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CORONAVIRUS SPECIAL

3 April 2020

Roundup of recent DWP announcements

Boosting capacity in Universal Credit

DWP has experienced a huge increase in claims and our phone lines have been extremely busy as a result. We're taking urgent action to boost capacity, we've moved 10,000 existing staff to help on the front line and we're recruiting more.

The system is standing up well to pressures and our dedicated staff are working flat out to get people the support they need.

We're still asking people to apply for Universal Credit online and to only call DWP to book their initial telephone appointment. Because the lines are busy, local jobcentres will also try to call customers if they see the customer has applied online but hasn't yet got an appointment booked. Please reassure those you support that they should not worry if they can't get through straight away, we'll contact them as soon as we can.

Claims will start the day people submit their application online, this is not reliant on identity being verified online. DWP will never text or email asking for personal information or bank details.

Clarification – application process for New Style Employment and Support Allowance

Following queries last week we wanted to clarify the process for applying for New Style Employment and Support Allowance.

People should apply for New Style Employment and Support Allowance by phone, where they are not already claiming Universal Credit.

[More information](#)

When a New Style Employment and Support Allowance claim is taken over the phone we will verify a person's identity at the same time. Claimants do not need to complete a form.

We are aware the phones lines are exceptionally busy and are working to improve the situation as quickly as possible. Claimants will be able to back date their claim and they should keep trying to get through on the phone.

People who have applied for Universal Credit or are already getting Universal Credit should contact their work coach or case manager about applying for New Style Employment and Support Allowance by signing in to their Universal Credit account.

[More information](#)

Chancellor strengthens support on offer for business as first government-backed loans reach firms in need

On Friday 3 April, the Chancellor took further action to support firms affected by the coronavirus crisis by bolstering business interruption loans for small businesses and announcing a new scheme for larger companies.

Further information can be found on [GOV.UK](#).

Visiting service arrangements

DWP Visiting Service has suspended routine face-to-face home visits with the exception of the following three criteria:

- Visits to vulnerable customers

- Where a visit is needed to ensure benefit payments can be made
- Visits to undertake safeguarding checks

For our partners who make referrals to DWP Visiting, please continue to do so in the same way you do at present. For all visit referrals we will undertake a risk-based assessment, ensuring they meet the criteria above and then make a decision on the best way to support the customer. Those customers who do not meet the criteria will instead be contacted by telephone or letter.

Carer's Allowance easements

DWP has introduced two important temporary measures to help unpaid carers through the current emergency.

Unpaid carers will be able to continue to claim Carer's Allowance if they have a temporary break in caring, because they or the person they care for gets Coronavirus or if they have to isolate because of it. Under normal rules there are restrictions on breaks in care, but these have been lifted.

Providing emotional support rather than just more traditional forms of care to a disabled person will also now count towards the Carer's Allowance threshold of 35 hours of care a week.

Universal Credit Transition Fund suspended

We are temporarily suspending the Universal Credit Transition Fund application process.

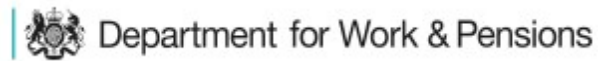
Our priority at this time is to ensure people get their benefit payments and to protect vulnerable people who need our support most. We also recognise that organisations may not be in a position in the current circumstances to proceed with an application or mobilise a new project.

If you have already submitted your application we will hold this on record, provided you are content for us to do so, in the event we are able to progress with the process later in the year.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for the charity sector

The Charity Commission has published [guidance for charities](#) to help them run during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The page will be updated with responses to further questions on an ongoing basis.



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