**9 February 2021**

**Media Release**

**Citizens Advice Hart urges government against “devastating” Universal Credit cut**

* Local charity says **74 %** of people seeking its advice on benefits have never needed its support before
* Number of people claiming Universal Credit in **North East Hampshire** has risen **184 %** since the pandemic began

A local charity has warned of the “devastating impact” of a scheduled cut to Universal Credit in April.

Staff and volunteers at Citizens Advice **Hart** have helped **587** people with Universal Credit since March last year. Around **74 %** of people in **North East Hampshire** seeking its advice on benefits have never contacted the charity before.

Advisers say many needing support from the benefits system have lost their job or suffered a drop in income as a result of the pandemic.

**Citizens Advice Hart,** which has continued to provide one-to-one support throughout the pandemic, warns that local families could be pushed into further hardship if the £20 a week Universal Credit uplift ends as planned in April.

In **North East Hampshire**  the number of people claiming Universal Credit has risen **184** % since the pandemic started.

**For households in Hart the loss of £20 a week is equivalent to over 2 days supply of food or 6 days energy supply.**

**Julia Tymukas, Chief Officer of Citizens Advice Hart said:**

“We support people every day whose lives have been turned upside down by this pandemic. For many of them, Universal Credit is the lifeline that has helped pay the bills and put food on the table.

“But households across **North East Hampshire** now face the devastating prospect of a £20 a week cut to their benefits in just a few short months.

“With a tough outlook in the jobs market, we’re urging the government to continue doing the right thing and maintain the Universal Credit uplift.”

**For more information contact: Julia Tymukas, Chief Officer** **chiefofficer@hartcab.cabnet.org.uk** **Tel 07920045080**

**We give people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward - whoever they are, and whatever their problem.**

Citizens Advice Hart is currently available Monday to Thursday via phone 0808 2787864 or webchat/email For more information go to our website at at our [website](https://citizensadvicehart.org.uk/contact/) **https://citizensadvicehart.org.uk/contact/**

Citizens Advice also runs a Help to Claim service which can support you with making a Universal Credit claim. For more information visit citizensadvice.org.uk or call **0800 144 8 444**