



## What is Universal Credit?

Universal Credit (UC) is a new benefit paid to you if you are of working age, on a low income or out of work. It will replace the following benefits which will end very soon:

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

If you receive any of the above, you will shortly be moved onto Universal Credit. It will help you to be better off in work than on benefits.

Contributory Jobseekers Allowance and contributory Employment and Support Allowance will continue to exist alongside UC. If you're entitled to one of these benefits as well as UC, your contributory benefit will be worked out according to the rules of UC.

## How to claim

You can [make a claim for Universal Credit online](#). If you get stuck while you're making your Universal Credit claim, a helpline is available Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm. Call 0345 600 0723

Once you have made your claim, you will need to attend an interview at your local job center where a work coach will help you take steps to find work.

## How is it paid?

Universal Credit will be paid into your bank account in a single monthly payment from the Department of Work and Pensions. If you are part of a couple, it will be paid into one account only.

It will be paid as if you are receiving a monthly salary. It is up to you to then pay your rent, council tax and other bills from the money you receive.

Housing Benefit will no longer be paid to us from the Council. You will need to set up a direct debit to pay your rent from the Universal Credit you get.

## How much is Universal Credit?

Your Universal Credit will be made up of a standard allowance plus elements you are eligible for such as:

- Housing
- Being responsible for children or young people
- Disabled children
- Childcare costs
- An ill or disabled adult
- Being a carer.

Other earnings and/or savings will be taken into account when working out your award

## **What about Council Tax?**

Universal Credit does not automatically entitle you to Council Tax Benefit like Housing Benefit did. You must apply separately to the Council and you should budget for this when you receive Universal Credit payments.

## **How does working affect Universal Credit?**

There are no limits on how many hours a week you can work if you're claiming UC. Instead, the amount you get will gradually reduce as you earn more (also known as a taper), so you won't lose all your benefits at once.

## **What if I am over Pension Credit age?**

Universal Credit is paid to people of working age and is not a benefit for people who have reached Pension Credit age. You would claim Pension Credit instead of Universal Credit. However, if one member of a couple is Pension Credit age and the other one is under, and you live in a Full Digital Service Area, you can claim either Pension Credit or Universal Credit. You can check whether you are better off on Pension Credit or Universal Credit by using our Benefits Calculator.

As Universal Credit replaces Housing Benefit and Child Tax Credit but is only for working-age people there will be some changes to Pension Credit so that it includes support for rent and an additional amount for pensioners with dependent children

## **How does Universal Credit affect PIP and DLA?**

If you're an adult and getting either Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA), it will continue to be paid along with your Universal Credit payment. If you are entitled to the benefits listed above.

These benefits are not means tested so they won't affect the amount you get in Universal Credit.

## **When will I be paid?**

If you make a new claim for Universal Credit you will not be paid for the first seven days. These days are known as waiting days.

The seventh day after you make your claim is the date of the month on which your Universal Credit Payment will be paid each month. This is called your assessment date.

Universal Credit is paid monthly in arrears so you'll have to wait one calendar month from your assessment date before your first UC payment is made. This is called your assessment period.

You then have to wait up to seven days for the payment to reach your bank account so it can take up to six weeks before you get your first payment.

## What about Rent Arrears?

The above rules mean your rent account may fall into a large debt while your Universal Credit claim is being processed.

The seven day waiting period won't apply in certain circumstances and you will be told this when you make your application to the DWP. Whether you are affected by the seven day waiting period or not, there will still be a delay of at least 5 weeks by the time you receive your first Universal Credit payment so it is important you understand that this will impact your rent account.

## What you should do now

It is very important you prepare for this change now so that you can pay your rent and not be at risk of losing your home. Some things you can do are:

- 1. Make sure you have a bank account – to receive Universal Credit you will need a bank, building society or credit union account.**
- 2. Make sure you have Internet Access – you will need to make your application for Universal Credit online where you will be given a personal online account to check your payments and update your details. If you need help getting online your Job Centre or local council can provide support.**

You will need certain documents as evidence to make your claim. You can find a list of the evidence you will need at [Making a Universal Credit claim](#)

- 3. Set up a direct debit – this is to make sure you don't fall into rent arrears by the time your first Universal Credit payment is made and to pay your rent account in advance. Even if you receive full Housing benefit, the change to Universal Credit will mean that your rent account will be behind by the time your application is in place.**
- 4. Draw up a monthly budget to make sure you have enough money coming in to pay for what you need.**

## What your Tenancy Agreement says

Your tenancy agreement says you should pay your rent with weekly or monthly payments in advance. This applies even if you receive full Housing Benefit now. To meet this obligation coupled with the change to Universal Credit, you should call us on 0121 561 7934 to set up your direct debit immediately.

It can be set up for minimum payments per month that are affordable and we will discuss these options with you so that your account doesn't go into debt.

## Where you can get help

If you are worried about how you will manage for money until you get your first payment, you can ask the Job Centre for help who will talk you through some options. You may be able to ask for an advanced payment, or ask if your payments can be split to be received twice in the month.

You can also ask if the Job Center will pay your housing element of rent directly to Black County Housing if you feel you want be able to manage your money yourself.

Your local council may be able to help with your rent costs if you apply or receive UC. This is known as **Discretionary Housing Benefit** which is temporary that may help you with the change depending on your circumstances. .

## Contact the Universal Credit helpline

If you need help with your claim, call the Universal Credit helpline on:

**0345 600 0723**

For more details on Universal Credit and to work out how much you may get please visit the website to find out how much you may get, visit the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk).