



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Universal Credit Update

October 2018

UC *Universal
Credit*

Opening up work_

Current Position with UCFS

Next to roll out -

Month	Local Authority	Jobcentre
November	Edinburgh City Council	High Riggs , Wester Hailes & Leith
	West Dunbartonshire Council	Clydebank & Dumbarton
December	Glasgow City Council	Castlemilk, Drumchapel & Shettleston

Landlord Portal - now 97 enrolled in Scotland with a further 15 planned for November

September statistics show there are 1,222,515 people on UC.

Scotland	In Work	Intensive Regime	Remainder
124,000	31%	48%	21%

Managed Migration - from July 2019 we will start to test and refine our processes on a small scale to ensure they are working well , before we take on larger volumes from 2020 onwards, and complete the process in 2023

What's New

Change to Payment Arrangements for *Private Sector Landlords*

The process for paying rent arrears has been automated which means that deductions taken to pay tenants rent arrears will be issued every 28 days in future .

Private landlords will receive a payment schedule detailing the payment and the tenant details for each tenant we have approved rent arrears deductions.

The Third Party Payments Creditor/Supplier Handbook on Gov.uk provides more detail on how payments are issued.

Online Trial Apply for Direct Rent Payments

We have developed a new online service which Landlords / Letting Agencies can use to request direct rent payments or rent arrears.

The service is a secure online form.

The trial will last for approximately 6 to 8 weeks, starting from Wednesday 3rd October with 13 landlords/letting agents participating in the trial .

Changes to Universal Support Delivered Locally

Citizens Advice will be delivering a new claims support service from April 2019. They will deliver this support , online, over the phone and in person through their network of Citizens Advice Bureaux

Integrated Telephony

We have been receiving positive feedback on Integrated Telephony, our telephony strategy which enables you or the claimant to contact a Case Manager best placed to support their query.

To talk to a UC Case Manager who is in the best position to provide this support, there are 4 pieces of unique identifying criteria which will enable the Department to route the call appropriately. These are the:

Telephone number the claimant has registered with Universal Credit

Their postcode

1st line of their address

Their date of birth

Not all are necessarily required to route the call to the owning case manager as Universal Credit have introduced a design to minimise the claimant journey. However it is imperative that you have all of the correct information to hand before you start the call or the call will be routed to the national telephony hub.

Explicit consent must be given by the claimant first – usually via the journal, the telephone or in person. For more information follow this link [Consent & Disclosure of Information](#)

Housing Escalation line – is for UC Live Service landlords only, and should only be used when there is threat of eviction

Rent Arrears in Universal Credit Project

Background

- Building on work with the Curo Housing Association in 2017 to explore the potential impact of UC claimants on rent arrears (DWP does not hold information on rent arrears)
- 1,056 tenancies identified by Curo as having UC interest – analysis based on 803 tenants where a UC award was made according to DWP records
- Building on Curo's tenant survey we then held two focus groups with carefully selected tenants to understand their experience
- There are limitations to this work:
 - **it was conducted in one specific area, therefore not representative of all UC claimants nationwide**
 - **It is based on a relatively small sample**
 - **Housing processes in UC are constantly changing , and the analysis pre-dates some process improvements that have improved payment timeliness as well as occurring before the 2017 budget changes to waiting days and to introduce Transition to UC Housing Payments**
 - **Migration from Housing Benefit to UC may have been triggered by a life event (for example losing a job) that may also be associated with increased rent arrears; so experience may not be representative of what will happen across the UC population with housing costs.**
- Asked for expressions of interest from other landlords in December 2017

Rent Arrears in Universal Credit Project

Current position

- DWP have extended the work with Curo and are now working with an additional seven landlords; one in Wales and six across England (including London) to undertake a similar analysis of rent arrears using their data.
- The project are currently collecting tenants rental arrears data for new UC claimants from six landlords and are arranging data sharing with a further two
- At the moment they are quality assuring their analytical processes and are starting to share primary results with individual landlords
- Ipsos- MORI will be carrying out some small scale qualitative depth interviews with a sample of tenants from the new landlords identified through the rent analysis to better understand their experiences.
- The plan is to publish a combined report covering the rent arrears analysis and qualitative research across all landlords that are taking part

Recovery of Overpayments

An overpayment is usually recoverable from the person to whom it was paid, however the following exceptions apply:

- **Payment of housing costs made direct to landlord and the overpayment is due to a change of address – overpayment is recoverable from both the claimant and /or the landlord**
- **Payment of housing costs made direct to landlord and the overpayment is a result of a misrepresentation or failure to disclose – overpayment is recoverable from person(s) who failed to disclose or misrepresented**
- **Payment of housing costs made direct to landlord and payment made in excess of rent- overpayment is recoverable from the landlord only (note this is only where say £500 was paid instead of £400)**
- **Payment of housing costs made direct to landlord and overpayment is for a reason other than those mentioned above- overpayment is recoverable from claimant(s) only**

Overpayments that are deemed recoverable from a landlord can be recovered from any future direct payments to that landlord and also via the usual recovery methods (e.g. deductions from benefit, Direct Earnings Attachment etc.) This applies even if the direct payments are for different tenants. Regulations are in place to prevent the landlord placing these other tenants into rent arrears to recover the debt.

DWP Support for Scottish Housing Day

To support SFHA Housing Day, DWP dedicated the week 17th -21st September as Scottish Housing Week. The focus on housing was across the One Service Network with a range of activities taking place across Scotland.

- **Daily messages went out to colleagues across jobcentres and service centres covering a variety of topics designed to build capability and enhance customer service with a strong focus on housing issues**
- **An invitation went out via the SFHA digital newsletter encouraging Housing Associations to have a presence in their local jobcentres on Wednesday 19th September (National Housing Day). Over 50% of jobcentres across Scotland had one or more Housing Associations on site on Housing Day. Service Centres hosted landlord events in the run up to Housing Week**
- **A Scotland Specific Housing Confident Call was arranged for Tuesday 18th September focusing on Scottish Flexibilities and APAs and colleagues across Scotland were encouraged to join the call and use the opportunity to question a panel of experts**
- **Senior operational leaders took part in a Housing First/Rapid Rehousing workshop led by Jules Oldham Policy & Operations Manager for Homeless Action Scotland**
- **DWP Scotland Social Media team, re tweeted appropriate SFHA messages on Housing Day.**

Budget Changes

- From April 2019, a higher work allowance rate is paid for those who do not have housing costs paid in their award. This will increase from £409 to £501 per month
- A lower work allowance rate is for those who do have housing costs paid in their award. This will increase from £198 to £285 per month
- From October 2019 the overall maximum level of deductions that can be taken from a household's UC award will be reduced from 40% to 30% of their Standard Allowance.
- From July 2020, a 12-month exemption period from Universal Credit's Minimum Income Floor will apply to all gainfully self-employed customers **new to UC** or new to self-employment
- From July 2020, entitlement to income related Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance and Jobseeker's Allowance will continue for 2 weeks after a claim for UC has been made.
- The transfer of Housing Benefit for pensioners from local authorities to the DWP will be delayed until the completion of the Universal Credit rollout (planned 2023)