

Third Party Guide - to support households required to make a **Move to Universal Credit**

April 2024 v1.0

Introduction

- This information pack has been designed to aid organisations supporting households which are required to move to Universal Credit from legacy benefits, as part of Managed Migration, also called 'Move to UC'.
- Further information specifically for Pension Aged Tax Credit customers being asked to move to Universal Credit or Pension Credit will be produced as a separate pack and shared in June.

All hyperlinks provided were correct at time of publication

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Overview to Universal Credit

The Introduction of Universal Credit

- In 2012, Parliament voted to end legacy benefits and replace them with a single modern benefit system, Universal Credit (UC). This was legislated, for as part of the Welfare Reform Act 2012.
- The replacement of six legacy benefits with UC is a large and complex undertaking. A core principle of the policy design is that once a customer makes a claim for UC their existing legacy benefits will come to an end; this includes tax credits.
- Once customers make a claim to UC, a notice is sent terminating their legacy benefit claim. This means they cannot choose to move back to legacy benefits. This has been part of the UC design since its initial stages and reflects the overarching principle that UC will fully replace legacy benefits, which have been closed to new claims since 2018.
- UC was first introduced in April 2013 in four postcodes in the Northwest. At this point only single jobseekers with no children could make a claim.
- There were 6.4 million customers claiming Universal Credit as of January 2024.

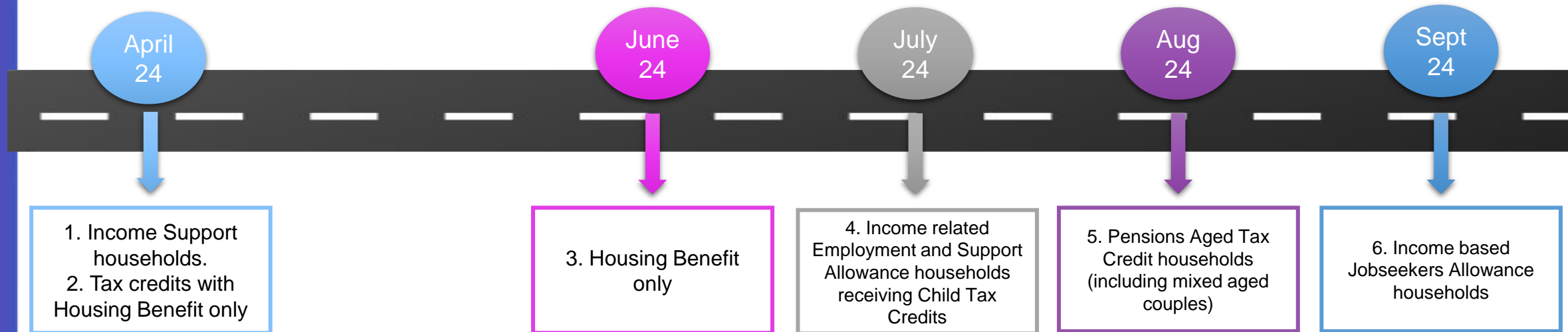
Move to Universal Credit (Managed Migration)

- Move to UC was introduced in July 2019 and aimed at moving over existing tax credit and Legacy Benefit customers. A small pilot ran in Harrogate, until it was suspended due to the coronavirus.
- Move to UC restarted with a discovery phase in May 2022. Initially it looked at all combinations of the six legacy benefits and later focussed on tax-credit-only households.
- Since April 2023, there has been a steady increase in the number of Migration Notices issued, and as of February 2024 Move to UC is operating in all Jobcentre Plus regions of Great Britain.
- From April 2024 onwards, migration of all remaining groups of households receiving legacy benefits to Universal Credit will begin, with exception of Employment and Support Allowance only and Employment and Support Allowance with Housing Benefit. These are deferred until 2028.
- In summer 2024 the migration of Pension Age Tax Credit customers will begin. This group will move onto Universal Credit or Pension Credit, depending on their individual circumstances.

Move to Universal Credit: Timeline and Customer Journey

Managed Migration from April 2024

From April 2024, DWP will start to write to households receiving the following benefits on the current planned timeline. Households may be receiving combinations of benefits (unless specified below), for example, Income Support households may also be receiving Housing Benefit and/or Child Tax Credits.



