

Benefit Bulletin: Big benefit changes and news

Produced by the Active Inclusion Service, Newcastle City Council

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People are being invited to claim Universal Credit

What they need to know – to protect their income!

As you know, Universal Credit is replacing these 6 working-age means tested benefits - called 'legacy benefits':

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

The DWP and HMRC have started writing to them - group by group - inviting them to claim Universal Credit. It started with Tax Credits and from April 2024 those on Income Support claimants and those claiming Tax Credits with Housing Benefit will get the invites.

It is most important they:

1. claim Universal Credit, and
2. claim it at the right time.

The letter is called a 'migration notice' and gives a deadline date in 3 months' time to claim Universal Credit.

After that deadline date, their legacy benefit will stop – so that's why they must claim Universal Credit – to protect their income.

If they don't claim Universal Credit within that deadline date, they won't get their transitional protection which tops them up to the same level as their 'legacy benefit'. They will lose other protections.

The appendix below has a copy of what the migration notice looks like.

This means they really **should claim Universal Credit to protect their income.**

So it is imperative we explain they really should claim UC. Not only to protect their income but also to protect access to other help such as health benefits, prescriptions, Free School Meals, Cost of Living Payments etc.

Attend a briefing in March and April 2024

To help you be aware of who this affects, what the implications are, what people must do, how to avoid problems and who can help, we have set up short briefings on Teams for professionals lasting about 45 minutes.

They are open to those who support Newcastle residents.

They will help you give **basic information** to the people you support and signpost them to the most appropriate service if they need further help and advice.

Please pass this information on to other professionals and volunteers supporting people in Newcastle

DATES for briefings – all start at 2pm

Thursday 21 March 2024
Tuesday 26 March 2024

Thursday 4 April 2024
Tuesday 9 April 2024
Wednesday 17 April 2024

This [link](#) takes you direct to the course – but you may still need to sign up/register in iLearn

This [link](#) takes you to the webpage which gives you more information and how to access and register for the briefings

Please note: These sessions are updated versions of the briefings held in December and January.

Other reasons you may have to claim Universal Credit

1. You may have to claim UC if you have a change in circumstances that triggers the UC rules (called Natural Migration).

This only happens if you have to claim a **new** legacy benefit.

Examples:

Example 1

Single person lives at home with parents, on income-based Jobseekers Allowance only, moves out to a rent a tenancy, claims Housing Benefit (HB) to help with rent. This new claim for HB triggers the UC rule, which means you cannot claim HB, any other legacy benefits will be stopped and there's no choice but to claim UC.

Example 2

On HB and moves to a new tenancy in same area, then it's just a change of address - it doesn't mean a new claim for HB. But a move to a new local authority area is a new HB claim, so then UC has to be claimed.

Example 3

On Working Tax Credit and have a first child. You can claim Child Tax Credits and do not have to claim UC. It's just a change of Tax Credits.

2. You can claim UC at any time you find out you would be better off on UC and you can manage to claim it.

Then you should consider claiming UC.

See our Universal Credit webpages for more details

[The move to Universal Credit](#)

[Where to get support in Newcastle with Universal Credit](#)

[Universal Credit – a simple guide](#)

[Universal Credit – a more detailed guide](#)

Other Universal Credit (UC) news

A backdating claim for UC can be made after the UC decision is made.

Facts:

- 16 March 2022, the parents of a young man with severe learning disability helped him claim UC.
- UC was awarded.
- 3 months later the parents asked for it to be backdated under backdating rules.
- The DWP refused to backdate saying it was too late to ask as the claim had already been decided.
- The parents appealed and the Court of Appeal agreed with them.

CPAG – explains what claimants and representatives need to do:

- Ideally, claimants should request backdating on their journal – **before** claim is decided.
- If not, they should request backdating – referring to regulation 26 of the '[UC etc. \(C&P\) Regs](#)' – and the DWP should treat that as a mandatory reconsideration (review) and make a decision. If the DWP refuses to backdate then the claimant can appeal.

CPAG advice: [No requirement to request backdating before a claim to universal credit determined | CPAG](#)

Full judgement: [Secretary of State for Work and Pensions v Miah \[2024\] EWCA Civ 186 \(01 March 2024\) \(bailii.org\)](#)

Other benefit news and related information

EU citizens with pre-settled status are more able to get Universal Credit

A recent Supreme Court decision means that EU citizens with pre settled status can claim UC if without it, they would be at risk of being unable to live in dignified conditions.

In addition, CPAG say the DWP will also need to revisit nearly 3,000 refused claims already made by such EU citizens.

