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Universal Credit

The content in our “Universal Credit and rented housing: guide for landlords” has been updated. To access the latest version please click [here](#)

An amendment has been made to the [Welfare Reform Act 2012 regulations](#) adding the Secretary of State's Determination to keep the surplus earnings threshold for Universal Credit at £2,500 until 31 March 2021

From October 2021, the period over which Universal Credit advances will be recovered will increase to 24 months, while the maximum rate at which deductions can be made from a Universal Credit award will reduce from 30% to 25% of the standard allowance. Announced in the [full budget report](#)

Extending Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) exemptions ([full budget report](#)) The government is introducing exemptions from the SAR for claimants of Universal Credit and Housing Benefit covering rough sleepers aged 16-24, care leavers up to the age of 25, and victims of domestic abuse and human trafficking

Reaching State Pension Age on Universal Credit

An amend Reaching State Pension Age on Universal Credit

All those who reach State Pension Age while claiming Universal Credit will receive a run-on, meaning that they can receive a payment for the entire Assessment Period in which they reach State Pension Age. Entitlement to pensioner benefits and State Pension is unaffected and continues as usual. This ensures there is no gap in benefit provision as people approach State Pension Age. This will benefit approximately 200,000 pensioners who will benefit by an average of £350 from this run-on at a cost of around £70 million over the next five years. This process is already in operation on an extra statutory basis, ensuring that nobody loses out upon reaching State Pension Age, and legislation will be amended accordingly later this year.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2020-03-05/HCWS146/>

Universal Credit to Pension Credit transition as mentioned above – The Budget confirms funding for an operational change to ensure claimants do not experience a gap in their benefit entitlement when moving from Universal Credit to Pension Credit see [full budget report](#)

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Coronavirus collated recent announcements

DWP update March 2020

- A range of extra [support and measures](#) will be in place to help workers, benefit claimants and businesses affected by coronavirus. This press release provides bulleted information for: People claiming support, People making new claims for financial support, Employees and self-employed and businesses.
- Thérèse Coffey, the Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions, has made an oral statement to Parliament about DWP and coronavirus (COVID-19) – please see [here](#)
- The Prime Minister has announced that Statutory Sick Pay will be made available from day one when self-isolating, instead of day four – see [here](#)
- Details about some of the latest DWP Coronavirus announcements can be found in the [full budget report](#). Below is a sample taken from this report:
 1. New style' Employment and Support Allowance will be payable for people directly affected by COVID-19 or self-isolating according to government advice for from the first day of sickness, rather than the eighth day
 2. People will be able to claim Universal Credit and access advance payments where they are directly affected by COVID-19 (or self-isolating), without the current requirement to attend a jobcentre
 3. The requirements of the minimum income floor in Universal Credit will be temporarily relaxed for those directly affected by COVID-19 or self-isolating according to government advice for duration of the outbreak, ensuring self-employed claimants will be compensated for losses in income
- [Other useful links and information.....](#) Jobcentre information; the public will now only be allowed in under exceptional circumstances. For example, to collect a voucher under the HM Government Payment Exception Service. Appointments, including ID verification for UC purposes, are being carried out by telephone wherever possible. Where at all possible the public are being urged to use on-line services to reduce the number of phone calls being received. Please find more information in the [Press Release](#) issued yesterday afternoon. Each jobcentre will have on their door a poster showing the phone numbers people can ring if they need help and cannot make their transaction on-line
- [Face-to-face health assessments for benefits suspended amid coronavirus outbreak - GOV.UK](#)
- The Chancellor announced various measures last week, **one of which was to increase UC and Working Tax Credits by £20 per week from 6 April 2020**, when benefits were due to increase under the annual benefit uprating. This additional £20 is on top of the uprating previously announced. This will apply to all new and existing claimants.
 - For UC this means that a single person aged 25 or over will see their standard allowance increase from the current £317.82 to £409.89 per month for their first full assessment period after 6 April 2020.
 - For Working Tax Credits payments will be increased by £1,045 to £3,040 per year from 6 April 2020 to 5 April 2021. The amount a claimant or household will benefit from will depend on their circumstances, including their level of household income. However, the increase could mean up to an extra £20 each week.
- People are being urged to use online services before turning to the telephone for help with their benefit claim - [Claimants are asked to apply online as jobcentres limit access - GOV.UK](#)

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- [Coronavirus – Changes to Veterans UK Services - GOV.UK](#)
- [Government confirms £500 million hardship fund will provide council tax relief for vulnerable households - GOV.UK](#)
- [Coronavirus update - benefit reviews and reassessments suspended - GOV.UK](#)
- [Plans set out to support pupils eligible for free school meals - GOV.UK](#)
- [£3.2 million emergency support for rough sleepers during coronavirus outbreak - GOV.UK](#)
- [Government agrees measures with energy industry to support vulnerable people through COVID-19 - GOV.UK](#)
- **Coronavirus and New Style ESA Claim Process**– instead of completing a claim form for New Style ESA please advise our customers to ring 0800 328 5644 and an agent will take the claim over the phone. [Gov.UK](#) pages have been updated with new advice
- **Benefit Appeals information-** [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): courts and tribunals planning and preparation - GOV.UK](#)
- **Coronavirus and Child Benefit claims-** HMRC advised that claims should be made as normal ([see Gov.UK](#)) and, if they are unable to register the birth, they should attach a covering letter giving that information so the claim could be processed. Contact details for HMRC Child Benefit can be found [here](#)
- [Complete ban on evictions and additional protection for renters - GOV.UK](#)
- **DWP Third Party Payment Teams telephony:** As a result of the increased measures the Government have put in place to limit the spread of Coronavirus, the DWP Third Party Payment Helpline is currently operating at a reduced level. When contacting the Helpline, we ask that you display patience and we will endeavour to answer your call as quickly as we can.