Additional Information

- The migration approach from 2024 onwards is based on benefit combinations rather than customer or household location
- Customers in receipt of a contributory benefit **only** will **not** move to Universal Credit
- Those in receipt of both contributory **and** means tested benefits will be migrated in line with their means tested benefit
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance households (including those also receiving Housing Benefit) are deferred until 2028

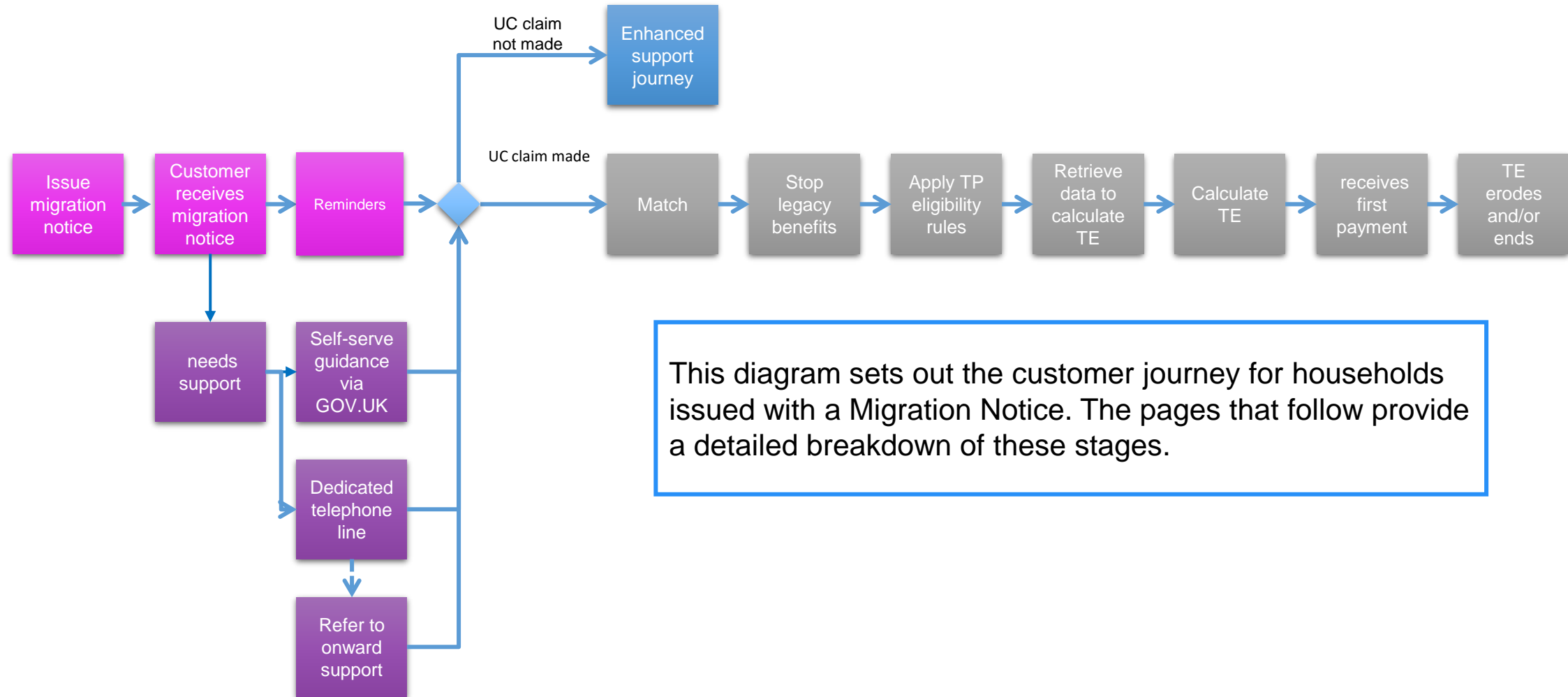
Things to consider before making a claim

Households have three months to make a claim from the date the Migration Notice was sent.

Whilst DWP cannot advise when the best time is to make a claim it may be worthwhile considering the following when customers are mapping out their income and outgoings to help them determine the best date to claim UC:

- What date is their rent due?
- When do they have to pay other bills such as electric, gas, water, Council Tax?
- When were they last paid their current benefits – how long will they have to wait for their first payment of UC?
- Are they entitled to any 'run-on payments' to help them budget?
- What other income will they receive before they get their first payment of UC?

