and 19 November 2023. There will be a further payment of £299 in Spring 2024 for eligible claimants.

In addition, over six million people across the UK on eligible 'extra costs' disability benefits have been paid a £150 Disability Cost of Living payment and more than eight million pensioner households will receive an additional £300 Cost of Living Payment during Winter 2023/24.

For those who require extra support, the Government is providing an additional £1 billion of funding, including Barnett impact, to enable the extension of the Household Support Fund in England this financial year to continue to provide discretionary support to those most in need with the significantly rising cost of living. It will be for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate their additional Barnett funding.

Allocations for the current Household Support Scheme running from April 2023 can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils/household-support-fund-grant-determination-2021-no-315787.

Finally, the Department for Work and Pensions does not have any role in the operation of foodbanks. Foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations which bring people in local communities together to support one another and this is a great example of the generosity of spirit of communities across the country. We take the issue of food security seriously, which is why we added internationally used food security questions to the Family Resources Survey in 2019/20. These questions remain in the survey and will allow us to track food security over time.

Building on the food insecurity data which this Government first published in 2019/20, we have published official estimates of foodbank use for the first time.

The new statistics on foodbank usage will help the Government to understand more about the characteristics of people most in need and we will continue to work across Government to support the most vulnerable.

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Mims". The letters are cursive and connected, with a small dot above the 'i'.

Mims Davies MP
Minister for Social Mobility, Youth and Progression