

CORE QUESTIONS -RESPONSE FROM THE EMPLOYER AND PARTNERSHIP MANAGER, DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS

1. Do you feel that poverty is growing within the town? Please can you supply some trend data in support of your response, such as who are the most affected, where it is concentrated and the main causes of poverty.

- With over half a million fewer children living in a long term workless household since 2010 and a record rate of single parents in work, we have improved the futures of thousands of UK families - giving them better opportunities and more financial security.
- Childcare should never be a barrier to getting a good job. That's why through Universal Credit parents can receive personalised Work Coach support at over 600 local jobcentres and can claim back up to 85% of their childcare costs, making sure work always pays

2. What do you feel are the causes of poverty locally?

Poverty rarely has a single cause. A range of factors including rising living costs, and accommodation costs taking a bigger chunk out of household finances. We support people into work who can take more control over their working lives and income.

3. What can public services do in this time of austerity?

By providing money management support to families who find themselves struggling with overwhelming debt.

4. What can other groups/individuals do to help?

Turn2us is a national charity providing practical help to people who are struggling financially.

The helpline supports people by completing benefits calculator and grants search over the phone. They also offer web chat during opening hours to give support on calculator or grant search results.

Benefits are money or credits given by the government to help people on low incomes or with specific needs. Grants are money given by charities to people in financial need. You don't have to pay them back.

We want people to improve their financial situation by gaining access to welfare benefits, charitable grants and support services.

Should anyone need help with managing their money they can speak to their work coach and be signposting to the most appropriate support available.
DWP is working with local councils and organisations, like the Money Advice Service and Citizens Advice.

5. What is being done by your organisation to identify and mitigate household poverty?

- The Government wants to develop its understanding of household food needs so that it can ensure that support is targeted on those who are most vulnerable. We welcome this 3-year research programme which will help build our evidence base; and look forward to working with the Trussell Trust and others to understand how this evidence can help inform and shape future support.
- This report shows that food bank use cannot be linked to a single reason and that many food bank users are already experiencing a range of very challenging personal circumstances and ill-health which can limit their ability to engage effectively with the benefits system or to sustain employment.
- It also shows that there is more to do to ensure that vulnerable people are able to access the support they are entitled to including discretionary support and help with a range of issues including budgeting and debt advice.
- The Government is committed to a strong safety-net for those who need it and continues to spend over £95 billion a year on welfare benefits. This includes a well-established system of hardship payments, benefit advances and budgeting loans as an additional safeguard for those who need them.
- Jobcentre managers already have discretion to work with food banks; and we are exploring whether, building on existing good practice, working more closely with food banks can help us to identify and better support any customers who may, for a variety of reasons, not be receiving the full formal support that they are entitled to.

6. Are you aware of an impact that poverty has had on the economy, crime, health and education? Please supply further details, together with any supporting statistics.

The DWP does not keep data relating to this and I am unable to comment.

7. How can partnership working be maximised?

Attending countywide forums and sharing of information on services, products and how to access them.

8. What has already been done to tackle poverty and what assistance is currently available?

Universal Credit Payment timeliness – July 2019 (provisional)

Proportion of paid UC claims that were paid on time (all claims)

- Full payment on time: 95.49%
- Some payment on time: 98.29%

Proportion of paid UC claims that were paid on time (new claims)

- Full payment on time: 88.43%
- Some payment on time: 92.89%

9. What awareness exists of the different types of assistance that is available and how can this awareness be improved?

We work in collaboration with numerous partners who often deliver their services from Jobcentres. All staff are aware of who is on site each day and will actively promote what help there is. We also have online access to a directory of local services and search for the most appropriate help support to signpost to.

10. Are all households in poverty being reached?

We will offer support to all those in receipt of a benefit

11. What support and advice is available to individuals who find themselves in arrears, for example, arrears on mortgage payments?

If a claimant declares they are financially struggling to pay their rent, they may be able to get further support and financial help from their local authority and should be signposted to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP). The AD/TA/DM signposts the claimant to their local authority and if appropriate sends them an SMS text using the template - UC LA Financial Assistance (DHP).

If the claimant would like help and support with their Council Tax payments, the AD signposts them to their local authority and if appropriate sends an SMS text using the template - UC Council Tax Reduction Support.

12. Do you have further information regarding poverty issues which you would like to inform the Scrutiny Panel?

You can have some of your bills (including rent, services charges, fuel or water bills) paid directly out of your benefits payments if you're having difficulties. This is called 'third party deductions' and sometimes Fuel Direct.