The Customer Journey for Managed Migration



Customer Journey – Pre-Claim

Issue migration notice

The customer will receive a Migration Notice (letter) informing them that their legacy benefit is ending, and the need to make a claim for UC to continue to receive financial help. This Migration Notice (letter) sets out what the **customer needs to do and by when**. It has the following information:

- A list of the benefits that are ending.
- A date of 3 months and 1 day from the date the letter was sent (deadline date) by which the customer needs to make this claim for UC.
- A hyperlink to make a claim to UC <http://www.gov.uk/dwp/move-to-uc>.
- A Universal Credit Migration Notice Helpline telephone number.
- A telephone number and hyperlink to Citizens Advice Help to Claim service and hyperlinks to other support services.

Customer receives migration notice

During the 3 month and 1 day window;

- **at week 7** – a reminder letter is sent if the customer has not already made a claim for UC.
- **at week 10** – if no claim is made, then an SMS text reminder is sent. If no valid phone number is held, this reminder reverts to a letter.
- **at week 12** – if still no claim is made, then the enhanced support journey starts. Slide 13 sets out the Enhanced Customer Journey.

Reminders

The reminder letter clearly states that existing financial support from current legacy benefits will end if the customer does not claim Universal Credit by the deadline date. (Also see slide 14 for extensions)

Transitional Protection will only be considered if the customer claims UC within the period preceding the deadline date, or within the grace period - [Transitional protection if you receive a Migration Notice letter](#)

Customer Journey – Sources of Support

Needs support

A range of support is available to help people successfully move to UC, including:

- A dedicated Move to UC telephone helpline.
- Universal Credit website: www.gov.uk/dwp/move-to-uc
- Comprehensive guidance on gov.uk.
- A new gov.uk website dedicated to supporting households move to UC [Move to Universal Credit - Move to Universal Credit \(ucmove.campaign.gov.uk\)](http://Move to Universal Credit (ucmove.campaign.gov.uk))
- Help to Claim, delivered independently by Citizens Advice, in partnership with Citizens Advice Scotland, which provides practical tailored support to enable individuals to make a new claim to UC or move from legacy benefits; and
- Face-to-face support in local Jobcentres.

Self-serve
guidance via
GOV.UK

Dedicated
telephone line

There are also independent, free and anonymous benefits calculators to check what customers could be entitled to, hosted on <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators>

Refer to onward
support

[Advicelocal](#) also provides links to tailored information for local areas, including details of free, independent advice organisations who can help customers get the information and support that they are looking for.

Customer Journey – Enhanced Support Journey

All households who have yet to make a claim to UC will receive a reminder via letter after 7 weeks (from issue of the Migration Notice). A further reminder is sent after 10 weeks by letter or text.

Enhanced support journey

Additional contact will be made for all households which are in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support. Many of these households will also be in receipt of Housing Benefit and so will benefit from this additional support in making a claim for Universal Credit.

These households will receive a text at **week 12** to advise them that DWP will be phoning them. Three attempts (on different days) will be made to contact the household to offer support.

Where no contact is made, DWP will refer ESA households for a home visit. For Income Support customers, legacy systems will be checked to identify any additional needs and if any are identified, a referral for home visit will be made.

Should the visit be unsuccessful, further escalations will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Requests for Migration Notice Extensions and Cancellations