More details from [CPAG](#)

Benefit and related announcements in the Spring Budget

- The [Household Support Fund](#) has once again, been extended from April to September 2024. This fund allows councils to support people in various ways. These details of [Newcastle Council's present scheme](#) will be updated with this new extension.
- The maximum repayment period for [Universal Credit budgeting advances](#) is to be increased from 12 to 24 months – for loans taken out from December 2024 onwards. It's already 24 months for UC advances.
- There will be additional funding to support the processing of disability benefit claims. Hopefully this will reduce the long waiting periods.
- The 'Additional Jobcentre Support pilot' (from the Spring Budget 2023) is to be extended for a further 12 months, where claimant will have to accept a new claimant commitment at 6, 13 and 13 weeks.
- Individuals with income of over £50,000 lose their [Child Benefit](#) through the high income charge. From April 2024, this charge will increase from £50,000 to £60,000 meaning that 170,000 families will benefit. And from April 2026, the charge will be assessed by household rather than by individual.
- The standing charge premium for those with pre-payment meters will be removed from April 2024
- The Debt Relief Order one off £90 administration fee will be removed from April 2024

More details from the [government](#) and some reactions:

[Spring Budget 2024: Reaction](#) summarised by the House of Commons library.

[Poorest receive just 3% of chancellor's spring budget tax giveaways | New Economics Foundation](#) and 'the richest 20% of households will receive 13 times more than poorest from measures announced in the spring budget'.

[Spring Budget 2024 | Institute for Fiscal Studies \(ifs.org.uk\)](#)

Benefit rates from April

Usually benefits increase with inflation in April. The rates for April 2024 have been announced in [The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#). Many of them are listed in [DWP guidance](#).

Details of [benefit and tax credit rates now and in earlier years](#) (Rightsnet)

A notable mention is that, after a four-year freeze, Local Housing Allowance rates are increased. See the [Indicative Local Housing Allowance rates for 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) (see 'Tyneside'). For the current rates see [Search for Local Housing Allowance rates by postcode or local authority : DirectGov - LHA Rates \(voa.gov.uk\)](#)

Also note the National living wage will increase to £11.44 from April 2024.

Online Personal Independence (PIP) claims – rolling out

The availability of claiming PIP online is being extended across the country in 2024. Find out which areas by putting in a postcode in [Check if you're eligible for PIP – Apply for Personal Independence Payment \(PIP\) \(dwp.gov.uk\)](#)

The [government says](#) it will also work with stakeholders to develop plans to allow third parties to make a claim on someone's behalf.

Child Benefit now online

Get the [HMRC app](#) or [report changes that affect your Child Benefit online](#).

Big plans for disability and sickness benefits

The government's [plans](#) include removing the Work Capability Assessment (WCA), only having the Personal Independence Payment test and other related changes from 2026 - 27. In advance of those changes, the government say they will [reduce the scope of the WCA](#) for new claimants from 2025.

Those arriving from Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Lebanon exempted from benefit migration tests.

Those arriving from the region who have recourse to public funds will meet the residency tests for income-related, disability and carer benefits upon arrival in the UK. This mirrors the approach taken in response to recent crises in Ukraine and Sudan.

See also [HB Circular A7/2023](#), [ADM Memo 17/23](#) and [DMG Memo 11/23](#)

Compensation for poor DWP service

A DWP staff guide that explains [DWP's financial compensation principles and processes](#).

The 2-child limit

One exemption from this notorious [benefit rule](#), is a child being conceived without your consent. Added to the list of approved third-party professionals is a specialist support worker from Rape Crisis England and Wales.

[Support for a child conceived without your consent](#)

An 'ambitious blueprint for tackling child poverty in the North East'

'More than one third (35%) of all babies, children and young people in our region are living in poverty.'

See more details and recommendations in the [executive summary](#) and [full report](#), including maximising family incomes through combined authority wide take up campaigns and expanding the reach of income maximisation.

Other support for you and residents

Introduction to Benefits – training

For staff and volunteers supporting Newcastle residents

If you want to get a basic idea about:

- how benefits work
 - how to help people get what they're entitled to and to avoid problems
 - where you and residents can get support and information on benefits
- then sign up for this free live course on Teams:

Available date:

- Wed 20 March 2024. 2-4.30pm

Further information and how to register:

www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals
or [direct link to the courses](#)

Universal Credit – online module

More details www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals

If you are dealing with someone's benefit or simply have a question...

And you work or support residents in Newcastle... ring **Newcastle Council's Welfare Rights consultancy line**. It could save you time and help you know what to do next.

Details in [Information for professionals and volunteers - financial inclusion](#)

Where to get benefit and debt advice in Newcastle

The **latest** version of **Where to get benefit and debt advice in Newcastle**, can be found on the Newcastle City Council website page: [Benefit advice services in Newcastle and benefit offices](#) and includes details on the Welfare Rights Service's Public advice line.

