



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 6<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup> As you may be aware, SCOWR is a broad coalition of voluntary sector organisations, trade unions, faith groups and others. Members include:

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<sup>1</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup>  
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"<sup>2</sup>:

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

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<sup>2</sup> 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>

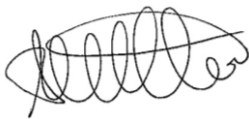
Over the last two years, equalities organisations have worked collaboratively with the Scottish Government on our call to repeal the backwards practice of a single household payment of Universal Credit. It is our belief that the rights, safety and security of women in Scotland should not be compromised 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