

# UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Amounts stated are valid until end of April 2018

## WHAT IS UNIVERSAL CREDIT?

Universal Credit is a new single, monthly benefit that is replacing six existing benefits for people who are out of work or on a low income. Extra money will be available for people who have a disability or health condition, caring responsibilities, childcare or housing costs.

## How is UC being introduced?

UC was introduced from April 2013 in some parts of England, Scotland and Wales and is gradually being rolled out across these countries. It will be introduced in Northern Ireland from September 2017.



## WHICH BENEFITS IS UNIVERSAL CREDIT REPLACING?

- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit.

If you're already claiming a benefit, you will be informed when and how Universal Credit will affect you.

To find out what will change for you, the DWP has developed an online personal planner that should take you around five to 10 minutes to complete. You can do this by visiting [ucpp.dwp.gov.uk/universal-credit-preparation/](http://ucpp.dwp.gov.uk/universal-credit-preparation/)

## WHAT IS UNIVERSAL CREDIT MADE UP OF?

How much you receive will depend on your personal circumstances. The government will provide a basic rate called the 'standard allowance' and will offer extra amounts, known as 'elements'.

You may be entitled to these extra elements if you have:

- A limited capability for work due to disability or a health condition
- Housing costs
- Children
- Childcare costs
- Caring responsibilities.



## QUALIFYING FOR UNIVERSAL CREDIT

To claim for Universal Credit you need to be:

- Over the age of 18 (16 in some cases, for example if you're not being supported by your parents)
- Under the Pension Credit age
- Living in Great Britain (or Northern Ireland from September 2017)
- Not in education (see **What if I'm in education?**).
- Not have savings more than £16,000.

If you work over 16 hours a week or earn over a certain amount, then you may not be able to get the limited capability for work element on top of your basic allowance, even if you have a disability or illness.

If you live with your partner you'll need to make a joint claim as a couple. Your partner's income and savings will be taken into account, even if they aren't eligible for Universal Credit themselves.

If Universal Credit hasn't been introduced in your area yet, or for your type of claim, you may be able to get Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) if you're looking for work, or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) if you're ill or have a disability.

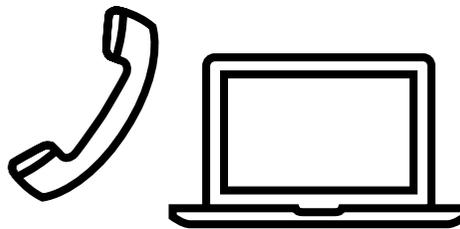
If Universal Credit has been introduced for you, but you're also eligible for contribution-based JSA or ESA, you may be able to claim these benefits and an additional Universal Credit top up. There are limits on how long you can get these contribution-based benefits for, so check with a welfare adviser to see if you're eligible.

## WHAT ABOUT WORK?

There isn't a limit on the number of hours you can work per week when you're claiming Universal Credit. However, if you start earning more money your Universal Credit payment will gradually reduce.

You can earn a certain amount of money, called a 'work allowance' if you or you and/or your partner have responsibility for a child and/or have limited capability for work. For this, your Universal Credit is reduced by 65p for every £1 you earn above the work allowance limit.

This means that you won't lose all your benefits at once if you're on a low income.



## WHAT IF I'M IN EDUCATION?

One of the rules for receiving Universal Credit is that you can't be in education. You are unlikely to be able to receive Universal Credit if you are under 19 and on a non-advanced course (for example GCSEs, A'Levels Scottish Highers or NVQs up to level 3).

If you are on a full time course of advanced education (for example a university degree or BTEC Higher National Certificate) then you can't claim Universal Credit. This is also the case if you're on a full time course or full time training, whether it's advanced or non-advanced, and you receive a loan or grant for your maintenance.

There are some exceptions though. For example if you:

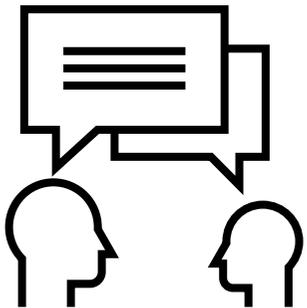
- Are under 21, on a non-advanced course and you don't have parental support
- Have a partner who isn't a student
- Are responsible for a child
- Have been assessed as having limited capability for work and receive Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment
- Have taken time out of your course for treatment, have recovered, and are not eligible for student finance. In this case, you'll need to be waiting to return to the course, and your absence must have been agreed with your place of education.

Speak to a welfare adviser to find out if the education rule applies to you.

## UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND TREATMENT

People with disabilities can receive additional elements on top of the standard allowance. Depending on the severity of their disability, they could receive the 'limited capability for work' element or the 'limited capability for work and work related activity' element.

You may not think of yourself as disabled, but you can receive this second element if you're receiving or recovering from chemotherapy or radiotherapy. You may also be able to get this element if you're likely to have chemotherapy or radiotherapy in the next six months. If this is the case, you also won't have to go through the work capability assessment that usually decides whether someone can receive this element.



## HELP PAYING YOUR RENT

If you are over 21 and need help paying your rent, this money will now be included in your monthly Universal Credit payment, rather than Housing Benefit. This means you'll be responsible for paying the landlord yourself. If you're 21 or under you won't be able to get Housing Benefit, although there are some exceptions.

If you are a council tenant and your home has more bedrooms than considered necessary the amount of Universal Credit you can receive for housing will be cut. You may have heard this referred to as the 'bedroom tax'.

The Money Advice Service has produced guidance on the bedroom tax, as well as how to manage your rent payments when receiving Universal Credit. Visit its website at [moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://moneyadviceservice.org.uk) for more information.

## TWO CHILD LIMIT

Households with two or more children and any more children born after April 2017 will not receive tax credits or Housing Benefit (the housing element of Universal Credit). Parents with a youngest child under the age of three will be expected to look for work if they want to claim Universal Credit – this includes lone parents.

## THE BENEFIT CAP

Local councils have introduced a cap to put a limit on the total amount that people can receive through certain benefits. This was introduced from April 2013 to claimants in England, Scotland and Wales and will eventually form part of the Universal Credit system.

To find out more about the rates visit [gov.uk/benefit-cap](http://gov.uk/benefit-cap).

The Benefit Cap will not apply to your household if you or your partner qualify for Working Tax Credit. Or if you, your partner or any children you are responsible for, and who live with you, get one of the following benefits:

- Attendance Allowance
- Carer's Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment
- Employment and Support Allowance (where the Support Component has been awarded)
- Industrial Injuries Benefit
- Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (Guaranteed Income Payments)
- Armed Forces Independence Payment
- War Pensions (this includes the War Widow's/ Widower's pension and war disablement pension)

If you're already receiving benefits and you might be affected by the cap, the DWP will contact you to let you know what will happen.

## CHILDCARE SUPPORT

Any childcare costs you get covered as part of Universal Credit will be counted when your benefit income is being worked out. However, there are some exceptions. For example, you won't be affected if someone in your household qualifies for Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment. This could be you or your partner, or a child or young person you are responsible for. You'll also be exempt if you or your partner qualify for the limited capability for work-related activity element of Universal Credit.

The most you can receive from the childcare element of Universal Credit is 85% of your childcare costs. This is up to a maximum of £646.35 for one child or £1108.04 for two or more children.

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## HOW DO I APPLY FOR UNIVERSAL CREDIT?

Claims for Universal Credit need to be made online by visiting [gov.uk/apply-universal-credit](https://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit). In exceptional circumstances you may be able to claim by phone, request a home visit or get an adviser to complete the online form for you.

You will have to sign a *Claimant Commitment* form that will explain what will happen if you don't meet certain responsibilities in return for claiming Universal Credit. You will still receive financial help if you're unable to work.

Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to accept your *Claimant Commitment* online or by phone. Speak to a welfare adviser if you aren't sure about this.

After you've made your online application you may be asked to attend a face-to-face interview at your local Jobcentre. Make sure you explain any issues at this interview that could mean you're unable to attend interviews or look for work.

## NEED HELP MAKING YOUR CLAIM?

If you need help with your application you can speak to someone at the Universal Credit helpline on **0345 600 0723** or textphone **0345 600 0743**. There is a voice activation service when you call the number to help you get to the right department.

## ABOUT CLIC SARGENT

CLIC Sargent is the UK's leading cancer charity for children, young people and their families. Our care teams have been providing expert support across the UK for years. CLIC Sargent provides information, advice and guidance to help young people and their families take control and make decisions about their treatment and future.

## NEED HELP?

As the roll out of Universal Credit is ongoing, this information is subject to change.

For the most up-to-date information, contact CLIC Sargent's free telephone welfare advice services by calling **0800 915 4439** or emailing [welfareadvice@clicsargent.org.uk](mailto:welfareadvice@clicsargent.org.uk)

Advisers can answer questions about the forms you need to fill in, or benefits in general. They can also let you know about other organisations that can help you.