- A customer's Migration Notice will tell them that they need to make a Universal Credit claim by a specific date. This will be a minimum of three months and one day from the date the migration notice is issued.
- Some customers may need more time to make their claim for good reasons. These customers will need to contact the Universal Credit Migration Notice Helpline and explain their reasons for struggling to meet the deadline. It may sometimes be appropriate to extend a claimant's claim by date.
- Where customers claim UC within an extension period, they will be assessed for Transitional Protection and awarded it where eligible. These extensions are for a limited time, but further extensions can be added if required and it continues to be appropriate to extend the deadline.
- Requests for a cancellation can be made if: a customer has had a change of circumstances since receiving the Migration Notice which moves them into one of the Move to Universal Credit deferral or exclusion categories; or if the customer has complex needs and cannot make a claim to UC even with support or an extension. Cancellation requests cannot be considered when a customer's deadline date has passed or when a customer has made a claim to UC.
- Customers must understand that if the Migration Notice is cancelled and the customer needs to make a claim to Universal Credit in the future, they **will not** receive any transitional protection. This means they might not receive the same amount of money or might not be entitled at all.
- The cancellation request will be considered and if approved DWP will make sure that the customer understands the impact of a Migration Notice cancellation. A Migration Notice cancellation letter will be issued to the customer to inform them of the decision and that they will **no** longer be eligible for transitional protection.
- If they need to make a claim to UC in the future, they may find that they get less money on UC than they receive from current benefits, unless a new Migration Notice is issued, and transitional protection is appropriate.

People who face digital barriers

The standard process to make and maintain a Universal Credit claim is via the online self-service system. Customers will ordinarily need to be able to use online services to make and maintain their UC claim.

We do however appreciate the difficulty and uncertainty that some customers may face in using government digital platforms, and as such DWP is committed to help and assist where able.

We also recognise that there are significant benefits to the overall customer experience if customers can use online accounts. These include:

- no need to phone to report changes of circumstance.
- earlier access to monthly statements, no longer needing to await posted copies.
- 24 hr use of online journal to ask questions or communicate with DWP (case managers or work coaches)

If a customer has difficulty, research has shown that customers will ask for assistance from family and friends in the first instance, use the Move to UC Migration Helpline or possibly visit a JCP. This will help enable the customer to become more comfortable with the platform, and in time familiarity will enable easier use.

Customers can also make use of the CA Help to Claim service, to initiate the claim, however this help ends when the customer receives the first Universal Credit award. Further help can be sought in JCP GB wide.

The facility to make new claims by phone is available for those who are unable to complete the online service. The claim by phone process is only to be used when other assisted digital options have been exhausted and found to be not suitable, and all reasonable attempts have been made to enable, support and educate customers to self-serve online.

Income Support Lone Parents

From April 2024 Income Support customers will be invited to start their migration journey to Universal Credit.

For lone parents, with no other condition of entitlement, their Income Support entitlement ends when their youngest (or only) child reaches the age of 5.

A written notification is sent to them four weeks before the benefit is due to end.

We are providing additional support to lone parents by contacting them by telephone to explain the end of entitlement and the availability of Universal Credit if they need ongoing financial support and how to claim it. Customers can receive up to two weeks additional Income Support if they make a claim to Universal Credit before their entitlement is due to end. This run-on payment is not repayable.

At the same time, customers may also receive a written notice informing them that they have been selected to make a claim for Universal Credit online as part of the migration process. They have three months in which to do this. Their Income Support will continue throughout this period until they make a Universal Credit claim unless their Income Support entitlement would end earlier.

For customers who receive, or have already received, both written notifications, they must identify the earliest date that their benefit is due to end and make sure to apply for Universal Credit before that date.

Temporary Accommodation and Supported Accommodation

Temporary Accommodation – this is accommodation provided by a Local Authority or social sector housing and only in cases where a Local Authority is meeting its duty to homeless persons in accordance with the Housing Act.

Supported Accommodation – this is accommodation which is provided by a landlord in the social or voluntary sector and care, support or supervision by the landlord, or by someone acting on the landlord's behalf are provided.

Customers in receipt of **Housing Benefit only** and in supported or temporary accommodation will not be issued a Migration Notice by DWP and will remain on Housing Benefit which will continue to be administered by Local Authorities.

Customers in receipt of a **legacy benefit that includes Housing Benefit**, will be issued a Migration Notice by DWP and will need to claim Universal Credit. These customers will continue to receive Housing Benefit for their accommodation costs until their housing circumstances change.

Move to Universal Credit: Getting ready to make a claim

Verification of a customer's identity

As part of making a claim to UC a customer will be asked to provide some documents to prove their identity. Some examples that are commonly used are:

- Driving licence
- Passport
- Debit Card
- Payslip or P60

For more information go to [How to verify your identity for Universal Credit - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/how-to-verify-your-identity-for-universal-credit)

Documents to have to hand when claiming Universal Credit

As UC replaces six legacy benefits, DWP needs to gather information to be able to determine the amount of Universal Credit to pay.

