



Coronavirus (Covid-19): Income, Universal Credit and Entitlement Advice

As the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic progresses, there are actions you can take and advice available if you are struggling to cover your bills. As this is affecting everyone, there have been some changes made to benefits and sick pay to make them easier to access. We have compiled a list of useful information and resources that may help, based on your current situation. If you need any further guidance, our Income and Welfare teams are on hand to support you through this difficult time – just call 0800 5445 442 and select option '2'.

Employed: Contracted Hours

Some employers have sent employees home and told them they will be paid as usual. If this is you, and you do not usually receive any benefits, then you do not need to make a claim.

Workers with contracted hours will be covered by the government's pledge to cover 80% of wages up to a maximum of £2,500 per person. This will be claimed by your employer and paid in the same way your usual pay is – you will not need to do anything yourself. These payments will be backdated to 1st March 2020 and last up to three months. If your employer has told you that you will miss scheduled payments between now and when the government payments are due to be made in late April (e.g. if you are paid weekly), you could be entitled to Universal Credit in the meantime.

It will be up to your employer to decide whether to make up the 20% difference. If your employer cannot make up the 20%, and this 20% cut takes you under the threshold for Universal Credit, you will need to make a new claim. If you are already on Universal Credit alongside your wage, you will not need to make a new claim, and your top-up payment will be calculated against the 80% figure.

Employed: Zero Hours Contract

The 80% pay pledge from the government applies to everyone who is taxed before they get their pay in their bank account (PAYE). We are waiting for more information on this, but should be based on an average of your pay, rather than just one week.

If your average pay takes you below the threshold, you will need to make a Universal Credit claim.

If you are already on Universal Credit alongside your wage, you will not need to make a new claim and your top-up payment will be based on 80% of your average pay.

Employed: Hours Cut

If you are employed, but your employer has cut your contracted hours and will be paying you less than usual because of this, you could be entitled to Universal Credit if your wage falls below the threshold. Please visit the Turn2Us benefits calculator [\[link\]](#) to check your benefit entitlement.

Redundancy

If you have been made redundant despite the 80% pay pledge, there are still rights and rules your former employer needs to fulfil around redundancy payments. While policies vary between companies, there is a minimum entitlement decided by the government. If you have worked in your current job for more than two years, you should be entitled to:

- Half a week's pay for each full year worked when you were under the age of 22
- A full week's pay for each full year you were aged between 22 and 41.
- One and a half week's pay for each full year you were aged 41 or older.

Self-employed: Lost work

Pay for the self-employed has not yet been announced. More information on provision for self-employed workers is due on 26th March 2020. However, any self-assessment tax payments that were due on the 31st July are now not expected to be paid until January 2021.

There is now no minimum income for Universal Credit claims, which should increase your entitlement. The standard allowance for those aged 25 and over has been increased from £317.82 to £409.89 per month. There could also be other payments you are entitled to supplement this, and couples can claim more. However, if your partner is still earning, that could affect how much you can claim.

Those who are self-employed cannot claim statutory sick pay, but Universal Credit is now worth the same – £94.25 – each week.

Sickness and Self-Isolation

You should be eligible to claim statutory sick pay, worth £94.25 per week for up to 28 weeks. Your employer might have a more generous sickness scheme, so it is worth checking as you should then be paid the higher amount. You can now claim this from day one of your sickness or self-isolation.

You can access a Coronavirus (Covid-19) sick note or isolation note here: <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>. If you do not have access to the internet, someone else can do it on your behalf or you can call 111. The note will then be emailed to a trusted friend or direct to your employer if you do not have an email address.

Rent Difficulties

We don't want anyone to feel stressed or anxious about their rent during this time. If you can still pay, you should. However, anyone that is worried about decreased hours, less pay or are losing your job should call our Income and Welfare staff for advice on how to proceed. They can support you with ways to pay, understanding your eligibility for benefits and advise you on making a Universal Credit application. Call us on 0800 5335 442 and select option '2'.

Further Information & Helpful Resources

Apply here for Universal Credit:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit>

Due to how quickly the Coronavirus (Covid-19) situation has progressed, some information on the website is no longer applicable (e.g. 5 week wait times). There may be long queues online, but face-to-face interviews have been suspended and you will now receive your first payment within one week if you are eligible.

Find out more information about Coronavirus and claiming Universal Credit here:

<https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus/>

Newcastle City Council: Coronavirus & Benefits information

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/welfare-benefits/welfare-rights-and-money-advice/coronavirus-and-benefits-special-page>

Turn2Us Benefits Calculator

<https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk/AboutYou>

As they are experiencing high levels of traffic, please keep a note of your Calculation Reference to access a calculation in case of any problems.

Government advice on Coronavirus (Covid-19)

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>