

Social Justice and Social Security Committee - Inquiry into low income and debt problems

Received: 3 May 2022

Follow up submission from: Charlene Kane, Denny & Dunipace Citizens Advice Bureau

Good morning,

Following on from the meeting, I have had some thoughts that I would like the panel to also consider, these are outlined below:

Bankruptcy – Clients who have a contribution to make (even those on a low income) are unable to progress their careers because of the costs associated with their bankruptcy. They are unable to build financial resilience as they cannot save or create a financial buffer. This acts as a disincentive to improve their earnings prospects and advance on their chosen field, as any additional monies earned will be taken toward their contribution. This will ensure our clients miss out on opportunity, and remain in poverty. We would like the panel to consider allowing these clients to keep some of this income, (maybe £100 per month) to allow them to see the benefits of their promotion, and ensure they do not need to borrow to buy essential items. i.e. if their washing machine was to break down, then they would have sufficient disposable income to replace it, rather than become reliant upon credit again, or rely on charities, and Scottish Welfare Fund Community Care Grants.

Council Tax – We feel, as a bureau, there needs to be more emphasis on Council Tax Benefit entitlement. Most of our clients who are on a low income do not realise they are entitled to council tax, and that even in small amounts, that council tax reduction becomes a passport benefit for other things like Energy Efficiency solutions, additional benefits and Warm home discount schemes (with eligible suppliers). Some sort of advertisement to encourage people to have a benefit check carried out to check their entitlement to this benefit, would be beneficial, especially to those on a low income now.

These are issues that we would like to be considered by the panel, as well as all issues raised on Thursday.

Thank you for any considerations made.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Charlene Kane

Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) Regional Support Officer

Denny & Dunipace Citizens Advice Bureau