

# Coronavirus and claiming benefits

This page provides information about coronavirus and claiming benefits. It will continue to be updated. Please check this page regularly for updates on the arrangements the Department for Work and Pensions is making to support those who are affected by coronavirus.

For health information and advice see the [NHS pages on coronavirus](#)

Learn more about the [government response to coronavirus](#)

## If you're in work and not claiming benefits

If you cannot work due to coronavirus and are eligible for [Statutory Sick Pay](#) you will get it from day one, rather than from the fourth day of your illness. DWP intends to legislate so this measure applies retrospectively from 13 March 2020.

Statutory Sick Pay will be payable if you have coronavirus or are [self-isolating](#) on government advice.

If you are a gig worker and/or on a zero hours contract, you may be entitled to sick pay. Check your [eligibility for Statutory Sick Pay](#)

If you need to provide evidence to your employer that you need to stay at home due to having symptoms of coronavirus an Isolation Note can be obtained from [NHS 111 online](#). If you live with someone that has symptoms, an Isolation Note can be obtained from the [NHS website](#).

If you are not eligible to receive sick pay you can [apply for Universal Credit](#) and/or [apply for New Style Employment and Support Allowance](#)

You can also apply for these if you are prevented from working because of a risk to public health.

## If you're already claiming benefits

## **Changes to jobcentre appointments**

People receiving benefits do not have to attend jobcentre appointments for three months, starting from Thursday 19 March 2020.

People will continue to receive their benefits as normal, but all requirements to attend the jobcentre in person are suspended.

**You should not attend the jobcentre unless directed to do so for an exceptional purpose.**

People can still make applications for benefits online if they are eligible.

If you apply for Universal Credit you will need to make an appointment for your new claim interview. This interview will take place by telephone with a work coach. You will be given the number to call to book this appointment when you have submitted your claim.

If you're already claiming Universal Credit and think you may have been affected by coronavirus, please contact your work coach as soon as possible. You can do this using your [online journal](#)

## **Changes to health assessments**

In light of the current coronavirus outbreak, the Department for Work and Pensions has taken the precautionary decision to temporarily suspend all face-to-face assessments for health and disability-related benefits. This is aimed at reducing the risk of exposure to coronavirus and safeguarding the health of individuals claiming health and disability benefits, many of whom are likely to be at greater risk due to their pre-existing health conditions.

If you already have an assessment appointment arranged, you do not need to attend. Your assessment provider will contact you to discuss your appointment and explain the next steps to you.

If you have made a claim for Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Universal Credit or Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) but do not have a date for an assessment appointment, you do not need to do anything. You will be contacted shortly by telephone or letter to let you know what will happen next.

If you are already receiving PIP, ESA, Universal Credit or IIDB you will continue to receive your current payments as normal.

If you have made a new claim or wish to make a new claim, DWP will continue to take claims for all benefits.

Read the current [NHS guidelines on coronavirus](#), including advice on those who should stay at home.

## **Changes to how much you'll get**

From 6 April the government is increasing the [standard allowance](#) in Universal Credit and the basic element in [Working Tax Credit](#) for one year. Both will increase by £20 per week on top of planned annual uprating. This will apply to all new and existing Universal Credit claimants and to existing Working Tax Credit claimants.

This means that for a single Universal Credit claimant (aged 25 or over), the standard allowance will increase from £317.82 to £409.89 per month.

From April, [Local Housing Allowance](#) rates will be increased to the 30th percentile of market rents. This will apply to all private renters who are new or existing Universal Credit housing element claimants, and to existing [Housing Benefit](#) claimants.

## **If you're self-employed**

If you are self-employed and claiming Universal Credit, and are required to stay at home or are ill as a result of coronavirus, the [Minimum Income Floor](#) (an assumed level of income) will not be applied for the period of time whilst you are affected.

