
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir David Norgrove

Debbie Abrahams MP
Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

2 February 2018

Dear Ms Abrahams

The Authority's attention was recently drawn to statements made by the Labour Party about Universal Credit.¹

We were asked to consider the accuracy of an email sent from the Labour Party on 6 December stating "40,000 children will wake up in poverty on Christmas Day because the Tories refuse to pause and fix Universal Credit." We were also asked to consider the accuracy of a video published by the Labour Party Twitter account that said "millions of people are facing poverty, debt and eviction as a result of Universal Credit" and that people have to wait "six weeks before receiving their first payment".

We conclude that the statements should have been clear about their source, drawn from published analyses and less categorical. We approached the Labour Party press office for clarification on the statistical sources of the statements. Our conclusion, based on the response we received, takes the following points into account:

1. Labour party officials confirmed that the main source for statements about "40,000 children" waking up in poverty on Christmas Day was research by the Peabody Trust. The Trust's press release for this research carefully described the limitations of available data, and was clear that some of the 40,000 children it referenced would "be in households that have resources to tide them over during the Christmas period". However, some statements made by the Labour Party disregarded these qualifications. It would also be better if the analysis the Labour Party chose to reference were publicly available.
2. We considered the implied link between Universal Credit and "poverty, debt and eviction". The Labour Party did not provide a source for this statement, a particularly important gap in view of the scale of the claim.
3. The statement "people have to wait six weeks before receiving their first payment" fails to acknowledge the availability of advance payments. Official statistics show that around half of all new Universal Credit claimants receive advance payments².

It is clearly important that statements by a political party should be fully supported by the statistics and sources on which they rely. We do not believe this was the case here.

¹ [Letter to Sir David Norgrove \(Dec 2017\)](#)

² Department for Work and Pensions (Sep 2017): [Universal Credit Statistical Ad Hoc: Payment Advances](#)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Norgrove". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of "David" and "Norgrove" being capitalized and prominent.

Sir David Norgrove