Further support, information and training

Find our **earlier Benefit Bulletins** on our [website page for professionals and volunteers](#) and for **more information on benefit changes**, see our website page [Changes to the benefits system](#) which includes a **timeline of the main benefit changes**

More details about benefits, including those mentioned above, can be found on [our welfare rights and money advice website pages](#), including benefit self-help factsheets

Find **Where to get advice in Newcastle** on the [benefit advice services website page](#)

For details of our 'live' **training on Teams** and **e-learning modules** for professionals such as 'Introduction to Benefits' and 'Universal Credit', see our [website page for professionals and volunteers](#)

Professionals can get phone advice from [the Council's Welfare Rights' consultancy line](#)

You can subscribe to the DWP information for professionals in [Touchbase](#)



This Benefit Bulletin was written by the Active Inclusion Service at Newcastle City Council. It is normally provided bi-monthly and at times of important benefit changes and news. It is as accurate as possible at the time of writing

We also write a regular email for advisers and interested others, with quick benefit news and information. Email clive.davis@newcastle.gov.uk to go on the mailing list

We also produce a weekly **Active Inclusion Newcastle e-bulletin** which provides a brief update on financial inclusion and homelessness prevention issues. If you want to receive this, or for more details, email activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk

Appendix – What the UC migration notice looks like

So far, migration notices were sent to Tax Credits single people then couples. We have been told for the migration notices that are to be sent to those in Northumberland and Tyne & Wear, it will be sent to both. This is a sample of the one sent to couples. Of course, the wording may change by January. Note the deadline date will be 3 months after the date of the letter.

	 HM Revenue & Customs
<small>PARTNER NAME 0 EGMONT ROAD RUNCORN ROAD TS4 2HT</small>	Telephone: 0800 169 0328 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday
	www.gov.uk/dwp/move-to-uc
	Your Ref: TYDX- XHKKJX1S
	22 September 2023
<h3>You and your partner need to claim Universal Credit</h3> <p>You must claim by 22 January 2024 to keep receiving financial support</p>	
<hr/> Universal Credit Migration Notice	
Dear Partner Name,	
Universal Credit is replacing your Child Tax Credit.	
You and your partner must make a joint Universal Credit claim by 22 January 2024 to keep receiving financial support.	
We define partners as 2 people who live in the same household and are:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• married to each other• civil partners of each other• living together as if they were married	
Universal Credit is a Department for Work and Pensions benefit. You can make a claim even if you:	
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- are working
- have renewed your tax credits
- have capital or savings of more than £16,000

Your tax credits award will end from the date you make your Universal Credit claim.

How to claim Universal Credit

Go online to claim Universal Credit: www.gov.uk/dwp/move-to-uc

If you cannot claim online, call the Universal Credit Migration Notice Helpline for free on 0800 169 0328.

▲ How to get help

- call the Universal Credit Migration Notice helpline for free on 0800 169 0328
- visit the Universal Credit website: www.gov.uk/dwp/move-to-uc
- visit your local jobcentre

You can also call us for free on 0800 169 0328 if you:

- need more time to claim
- are not the person named on this letter
- do not intend to claim Universal Credit

For free, independent and confidential help, call the Citizens Advice Help to Claim service on 0800 144 8444 or go to their website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/help-to-claim

Check who can help you in your local area at: advice.local.uk

How much you will get

Most people will be entitled to the same amount or more on Universal Credit. If the amount you are entitled to on your existing benefits is more than you would get on Universal Credit, a top up is available. This is called transitional protection.

This Migration Notice entitles you to transitional protection if your circumstances do not change before you claim Universal Credit. If your circumstances change before you make your claim, this may affect the amount you may get.

If you have certain kinds of debt, this may affect the amount of Universal Credit you get. Call 0800 169 0328 if you think this will affect you.

Why you need to claim Universal Credit

Universal Credit is replacing the following:

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

If you have already made a claim

Ignore this letter if you have already made a claim for Universal Credit.

Yours sincerely,

Universal Credit

This is a migration notice issued under regulation 44 of the Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2014 (MNJC1).

We have many different ways we can communicate with you.

If you would like braille, British Sign Language, a hearing loop, translations, large print, [audio](#) or something else please tell us using the phone number at the top of this letter.

How DWP collects and uses information

We will treat your personal information carefully. We may use it for any of our purposes. To learn about your information rights and how we use information, please see our Personal Information Charter at GOV.UK.

Call charges

Calls to 0800 numbers are free from landlines and mobiles.

Equality and Diversity

We are committed to treating people fairly, regardless of their disability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, transgender status, marital or civil partnership status,

age, religion or beliefs. Please contact us if you have any concerns.

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