Dear Professor Alston,

The concept of enforcing a "digital only benefit" simply proves the extent to which the architects of this scheme live in blissful ignorance of many of the facts of the matter.

There are still many pockets of the UK that do not have reliable, or any broadband.  If you live in a rural or semi rural area, with limited or no broadband, the chances are that you won't have a bus service, either.  Many libraries have closed, due to the austerity measures of removing government funding to local authorities.  The staff levels at job centres have been slashed, leaving claimants with insufficient help or support.

If you and your family are in extreme poverty, it might be hard to afford a computer and to have to pay monthly broadband charges, if you are struggling to buy food, is a very cruel, very unnecessary extra burden.

The officials who have devised the Universal Credit system might not know that if you miss a monthly payment, your broadband supplier will cut off your service, making online services unavailable.  If the person cannot afford to make up the missed payment ***in addition to*** the fines for the missed payment, they might **NEVER AGAIN** be able to have broadband.

I am writing to ask you to use your influence to ensure that:

1. Support is available via ***face to face*** staff at job centres (or other accessible venues)

2. Face to face Universal Credit support is available during evenings and weekends, so that working people can bring their queries, hand in their proof of earnings, etc. in the hours when they are not doing paid work.

If you have no money and are having to use a food bank, you probably feel that you can’t even afford to have broadband.

In the UK, we have all heard about the weeks and weeks of living with no money.  There have already been suicides.  There are rent arrears.  Massively growing numbers of people having to rely on foodbanks.

A huge segment of our nation is in crisis.

Universal Credit is making their difficult lives even worse.  You can help.

I am writing to ask you to use your influence to stop the sanctions, don’t cut money from working families who are already not coping and make sure that there are face to face support services in accessible places and in accessible times for working people.

Another driver of poverty, leading to bankruptcies and homelessness is the debt collecting measures employed by local authorities.

Debt collecting agencies employed by banks and credit card companies have to follow a code of conduct.  They have to review the Income and Expenditure of the person who owes the money.  They cannot take money if this would leave the debtor unable to pay his rent or mortgage.  Councils do not do this.  They insist upon being paid, regardless of the consequences. They will take court action, which adds fees onto the debt and they will make the person bankrupt.

In the UK, many people have short-term contracts, zero hours contracts and casual contracts that don't provide sick pay.  Many families live from one day to the next.

The council can force a situation that ultimately leads to homelessness.

Local councils should be obliged to adhere to the same code of conduct as the debt collecting agencies.

Thanks in anticipation.

All best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Ithiel Mogridge

Bristol

England