



Department
for Work &
Pensions

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Universal Credit

Scottish Housing Network Forum June 2021

June 2021

Our Operational Delivery

- We have now resumed more of a Business As Usual service, where we are inviting customers back into our offices. Some of our colleagues who were previously working from home are now back on site.
- Our Jobcentres are COVID safe, we have screens fitted, hand sanitiser, limited customers access to ensure social distancing and a reduced numbers of colleagues in all our offices.
- We will continue to have a blended approach to working on site and working from home.
- We are currently in consultation with Scottish Prison Service to return our Prison Work Coaches back to prisons to support prisoners pre-release. This too will be a blended approach (50% in prison & 50% in local Jobcentre Plus office).

Our Operational Delivery

Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders

DWP Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders (ACSSLs) were introduced in 2020 (previously known as Safeguarding Leads), working with a range of external partners to align our support for our most vulnerable customers.

Recognising the positive impact that a collaborative approach can have, the team has built robust links within their local areas, aligning support for vulnerable customers.

They have a key role in providing a flexible advanced customer support function across Scotland beyond our business-as-usual processes, to our most vulnerable customers.

Housing

Annual Rent Increase

- To help SRS Landlords support their tenants, a new 'Updates' page was added to the landlord portal. This is where the notification is housed. We will use the '**Updates**' section for future communications with landlords.
- This year tenants' received a '**Confirm your Housing Costs**' to-do. (Customers who pay their Housing Costs monthly, the to-do appeared from the 1st April . For those that told us they pay their housing costs **weekly**, the to-do appeared **from the 5th April**). Where no response received from the customer – 10 days after the end of the Assessment Period (earliest date being 11th April) the landlord was able to notify us of the change **on behalf of** the claimant.

Housing

Portal

- A separate new feature in landlord portal, where an **APA is in place** and the claimant has notified the wrong amount for housing costs, this can now be amended by the landlord via the landlord portal.

Landlord Mergers

- We have been looking at options for safely carrying out mergers, and hope to be able to begin work testing options for a solution soon. However this is still subject to being prioritised given the current wider Covid-19 responses in UC.

Housing

Arrears Payments/Third Party Deductions

Once payments are set up on the Third Party Payments system, you should receive payments every 28 days in arrears and expect the 1st payment within 6 weeks from the date the deductions commenced.

To stop Third Party Deductions – you should phone Universal Credit on 0800 – 328 – 5644. Following your notification, adjustment to both the customers' and your account will be made.

****If you experience any difficulties please escalate via your local partnership manager****

Help to Claim

Help to Claim has supported over 500k people in Scotland, England and Wales to make a new claim to Universal Credit.

DWP agreed in March this year that Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland will deliver Help to Claim for another year up to 31st March 2022.

Benefit Cap

Is there a way that we can be notified when a tenant becomes subject to this?

- Unfortunately not, as this is reassessed each assessment period. All the information is available on the claimant's account and personal statement.
- Gov.uk advised customers to contact us if they are affected by the benefit cap and need help. If they need help paying rent or a rent deposit, we advise them to contact their local authority and they can check to see if they are eligible for a discretionary housing payment.

Move to Universal Credit

- The Pilot remains suspended as the Department continues to focus on delivering its part of the Government's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Department continues to focus on ensuring people get the support they need from us as the labour market rebounds from the effects of the pandemic. This includes ensuring the UC system can continue to support a much larger caseload of 6 million claimants, along with 13,500 new Work Coaches, whilst also delivering our Plan for Jobs and tackling Fraud and Error.

Recent Updates

Shared Accommodation Rate changes

DWP has implemented changes to the **Shared Accommodation Rate** that will help vulnerable care leavers access additional housing support. The changes mean that care leavers can now claim the higher one-bedroom rate for longer, as the maximum age limit has been raised from 22 to 25.

Also, anyone who has lived in a **homeless hostel for three months or more**, regardless of age, will now be able to claim the higher rate, as the age limit has been removed.

Less than 30 days to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme

EU, EEA or Swiss citizens or their family members resident in the UK by 31 December 2020, now have less than 30 days left to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to ensure they can continue to reside, work, study, access free healthcare and benefits in the UK after 30 June 2021.

Universal Credit

**Thank You
&
Time for
Questions**