From 6 April the requirements of the Minimum Income Floor will be temporarily relaxed. This change will apply to all Universal Credit claimants and will last for the duration of the outbreak. New claimants will not need to attend the jobcentre to demonstrate gainful self-employment.

The **Self-employment Income Support Scheme** (SEISS) will support self-employed individuals (including members of partnerships) whose income has been negatively impacted by

coronavirus. The scheme will provide a grant to self-employed individuals or partnerships, worth 80% of their profits up to a cap of £2,500 per month. Read more about [eligibility for SEISS](#)

You should not contact HMRC about accessing SEISS now. HMRC will use existing information to check potential eligibility and invite applications once the scheme is operational.

The Self-employment Income Support Scheme will be treated as earnings in Universal Credit. Your Universal Credit payment will adjust in response to changes in your earnings.

If you need financial help whilst waiting for SEISS, check your [eligibility for Universal Credit](#)

### **Changes to your earnings**

If you are in work and already claiming Universal Credit, and are staying at home on Government advice, you should report this in the usual way via your [online journal](#). If this means you are working fewer hours, the amount of Universal Credit you receive will adjust as your earnings change.

### **If you're making a new claim**

Don't delay making a benefit claim, even if you think you may be affected by coronavirus.

You can [apply for Universal Credit](#) online. If you are eligible you will need to make an appointment for your new claim interview. This interview will take place by telephone with a work coach. You will be given the number to call to book this appointment when you have submitted your claim.

We are aware that the appointment booking line is exceptionally busy, therefore your local jobcentre will call you if they've seen you've applied online but haven't been able to get through to get an appointment yet. They will use your online journal to let you know they'll be calling, and will contact you as soon as they can.

You should continue to try and book a new claim interview until you have been contacted.

Universal Credit users are experiencing extended waiting times for GOV.UK Verify. We appreciate how frustrating this is and we are working to improve the situation as quickly as possible.

Not everyone will be able to verify their identity online. Don't worry if you can't – call the number provided once you have submitted your claim, to book a new claim telephone interview with a work coach.

If you need to claim Universal Credit or [Employment and Support Allowance \(ESA\)](#) because of coronavirus, you will not be required to produce a Fit Note.

If you are affected by coronavirus you will be able to apply for Universal Credit and can receive up to a month's advance upfront without physically attending a jobcentre.

If you are suffering from coronavirus or are required to stay at home and want to apply for ESA, the usual 7 waiting days for new claimants will not apply. ESA will be payable from day one.

For more information about any aspect of Universal Credit, including how to make a claim, visit the [homepage](#) or use the links at the top of this page.

If you have been working within the last 2 to 3 years and have paid and/or been credited with enough National Insurance contributions, you may be able to claim [New Style Jobseeker's Allowance \(JSA\)](#)

New Style JSA can be claimed on its own or at the same time as Universal Credit. Your savings and capital (or your partner's savings, capital and income) are not taken into account when claiming New Style JSA.

If you are self-employed and are making a new application for Universal Credit, you will not need to attend the jobcentre to demonstrate gainful self-employment.

## **If you're an employer**

There's a range of support available to help employers deal with the consequences of the coronavirus outbreak.

The government has announced an extensive [package of financial measures](#), including the Job Retention Scheme, a Statutory Sick Pay relief package for small and medium enterprises, and deferred VAT and Income Tax payments.

And if you have fewer than 250 employees, you will be able to reclaim Statutory Sick Pay for employees unable to work because of coronavirus. This refund will be for up to 2 weeks per employee.

If you employ people, you are urged to use your discretion about what evidence, if any, you ask for when making decisions about sick pay. If evidence is required, employees can get an Isolation Note from [NHS 111 online](#) if they have symptoms, or the [NHS website](#) if they live with someone that has symptoms.

Find out about other [government support for businesses](#) affected by coronavirus.

For those businesses that find themselves needing to increase their workforce as a result of the outbreak, such as those in food logistics, preparation and retail, remember to post vacancies on [Find a Job](#)