

# Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Universal Credit

**Page last updated: 1 May 2020**

This is what to you need to do for Universal Credit during the coronavirus outbreak. Our helpline is very busy - please only call if you have to. Check this page for updates.

[Open all](#)

---

## Helpline and journal message delays

Because of coronavirus, we're experiencing very high demand.

It's taking much longer than usual for us to answer the phone or your journal messages. We apologise for these long delays - we know this is a difficult time.

No one will be penalised for following government guidance to stay at home.

Your payments will continue. We will contact you if we need anything.

For now, please only contact us if you absolutely have to. This will help our staff to focus on making payments and processing new claims.

You still need to tell us if anything changes by reporting a change of circumstances in your online account.

---

## Payments

See when your payment is due - follow the link to **Payments** from the [homepage](#).

### Payment increases

Payments will increase for everyone after 6 April. You will see this on your next statement after 6 April.

This includes increases for:

- your standard allowance
- the cap for private rented housing, if it applies to you

Further increases for people with children, carers and people with disabilities will start from the 5 May. You will see this on your next statement after 5 May.

We are not taking phone calls about payment increases at the moment. You do not need to call us about this.

---

## If you are on furlough

### Claiming Universal Credit while on furlough

Your employer might be able to keep you on, even if they do not have any work for you because of the coronavirus outbreak. This is known as being 'on furlough'.

You can claim Universal Credit while you are on furlough.

### The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

While on furlough, you might be able to get up to 80% of your wages paid through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

This is done by your employer, not by Universal Credit. Please do not call us about it. Read about the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on GOV.UK.

### If you are already claiming Universal Credit and you are put on furlough

You do not need to tell us you are on furlough.

The pay you get while you are on furlough will be treated the same as any other earnings for your Universal Credit claim.

If you normally report your earnings to us through the 'Report your earnings from employers' to-do, you need to include your furlough pay in that.

---

## Commitments and looking for work

The only thing you need to do for your commitments at the moment is to tell us if anything changes - [report a change of circumstances](#).

### If your commitments say you should look for work

If your commitments say you should prepare, search or be available for work, then you should continue if it is safe to do so. Employers need people to fill important vacancies right now. Look on the [Find a job](#) website.

For now, your work coach will not check if you are keeping these commitments. You will not get a sanction if you cannot keep these commitments at this time.

---

## Appointments

There are no appointments in jobcentres - do not go to the jobcentre.

We are cancelling many appointments - check your journal for more information.

If your appointment is not cancelled, we will call you.

You do not need to contact us about appointments. You will not get a sanction if you do not attend an appointment.

### **How to know it's us calling**

Calls from us may show on your phone as one the these:

- 0800 number
- local number
- unknown number
- withheld number

If you have blocked calls from withheld numbers, please try to unblock them. We will make sure that you know the call is genuine.

We will never text or email you asking for your personal information or bank details.

---

### **Health assessment appointments**

All health assessments are on hold, for now.

If you have a health assessment appointment, wait for us to call you.

If you have applied for Universal Credit but do not yet have a health assessment appointment, you do not need to do anything.

---

### **Do not go to a jobcentre unless we ask you to**

Jobcentres are closed to the public. Please do not go to a jobcentre unless we ask you to. Follow government advice to stay at home.

Jobcentre staff will still meet with our most vulnerable customers, people in urgent need of help, or those who have no access to a phone or the internet.

---

### **If you have just applied for Universal Credit - we will call you**

When you have completed your application, you do not need to call us.

We will contact you if we need any more information.

This will happen even if you did not manage to verify your identity online.

You do not need to call to book an appointment - just wait to hear from us.

Before we call you, we will put a message in the journal in your online account.

## How to know it's us calling

Calls from us may show on your phone as one of these:

- 0800 number
- local number
- unknown number
- withheld number

If you have blocked calls from withheld numbers, please try to unblock them. We will make sure that you know the call is genuine.

We will never text or email you asking for your personal information or bank details.

---

## If you have just applied for Universal Credit - advances

You can apply for an advance while you are waiting for your first payment. You need to pay this back.

Use your online account to apply for this advance - do not call us or send a journal message.

Go to [apply for an advance](#).

---

## Self-employment

### The Minimum Income Floor (MIF)

The MIF will not apply during the coronavirus outbreak. You do not need to contact us about this.

### Report your income and expenses

You need to complete the 'Report income and expenses' to-do every month, even if your income is zero. You will see this on your **To-do list**.

### The Self-employment Income Support Scheme

You can apply for the Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). This provides a grant to self-employed individuals or partnerships, worth 80% of their profits up to a cap of £2,500 per month.

If you get this grant, you must report it in the 'Report income and expenses' to-do.

This scheme is not part of Universal Credit - please do not contact us about it. Read more about [eligibility for SEISS](#).

---

## Debt repayments

If you owe money for benefit overpayments, these repayments have been paused. This includes repayments for Social Fund Loans and Tax Credits overpayments.

You do not need to make any repayments until July 2020 at the earliest.

### **If this is normally taken from your Universal Credit payment**

If money is currently taken from your Universal Credit payment, you do not need to do anything. Repayments will stop automatically, until at least July. You do not need to call us about this.

### **If you make repayments through a bank or standing order**

If you make repayments through a bank standing order, contact your bank to cancel payments for April, May and June.

If you make repayments by bank giro credit or through online banking, stop payments for April, May and June.

### **Advances continue as normal**

If you have an advance, repayments will be taken off your Universal Credit payment as normal.

Please check back for new information about other debt repayments.

---

## **Emergency help with food and necessities**

If you urgently need food or basic provisions:

- look online, including on local community pages, to find help and foodbanks
- check your [local council's website](#) for coronavirus community response and support

More information will be available soon. Please check this page and look out for announcements.

---

## **Scams and fraud**

Criminals are using coronavirus to scam people - including people claiming Universal Credit. Be extra careful at this time.

We will never text or email asking you for your personal information or bank details.

Do not share information if you think the call might not be from Universal Credit. It could be a scam. If you are in any doubt, you can ask the caller to post a specific message into your journal so you can be sure it's us.

If you have applied for Universal Credit but have not been able to get an appointment yet, your local jobcentre might call you. They will leave a message in your online journal first, to tell you they plan to call.

Criminals who defraud our customers and Universal Credit will be investigated and face prosecution.

---

## **NHS advice about coronavirus**

Follow the [NHS advice about coronavirus](#).

---