It is useful for customers to have the following documents to hand when making their claim:

- Bank, building society or credit union account details
- Email address – both adults in the household will need a unique one
- Housing cost details, for example how much rent is paid
- Earning information, for example payslips
- National Insurance number, if one is held
- Other benefits, including those not being replaced by UC, for example PIP or Carers Allowance
- Details of any disability or health condition that affects a person's ability to work
- Childcare costs, if appropriate
- Details of savings or any investments, like shares or a property that a customer rents out

Move to Universal Credit: Support after making a claim

Customer Journey – Post Claim to UC

Match

Stop legacy
benefits

Apply TP
eligibility
rules

Retrieve
data to
calculate TE

Calculate TE

receives first
payment

TE erodes
and/or ends

- Once a claim to UC is made, as with a 'natural migration', the claim is matched against a customer.
- UC will then notify the legacy benefits systems to enable those benefits to stop.
- Eligibility criteria are applied to ensure Transitional Protection (TP) applies for the claim made.
- Data is retrieved from legacy systems to calculate the Transitional Element (TE)
- Where TE is payable it is added to the first UC payment award.
- TE will erode as the award for UC increases, or in certain circumstances it will end. For more information on TP and TE see [Transitional Protection - if you receive a Migration Notice letter](#)

Claimant Commitment

- Once a claim to Universal Credit has been received, DWP will contact the customer to discuss the level of contact and commitment required to maintain the claim.
- Customers will need to accept an agreement called a '[claimant commitment](#)' before any UC payment can be made. People who have a [SR1](#) will not need a claimant commitment.
- This commitment is that customers will prepare and look for work or increase earnings where already working. Work Coaches will be available to offer support to support customers looking for work.
- If living with a partner, both need to claim UC, and each will have their own claimant commitments.
- There will be regular meetings, usually at the jobcentre, where a review of the claimant commitment is completed. These can, in some instances, also be completed over the telephone.
- These review meetings provides an opportunity to ensure everything is being done to fulfil the commitment and to talk about anything that may be making it hard to complete what was agreed.
- Claimant commitments can be updated to account for any relevant change of circumstance. Examples may include illness or a partner starting work.
- If a customer is unable to fulfil their claimant commitment, they may receive a 'sanction'. If this results in inability to pay for rent, heating, food or hygiene needs there may be support available through [Universal Credit hardship payments](#).

Payments during Transition to Universal Credit

- A non-repayable two-week run-on payment is made for all customers whose claim ends, whether they make a claim to Universal Credit or not, if they were receiving:
 - Income Support
 - Income- related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
 - Housing Benefit (known as the Transitional Housing Payment)
- Different eligibility rules apply for tax credits and as such there will be no two-week run-on payment. Entitlement will therefore stop from the day before the Universal Credit claim is made.

How an Assessment Period works

Universal Credit is paid monthly and is calculated on an individual's assessment period.

An assessment period is a period of one calendar month.

The Universal Credit award is calculated on the last day of each assessment period and is based on the customer's known circumstances on that date.

The first day of the first assessment period is the day the claim is started and runs for a month. Payments will go into their **bank account**, seven days after their assessment period end date unless payment is due on a weekend or bank holiday when it will be paid earlier.

Example:

Date UC claim is made:	6 th April
End of first assessment period:	5 th May
Receipt of first payment:	12 th May

A statement giving a full breakdown of any payments will be available to view on their online Universal Credit account. This is normally available seven days before they are due a payment of Universal Credit.

How Housing Costs are paid on Universal Credit

- Households which receive support for housing costs on UC are paid their eligible housing costs directly rather than to the landlord.
- In certain circumstances, an Alternative Payment Arrangement can be considered (see slide 27).

Housing Benefit	Universal Credit Housing costs
Private tenants claiming continuously since before 2008 can choose to have Housing Benefit paid directly to themselves or to their landlord.	All customers will be paid eligible housing costs as part of their Universal Credit payment each month. It will be the customers who will be responsible for paying rent to their landlord. (see slide 27 for Alternative Payment Arrangements)
Private tenants claiming after 2008 are paid direct to their bank accounts. They are responsible for paying rent to their landlord, although some exceptions may be applied under set criteria and payment made to a landlord.	
All council tenants have rent rebate paid directly into their rent account.	
Housing Association tenants are able to choose whether they want Housing Benefit paid directly to themselves or to their landlord.	

