



Work and Pensions Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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From the Chair

Neil Couling CBE
Director General, Universal Credit
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House, Tothill Street
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18 December 2018

Dear Neil,

I understand that you have written to the Trussell Trust, and to other food banks, to seek their help in promoting awareness of the availability of Advance payments of Universal Credit. Your letter says that you wish to ensure that “claimants for Universal Credit are fully aware of the help they are entitled to”.

Your letter does not, however, mention that Advances are a loan which must be repaid. Many people who need to rely on food banks will already be swamped by debt. The “help” you are offering would simply pile another debt on top and add to their misery, particularly if sums are deducted from their Universal Credit payments in January to begin repaying this debt.

As Christmas approaches, is there not a better way please for the Department to help claimants than plunging them further into debt?

Best wishes and I look forward to hearing from you,

Rt Hon Frank Field MP
Chair