



Dear Mr Fabricant,

As the Trussell Trust publishes a new survey* that lays bare the devastating impacts of a £20 a week cut from Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit payments due across the UK next month, we feel it is vital that you are made aware of the similarly devastating effect that this is likely to have on some residents of Lichfield.

Recent statistics provided by *Lichfield foodbank* and Trussell Trust show that the percentage increase of people being forced to use a foodbank to put food on the table, is far higher in Lichfield than the national average:

Across the Trussell Trust food bank network, from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, 2.5m food parcels were distributed to people in need. That represents a 33% increase on the previous year. In Lichfield, across the same period, we distributed 4741 food parcels, an increase of 70%

980,000 of the 2.5m food parcels went to children. That is 37% of the total. In Lichfield, 2219 food parcels went to children - that's 47% of our total

Across the five years from 2015-16 to 2020-21, the Trussell Trust saw a 123% increase in the number of food parcels distributed. In that time in Lichfield, the number of food parcels we have distributed has increased by 314%

We are in no doubt that this increase in demand would have been even higher without the uplift in Universal Credit and Working Tax Credits. These have provided a breathing space for the individuals and families who are constantly battling to stay above the bread line in our city.

Whilst we are aware and appreciate that the government is contributing considerable sums to the Kickstart and Restart schemes, this does not recognise the immediate financial challenge many people will face. It does not take into consideration the increasing "in-work" poverty that is presenting itself in Lichfield and across the country.

Quite simply, the combination of the cut to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credits, combined with the end of the furlough scheme, increased energy prices and the impending 1.25% rise in National Insurance Contributions, will see many more individuals driven to using foodbanks in Lichfield. This last week alone (w/e 11.09.2021) *Lichfield foodbank* fed 145 people.

As we all know, the people of Lichfield continue to show incredible generosity by supporting and donating to *Lichfield foodbank* every week. And we want to thank them all and ask that they continue to support their community. But it simply isn't right for so many families in our city to be relying on charity for life's basic needs.

We know that in the difficult winter ahead, people - young and old - in Lichfield will be forced to skip meals. We know that families in our city already worry every day about switching on the heating and feeding their children. Many families are nearly at breaking point but just about manage to keep their heads above water.

No one should have to suffer the indignity of not being able to afford the essentials in life – like food. That’s why we’re saying it would be wrong of the UK government to take away £20 a week from already precarious incomes and push even more people through the doors of *Lichfield foodbank*.

We believe the answer must be to ensure our social security system provides people with enough money to cover the essentials. At the very least we’re saying this October, the UK government must choose to protect people and choose to keep the lifeline. And we’re asking you, Mr Fabricant, to speak for the people of Lichfield who need your support, and to oppose the £20 per week cut to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credits.

Signed:

David Clarke – Chair, *Lichfield foodbank*

Nigel Gann - Lichfield City of Sanctuary

The Reverend Steve Speight – LifeChurch, Lichfield and Chair of Trustees, *Lichfield foodbank*

Kathy Coe, MBE - *Founder, Pathway Project*

The Reverend Ian Hayter – Wade Street Church and Trustee, *Lichfield foodbank*

Ann Schwarzenbach – Trustee, *Lichfield foodbank*

The Reverend Rod Clark – Rector, St Chad’s Church and Trustee, *Lichfield foodbank*

The Right Reverend Dr Michael Igrave, the Bishop of Lichfield

The Very Reverend Adrian Dorber, Dean of Lichfield Cathedral

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1. The research is based on an online survey by YouGov of 2,008 adults (18+) currently claiming Universal Credit. People were surveyed between 5 – 19 August 2021.
2. The figures have been weighted to be representative of people claiming Universal Credit. All weighting data provided by the Trussell Trust from Stat-Xplore.
3. Estimates of the number of people are the Trussell Trust’s own analysis. They are calculated by taking the number of people aged 16+ claiming Universal Credit in Great Britain in July 2021 and in Northern Ireland in February 2021 and multiplying by the survey results. These figures do not include children.
4. The total number of people aged 16+ in Great Britain claiming Universal Credit in July 2021 was 5,923,820. In Northern Ireland in February there were 135,710.
5. The previous 30 days were counted from when the survey was conducted.
6. Data on the UK-wide public is based on an online survey by YouGov of 3,022 adults (16+), undertaken 4-8 August 2021. Figures have been weighted to be representative of all UK adults.

Survey data

Thinking about your current financial situation and the impact of reducing your weekly income by £20 if the increase does end in October 2021...How likely or unlikely is it that you would have to do each of the following in the three months from October 2021 as a direct result of this?

	% who say ‘Very likely’	Population estimates
Needing to skip meals to keep up with other essential costs (e.g. utilities or rent).	20%	1,212,000
Not being able to afford to heat your home this winter	21%	1,273,000
Not being able to cook hot food because you couldn’t afford to use the oven or other utilities.	11%	667,000
Not being able to travel to work or essential appointments (e.g. GP, school run or dentists) because you couldn’t afford to use public transport.	15%	909,000
Need to use a food bank	15%	909,000

Other detailed information on question wording and results available from the Trussell Trust on request.