



Clare Adamson MSP
Convener, Social Security Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Convener,

Automatic split payments of Universal Credit discussion at the Committee's 6th Meeting, Thursday 1 March 2018 Social Security (Scotland) Bill, Stage 2 (Day 4)

We write to you concerning the above-referenced meeting of the Social Security Committee on its scrutiny of the Social Security (Scotland) Bill. In particular, we wanted to bring to the Committee's attention our continued support for the automatic split payments of Universal Credit.

As Committee members will know, three powers over Universal Credit were devolved to Scotland, including the ability to split a payment of Universal Credit between two individuals in a single household. Since this power was devolved to Scotland, a coalition of organisations have been calling for the automatic split payments of Universal Credit. Our rationale for this vital change in existing payment structure is rooted in women's equality and, more specifically, in promoting and protecting women's safety and financial autonomy. The continued use of a single household payment of Universal Credit increases women's financial dependency and places them at an increased risk of abuse; a perspective shared by the UN Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In 2013, the UN CEDAW Committee wrote in its Concluding Observations on the state of women's rights in the UK that the single payment of Universal Credit creates a risk of financial abuse for women.

For reasons outlined above, our organisations have campaigned for automatic split payments of Universal Credit, and we are not alone in our calls to reform this regressive payment structure. **In 2017, the Scottish Government published its analysis of responses to the social security consultation, which found that 99 percent of organisations support splitting the Universal Credit payment between members of a household** (from a total of 94 responses). In addition to this overwhelming consensus on the importance of split payments, the Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform (SCOWR) continues to support split payments of Universal Credit.¹ As you may be aware, SCOWR is a broad coalition of voluntary sector organisations, trade unions, faith groups and others. Members include:

¹ Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform. (2016). *Holyrood Manifesto 2016*. Available from: <http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/SCoWR-Manifesto-Supplement-Holyrood-2016.pdf>

The Action Group
AdvoCard
Capability Scotland
Children in Scotland
Children 1st
Church Action on Poverty
Citizens Advice Scotland
Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland
Disability Agenda Scotland (DAS)
Energy Action Scotland
Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)
HIV Scotland
National Association of Welfare Rights Advisors
One Parent Families Scotland
The Poverty Alliance
Save the Children
Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People
Scottish Association for Mental Health
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
Shelter Scotland

The following organisations also called for the delivery of automatic split payments of Universal Credit with the publication: "Gender Matters in Social Security: Individual Payments of Universal Credit"²:

Barnado's Scotland
BEMIS
Close the Gap
Carers Scotland
Engender
Inclusion Scotland
Irish Heritage Foundation
OXFAM
STUC
Rape Crisis Scotland
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
Scottish Refugee Council
Scottish Women's Aid
Scottish Women's Budget Group
Wheatley Group
The Young Women's Movement
Zero Tolerance

² Engender. (2016). *Gender Matters in Social Security*. Available from:
<https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Gender-matters-in-social-security---individual-payments-of-universal-credit.pdf>

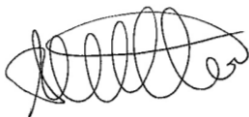
Over the last two years, equalities organisations have worked collaboratively with the Scottish Government on our call to repeal the backwards practice of a single household payment of Universal Credit. It is our belief that the rights, safety and security of women in Scotland should not be compromised by outdated social security policies. It is our continued call that Scotland make use of its new powers in relation to Universal Credit, namely to automatically split payments between a single household, to ensure women's safety and security.

As ever, it remains a pleasure to work with the Committee on matters of such importance to women's equality in Scotland.

Yours sincerely,



Emma Ritch
Executive Director, Engender



Anna Ritchie Allan
Executive Director, Close the Gap



Marsha Scott
Chief Executive, Scottish Women's Aid