



News Release from Sally Keeble

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Labour parliamentary candidate Northampton North

Universal Credit hits bereaved and disabled

Universal Credit is impacting on bereaved and disabled people and there's a lack of training for advice services to help them.

These were some of the experiences of people switching over to Universal Credit in Northampton and Sally Keeble, Labour's Northampton North parliamentary candidate has asked Neil Coyle MP, a Labour member of the Work and Pensions Select Committee, to take the matter up in Parliament.

"The difficulties that people experience with rent arrears and food poverty following a switch to Universal Credit are well known. In one case a woman in part-time work was left with a total income of only £260 a month to pay all her living costs and £64 towards her rent," Sally Keeble said. "However I encountered some other issues that need to be sorted."

These included:

- A bereaved person who had to apply for Universal Credit being expected to look for work within days of losing her husband. This happened despite rules which appear to allow for a period without being required to look for work after a bereavement.
- People with disabilities being directed to claim Universal Credit after being found fit for work – despite many such decisions being turned down at appeal. However, they lacked the funds to live on while waiting for appeal.
- A government concession on Carers' Allowance was ineffective. The concession was that Carers Allowance would be continued for two weeks after the death of the person being cared for. However, the Carers' Allowance was simply deducted from the person's Universal Credit claim, so the concession made no difference.
- A lack of funding for advice work to help people with Universal Credit claims, and a lack of training for advice workers. Community organisations operating on a shoestring are having to find hundreds of pounds to pay for private sector training.

"Some of these issues are flaws in the design of Universal Credit, some are glitches in the implementation of it," Sally Keeble said. "These are still early days in the roll-out of Universal Credit. I hope the problems can be resolved now before more people are affected. It's especially important that there's more advice work and more training for advisers to be able to help people when things go wrong."

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