As a reminder, listed below are the types of queries that the Third Party Helpline can help with:

What DWP Third Party Payments Telephony Team are able to do:-

- deal with queries from creditors/suppliers relating to payment schedules (date of first payment, amount, assessment period)
- issue duplicate schedules if not received after 5 working days
- give general advice to third parties on how set up deductions
- provide advice on changing creditor details via the creditor handbook on GOV.UK
- complete referral to set up electronic schedules
- refer complex queries regarding schedule issues for investigation
- stop a payment at request of DWP colleagues

NB - For private landlords only rent arrears are paid under the Third Party Deduction Scheme.

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Please can we ask before you call us for queries relating to payment schedules, you check with your Finance teams to see if they have details of the schedule you are enquiring about. You may get the answer you need without having to consider contacting us. Thank you

- **HRT:** Due to the current Coronavirus outbreak HRT face to face contact with claimants has been temporarily suspended, in line with the Department's contingency approach. Work Coaches (WC) will continue to do the HRT interviews but by phone instead of face to face in Jobcentres
- **DWP home visiting** has been suspended, with the exception of those customers who are most vulnerable – who will only be visited where it is safe to do so. Revised special procedures will be followed when appointee action is needed
- Chancellor gives support to millions of **self-employed** individuals – more information [here](#)
- Reminder....here's the link to get up to date information about Coronavirus and claiming benefits [Understanding Universal Credit](#). Please do not print off the guidance as it is constantly being updated as new information is announced
- [Gov.UK Local Support for Extremely Vulnerable People](#) – People should register if they have a medical condition that makes them extremely vulnerable to coronavirus. Help can then be requested for getting essential supplies like food delivered. This service is free and a person can register for themselves or for someone else
- Migrant Information Hub - Migration Yorkshire have just launched a new Migrant Information Hub - www.migrantinfohub.co.uk. The Migrant Information Hub aims to offer useful information and resources to help migrants, and those supporting them, to stay safe, connected and informed, and to reduce the harmful impacts of coronavirus (Covid-19) in our region. It includes new multi-lingual resources, national guidance, local services and support, plus news and updates on specific migrant issues.

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Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Personal Independence Payment reassessments – The government plans to reduce the frequency of health assessments required for people receiving Personal Independence Payment (PIP). For those whose condition is unlikely to change, [the Budget](#) sets a minimum award review length of 18 months.

Coronavirus Contingency Advice from PIP: For PIP claimants who have received a PIP2 form but is struggling to return it in time as they are struggling to get assistance with completion, or leave their property to post it back.... the claimant will be given an extension to 90 days from when the form was issued.

Coronavirus Contingency Advice from PIP: PIP renewals – Form AR1 received but the PIP claimant can't return it as they cannot get assistance to complete the form or leave their property to post it back to us. The PIP claimant does not need to do anything. PIP will extend your current award and contact them at a later date to re assess the PIP claim

Latest Personal Independence Payment stats: April 2013 to January 2020 are available [here](#)

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[PIP and ESA assessments scrutinised by Work and Pensions Committee](#). The Committee will first hear from Citizens Advice, Scope and the Disability Benefits Consortium on the assessment process in general, before questioning several charities on how it affects claimants with specific disabilities and health conditions.

Attendance Allowance

AA claim return delays due to Coronavirus – advice from AA unit. For obvious reasons, flexibility will be shown where the AA claim form has been returned late. We haven't put a specific timeline on the return extension as the majority of our customers are likely to be in self-isolation.

Organisations trying to provide advice over the phone with AA claims and renewals: Advice from AA unit.....information and advice can be given over the phone to help complete a claim packs. The customer could annotate the claim pack to indicate that Age UK have assisted

New Service for Benefit Assessments

A [single service](#) to deliver all disability benefits assessments will be trialled before being rolled out nationally. The new system will deliver all assessments using a single digital platform, developed and run by the DWP. The new system, which will be launched in a region to be confirmed in due course, will mean that people in receipt of more than one benefit will not have to provide the same information multiple times.

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Carers Credit

An updated version of our Carers Credit application form has been added to Gov.UK. Carer's Credit is a National Insurance credit that helps with gaps in a person's National Insurance record. A person may qualify for this if they are caring for someone for at least 20 hours a week. [More information here](#)

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New Measures to End Rough Sleeping

The Prime Minister has announced an extra £236 million to help get people off the streets and appointed an independent adviser, Dame Louise Casey, to lead an urgent review into the causes of rough sleeping. [Funding will](#) go towards offering Housing First style 'move on' accommodation for up to 6,000 rough sleepers and those at immediate risk of rough sleeping

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Help for Vulnerable to Apply to EU Settlement Scheme

The Home Office has today announced a further [£8 million of funding](#) to help vulnerable EU citizens apply to the EU Settlement Scheme. Charities and local authorities will bid for further funding to provide face-to-face, online and telephone support to vulnerable people across the UK. This may include legal support, caseworker services or general advice as either individual or group sessions.

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Support for UK Nationals in the EU

The UK government has allocated [£3 million](#) for charities and organisations to provide practical support for UK nationals living in the EU. Charities and organisations will receive government funding to provide practical support for UK nationals living in the EU with their residency applications. This includes potentially at-risk groups such as pensioners and disabled people.

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Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

The [DBS has launched a video](#) that explains the process for a standard and enhanced DBS check. The video includes a brief summary of the work at the DBS and then focuses on how standard and enhanced certificates are produced, and the various stages each application has to go through.

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Consultation:

How Should DWP Involve Disabled People in Changing How it Works?

The Social Security Advisory Committee is conducting research into how the DWP engage with disabled people in formulating policies and processes which affect them. The [consultation](#) is open until 23 March 2020.