

Universal Credit – information on support arrangements in Newcastle (from 24 April 2020)

Please note: This has been updated to reflect the changes to services due to coronavirus. Please also see our website pages on [coronavirus and benefits](#) and [benefit advice services in Newcastle](#).

Universal Credit is a means tested benefit for working age people who are on low incomes and working, seeking to work or unable to work. It is replacing the following ‘legacy’ benefits which are administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and local authorities:

- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA)
- Income Support
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

The Universal Credit ‘full service’ has been in all areas covered by Newcastle Jobcentres since 2017 for all new claims to the above ‘legacy’ benefits. If you receive one or more of the above ‘legacy’ benefits, you may have to claim Universal Credit if you have a change in circumstances. This includes families with three or more children who previously didn’t have to claim Universal Credit. This [online table lists the main changes that might lead to a claim for Universal Credit](#).

Support for Newcastle residents to make a Universal Credit claim online

Universal Credit claims should be made online on the government’s website at www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit.

If you can’t access the above, or you need support to complete the online Universal Credit claim, you can phone the **Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 5644**.

There is also a [government website page](#) for those who have accessibility needs and need support with:

- using the phone (advice on Relay UK, textphone, Video Relay Service for deaf people who use British Sign Language, and alternatives to the phone, including home visits)
- using a computer
- reading letters or filling in forms
- attending face-to-face meetings
- managing your own affairs

Jobcentre offices are temporarily closed for most appointments. There are more details in this DWP [press release](#).

Alternatively, you can contact the **Citizens Advice’s ‘Help to Claim’** service between 8.00am and 6.00pm (Monday to Friday) for help to make the online claim and prepare for the first payment:

Phone: 0800 1448 444 (this is a national number)

Webchat advice: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/helptoclaim

Newcastle City Council is providing a reduced service to support to people to make new Universal Credit claims online. This is only for residents who have IT skills and internet access, and who can be guided through the process using their IT equipment at home.

Residents who already have a Universal Credit claim can also be given support to access their online accounts and report any changes, again using their own IT equipment at home. They must have their login details (for data protection purposes) and will be guided on how to log into their account and then guided on the changes they need to make. To access this support, phone Elaine on 07970 632 851 (Monday to Friday, from 8.30am to 4.30pm).

Residents who don't have IT skills, have literacy difficulties, or have language barriers would need to phone the national Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 5644.

Before you start the online claim, you should have the following information with you. You will also need this information for other people who live in your home, e.g. your partner. You may also need to have other information with you, depending on your circumstances. You can start your claim without this information, but **you won't be able to submit the claim until all the requested information is provided** which will delay your first payment.

- An email address
- Your postcode
- Your National Insurance number and your nationality
- Details of the bank, building society or credit union account you want Universal Credit to be paid into (including account name, sort code and account number)
- Your rent agreement (if you have one) or mortgage details
- Details of your savings or other capital
- Details about your work and earnings
- Details of any income that is not from work, e.g. from an insurance plan
- Details of any other benefits you are getting
- Details of any education or training
- Details of your children, including their Child Benefit numbers

Once you have submitted your claim, **you must verify your identity**. You can do this online at www.gov.uk/verify, which has been expanded to include the [Government Gateway](#). If you can't do this, phone the Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 5644.

Budgeting support for Newcastle residents who are in receipt of Universal Credit

Universal Credit usually brings changes which may affect how you manage your money, including:

- A single monthly household payment (to one member of the household)
- A housing element paid directly to you, because Universal Credit claimants are required to pay their rent to their landlords themselves (instead of by Housing Benefit)

If you claim Universal Credit and need support with budgeting because of the above changes, you should speak to your Jobcentre Plus work coach who will refer you to Personal Budgeting Support if they think you need it. In some circumstances you also can request a temporary [Alternative Payment Arrangement](#) or other help. If you have spoken to Jobcentre Plus but have not been referred and you believe that you still need support with budgeting because of Universal Credit, you can contact the following services. Give your name and contact details and say that you are having budgeting issues because of receiving Universal Credit.

- **If you are a Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) tenant**, contact YHN by:
Email universal.credit@yhn.org.uk
Phone: **0191 278 8600**
- **If you live in any other type of property**, contact the Council's Money Matters team by:
Email moneymatters@newcastle.gov.uk
Phone **0191 277 1050**

Help to pay your Council Tax bill is not included as part of your Universal Credit claim. Council Tax Reduction must be claimed directly with Newcastle City Council. You can do this online at www.newcastle.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport

More information about Universal Credit is available online at www.newcastle.gov.uk/universalcredit