Department for Work & Pensions

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Councillor Andrew Morgan OBE
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Council Swyddfa'r Cabinet Office
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Dear Councillor Morgan,

Thank you for your letter of 5 August to the former Secretary of State on behalf of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough, in support of the Guarantee our Essentials campaign. I apologise for the delay in replying. As a department, please be reassured that we are looking at ways to improve the efficiency of our correspondence process to remove unacceptable delays in responding.

This Government is committed to tackling poverty, and to ending mass dependence on emergency food parcels. We recognise the scale of need in Rhondda Cynon Taf, where over 16,000 emergency food parcels were distributed last year, including nearly 6,000 for children. These figures are a stark reminder that many families continue to struggle to afford the essentials. We know good work can significantly reduce the chances of people falling into poverty. This will be the foundation to our approach. We are doing this by tackling economic inactivity and unemployment and joining up employment, health and skills support to meet the needs of local communities.

Working people should not have to turn to food banks. Our plan to Make Work Pay is a core part of our mission to grow the economy, raise living standards and create opportunities across the country. This will make work more secure and family-friendly and improve people’s living standards.

To help achieve this, in April the National Living Wage for workers over 21 was increased by 6.7 percent to £12.21 an hour and the National Minimum Wage for 18 to 20 year olds was raised by 16.3 percent to £10.00 an hour which is a record increase.

We recognise the very important role local authorities perform in tackling poverty and that greater certainty over budget allocations helps to design and deliver sustainable plans for local social security. We also value the work of devolved governments, including the Welsh Government's provision of free breakfasts for primary school pupils, which complements our shared ambition to support low-income families.

Through the Spending Review, we announced £842 million per year to reform crisis support, which rises to £1 billion when including the Barnett consequential. From 1 April 2026, we are introducing the Crisis and Resilience Fund, the first ever multi-year settlement for locally delivered crisis support. This will enable local authorities to provide preventative support to communities as well as assisting people when faced with a financial crisis, to support our ambition to end mass dependence on emergency food parcels.

In the meantime, we are committed to support those who need further help and provide a sustainable, long-term approach to drive up opportunity and drive down poverty across the UK. That is why we are providing £742 million in England to extend the Household Support Fund by a further year until 31 March 2026, with additional funding provided to Devolved Governments through the *Barnett formula, to be spent at their discretion.

This will enable local authorities to continue to provide vulnerable households with immediate crisis support towards the cost of essentials and develop their schemes to help prevent poverty locally and build local resilience. We also recognise the importance of dignity in access to food, and support local partnerships that promote inclusive, community-based responses to food insecurity.

On 18 June, we introduced the Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment Bill to Parliament, marking the next legislative step in delivering some of the reforms set out in the Pathways to Work Green Paper. We listened to the concerns raised about the pace of change and the adequacy of support, that is why we made changes to the Bill and renamed it.

The Universal Credit Act which received Royal assent in September still includes the important changes to Universal Credit - to tackle perverse incentives that drive people into dependency by rebalancing the core payment and health top up. This includes legislating for the first permanent, above-inflation rise in the Universal Credit standard allowance. We recognise the concerns raised by the Guarantee Our Essentials campaign and the evidence presented by organisations such as the Trussell Trust and Joseph Rowntree Foundation. We remain committed to reviewing Universal Credit to ensure it supports people to afford life's essentials and avoid deep poverty.

Thank you once again for taking the time to write. Please do not hesitate to do so again about this or any other matter.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP
Minister for Employment

*The Barnett Formula is how the UK Government adjusts funding for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland when spending changes in England, ensuring each gets a fair share. For more detail, you can read the official guidance on GOV.UK.