

The service

Step 1: Multi- channel 'no wrong door' access



Our service is available, face-to-face, over the phone and online through webchat and online content - to allow clients to access support in the way that's right for them. They can be sign-posted or referred by other support agencies or self-refer.



Step 2: Help to Claim check

We'll check that Universal Credit is the right benefit for the client to claim



Step 3: Individual needs assessment

However clients come into our service we'll start by assessing their individual needs to make sure they can get access to the right level of support in the way that's right for them



Step 4: Support to start a Universal Credit claim



Step 5: Completing a claim and getting ready for first payment

Depending on their level of need this might include help to:

- Check whether a client should be applying for Universal Credit
- Set up an email address or Universal Credit account
- Work through claim to-dos
- Access Universal Credit phone claim service or DWP home visit support
- Support through the verify process
- Provide additional evidence
- Prepare for the practicalities of a monthly payment
- Access adaptations such as direct payments to landlords and conditionality easements
- Apply for additional financial support



Step 6: Access to longer term support

Our help to claim service supports clients to make their initial Universal Credit claim. We can also support them with other issues in their lives by signposting or referring clients to other services - within Citizens Advice or through other organisations.

The Help to Claim service went live on 1 April, helping people to make a new Universal Credit claim and prepare for their first payment. The service is available face to face, on the phone and online through live chat and online content.

331 local Citizens Advice services are delivering Help to Claim in 941 locations across England, Wales and Scotland. The phone service can be accessed for free through three national numbers:

- England: 0800 144 8 444
- Wales: 08000 241 220
- Scotland: 0800 023 2581

Help to Claim so far



No wrong door - accessing the service

The most popular channel for accessing the service remains face to face, accounting for over half of the clients we've helped so far. The vast majority of clients have accessed the service either via DWP or by self-referring but we have seen nearly 5,000 clients from local authorities and other agencies in the first ten weeks.



Working with local partners

Local Citizens Advice are working to develop relationships with key referral partners and promote the service with local stakeholders and the public. In addition there are a number of officers around the country who are tasked with engaging with local stakeholders and sharing best practice. In England and Wales, there is a Best Practice Lead in each of the 31 Jobcentre Plus district and in Scotland this work is being done by 3 Network Engagement Officers based in Inverness, Edinburgh and Glasgow.



The support we're offering

When clients come into our service, they are triaged and offered support based on their needs (see service design overleaf). We're seeing significant take-up of the support to complete an application and prepare for first payment as well as people making use of the 1200 public access computers we have located around the country to help people make an online claim.

Top Issues for clients using the service

- Eligibility
- Understanding Universal Credit payments
- Access to the internet and digital literacy
- Advance payments
- Evidence and verification

Our policy team will continue to raise our concerns about Universal Credit and influence policy change. If you'd like to know more about our Universal Credit work please get in touch at universalcredit@citizensadvice.org.uk.