

BRIDPORT AND DISTRICT CITIZENS ADVICE - WRITTEN EVIDENCE (EUC0109)

The economics of Universal Credit

As an experienced adviser at Citizens Advice in Bridport and the Research and Campaigns coordinator, I am sharing with you below some of the issues we have been encountering with regards to UC. This can be evidenced through the forms we submit to Citizens Advice whenever we feel a client has been treated unfairly or there is evidence of unfair practice.

- claims being closed when payment cycles overlap with assessment periods (self-employed clients are particularly vulnerable to this with their fluctuating incomes)
- lost paperwork on behalf of UC, (NOT client) resulting in delays to payments, and subsequent refusal to backdate payments
- untidy tenancies resulting in rent arrears
- lack of access to UC interview in home town - rural area with lack of public transport; what transport there is prohibitively high
- underpayments when transferring to UC from ESA – ESA clients seem to have lost out a lot from the UC reforms
- clients in debt unable to access the debt management helpline on the phone (extremely long waits to be connected or no connection at all)
- high rate of referrals to local food banks due to lack of money
- increasing evidence of council tax and rent arrears and debt in general

In addition, the following is an indication of what we have been seeing in our office:

- clients finding it difficult to budget and manage a monthly payment and, for example, pay the rent on time to the landlord
- clients put under unnecessary stress during the claim process - frequent phrases in the evidence forms I monitor are stress, anxiety, misery, mental health issues - often due to maladministration by DWP and frustration with the online procedure

Gill Acton

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