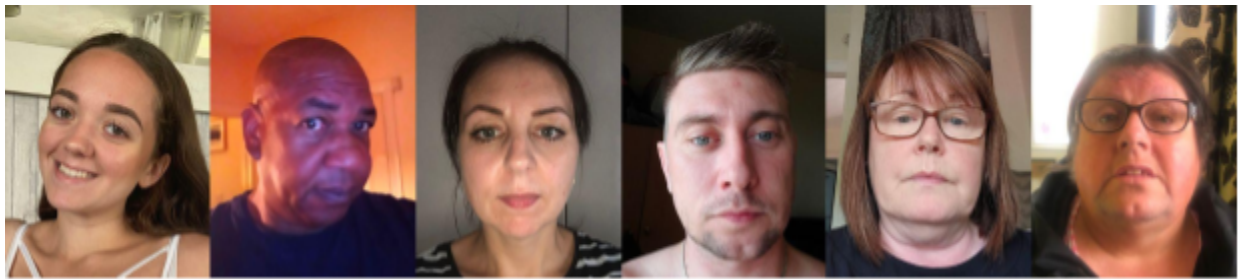




Citizens Advice Sheffield clients call on Government to 'Keep the Lifeline'



Pictured (left to right): Deanna, Stephen, Anna, Brett, Alison and Vera.

Powerful audio testimony from people in Sheffield shows how much difference the £20 weekly increase to Universal Credit has made to people's lives - and the devastation that would be caused by the withdrawal of the increase at the end of September.

Citizens Advice Sheffield has helped more than 11,000 people with Universal Credit since the pandemic began, so the charity has unique access to client stories and powerful testimony which show the impact that cutting the £20 weekly increase could have on our city's population and communities.

Citizens Advice is calling on elected representatives, decision-makers and public figures at local, regional and national levels to ensure that the increase is made permanent by supporting the cross-sector [#KeepTheLifeline](#) campaign, lobbying, Central Government and raising awareness of this vital issue.

Audio Testimony

We spoke to five Citizens Advice Sheffield clients about the £20 increase to Universal Credit and the dire implications of it being taken away at the end of September.

We have compiled our clients' answers to three questions. Click the 'Audio link' next to each to listen on YouTube:

<p>(1) What difference has the extra £20 a week 'lifeline' made to your life?</p>	<p>Audio link (2m12s)</p> <p><i>"I can go shopping and buy enough food with £20 to last me a full week."</i></p> <p><i>"I'm a lot less stressed about money... The thought of it going back down is quite scary."</i></p>
<p>(2) What would the impact be if the lifeline was taken away?</p>	<p>Audio link (1m46s)</p> <p><i>"It's the difference between eating at the end of the month <u>and</u> putting gas and electric on at the end of the month. It is a lifeline."</i></p> <p><i>"I just don't think it would be livable, really."</i></p>
<p>(3) Why should the government 'keep the lifeline'?</p>	<p>Audio link (1m30s)</p> <p><i>"It gives my family extra security - it gives that feeling that they are looked after, supported."</i></p> <p><i>"Simple answer - why should it be taken away?"</i></p>



Stats & Context

- Universal Credit (UC) is currently supporting **48,791 people in Sheffield** - 1 in 8 of the city's working age population.
- On average, **35% of UC claimants are in work** and **36% are part of families with dependent children**.
- The withdrawal of the £20 per week increase – scheduled by central government for the end of September 2021 – will lead to an estimated combined **annual loss of spending power in Sheffield totalling almost £43 million**.
- On an individual level, the scheduled cut will represent a **£1,040 pay cut** for some of the lowest-paid people in Sheffield.
- Citizens Advice estimates that **2.3 million people nationally could be driven into debt** if the UC increase is withdrawn.
- The £20 increase to UC was extended for six months in March 2021, to the end of September 2021.

Comment

Clare Lodder, Chief Executive at Citizens Advice Sheffield, said: “We see first hand what a struggle it is to make ends meet on universal credit. A £20 a week cut will, for many people, mean that they just don't have sufficient money to buy enough food and pay essential bills. How can this be right particularly when we know that Covid pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on our poorest communities. There isn't much time left to persuade the Government to change its mind so please join us in campaigning for the proposed reduction to be reversed”.

Contact

For more information about the [#KeepTheLifeline](#) campaign, contact Frances Potter at Citizens Advice Sheffield on frances.potter@citizensadvicesheffield.org.uk or clare.lodder@citizensadvicesheffield.org.uk