



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

WELFARE REFORM COMMITTEE

Rt Hon David Mundell MP,
Parliamentary Under Secretary of
State for Scotland

By email

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Dear Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland

Welfare Reform Committee

Thank you for your appearance before the Committee on 03 February to discuss the links between the welfare reforms and food banks. During this session you asked the Committee to provide specific examples, including a postal address and national insurance number, highlighting cases where a benefit related issue has led to the claimant using a food bank.

The Committee has endeavoured to fulfil your request as we have had an abundance of evidence on this topic. Committee Members made enquiries in their local constituencies and organisations from which we have received evidence put out the call on our behalf. However, what we discovered during the course of our call for case studies has surprised and saddened us.

It has become apparent that very few people, despite the wide ranging evidence received, were willing to forward their personal details to the Scotland Office and the DWP. We asked why they didn't want to pass on personal details, bearing in mind that this could help them resolve the potential benefit related difficulties that led them to use a food bank. The answer that we and the organisations putting out the call received was that the claimants were too afraid of unfair treatment and possible reprisals from the DWP to be identified.

It is a sad state of affairs when vulnerable people are unwilling to get in touch with the government department that is supposed to offer them support for fear of making a currently bad situation worse. I appreciate that this fear may be unfounded. However, I can assure you that it was very real to the people with which we had contact.

With this in mind we are sending the material as evidence of the impact that sanctions are having on the ground in Scotland and, upon further reflection, on the basis that these DWP clients do not wish their cases to be directly investigated.

Please find attached the case studies as received in Annexe A. Please also find attached to the email a spread sheet received as part of SFHA's submission.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael McMahon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**MICHAEL MCMAHON MSP
CONVENER**