For support with mortgage payments see: [Housing costs and Universal Credit: Living in a property you own - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/universal-credit)

Alternative Payment Arrangements

The move to a single monthly household payment is a significant change to the way most benefits are currently paid.

Some customers may have some difficulties in managing their finances and procedures are in place to address this. Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs) may be considered to help customers who are identified as needing additional support. In such circumstances, payment of housing costs can be made direct to landlords.

Direct payments to a landlord are considered on a case-by-case basis and can be considered at the start or at any point during the UC claim. The need may be identified in the Service Centre, Jobcentre or requested by the claimant, their appointee, caseworker or landlord advising of a vulnerability, rent arrears or risk of eviction.

APAs can be considered for customers who:

- cannot or may not be able to manage their single monthly payment and as a result are at risk of financial harm.
- previously had their housing costs paid to their landlord as part of their housing benefit claim.
- who experience domestic abuse.
- who meet a defined vulnerability criteria.

In Scotland, customers not in receipt of a DWP Alternative Payment Arrangement, can ask to change the way that their Universal Credit (UC) is paid. These are called the UC Scottish Choices and are delivered by DWP on behalf of the Scottish Government. Further information can also be found on Universal Credit (Scottish choices) on www.gov.scot.

Move to Universal Credit: Additional information

Debt, Overpayments and Loan Recoveries

Customers can migrate to UC with an outstanding overpayment e.g. tax credit, debt for household expenses (utility debt) and repayment of loans, including social fund loans.

Overpayment of Benefit

- An overpayment is benefit that a customer has received but is not entitled to. Overpayments occur mainly due to customer, system or official error. This can also apply to overpayments of tax credits and social fund loan recoveries.
- Any agreements in place for customers to repay their tax credits debt by direct debit (known as a 'time to pay agreement') will automatically be stopped. This applies whether the agreement is with HMRC or an independent debt collector.
- Customers who pay HMRC by other regular payments, either Standing Order or any other payment method, will need to stop these with their bank. If the customer is repaying via a Debt Collection Agency or Debt Consolidation Service, they will need to tell them that any further payments relating to their tax credit debt are no longer required to be made to HMRC.
- Overpayments, including those relating to tax credits, will automatically transfer over to DWP when the customer moves onto Universal Credit. Once transferred to DWP for recovery, any debt is recovered in the same way as overpaid DWP benefits. DWP's primary method of recovery is by deduction from an on-going benefit award and deductions from UC are taken from the next available assessment period. Customers are advised of the rate of deduction through a notification posted in their journal.
- DWP remains committed to working with customers who may be struggling with their repayment terms and has a well-established process to support customers to manage their debts.
- Customers are encouraged to contact DWP if they are unable to afford the proposed repayment rate. When a customer makes contact, the rate of repayment **may** be reduced, or temporarily suspended, depending on the customer's financial circumstances.

Third Party Deductions

A Third-Party Deduction (TPD) is money taken from a customer's benefit and paid directly to a creditor or supplier to pay utility bills or pay off arrears, often for household expenses such as:

- Housing costs, miscellaneous accommodation costs.
- Hostel charges, rent arrears and service charges for fuel and water.
- Fuel costs, water charges.
- Council Tax (CT) or Community Charge (CC).
- Fines (but not a partner's fine).

When moving to UC from legacy claims, TPD's end automatically when their legacy claim is closed. Customers and suppliers are both notified deductions have ended.

When the notification is received customers should contact their suppliers and to discuss their debt and the options to repay the debt. If TPDs remain appropriate, suppliers should then make a new request for deductions through Universal Credit. Suppliers should do this by completing and emailing the relevant form for their organisation that was provided in their Creditor Pack to the email address contained in their pack.

If a customer contacts DWP directly to request TPDs are restarted as part of the migration onto UC, they will be advised to contact their supplier to request deductions begin.

For further information please see: <https://www.gov.uk/bills-benefits> and [Check benefits and financial support you can get](#)

Additional Financial Support

- Customers in receipt of legacy benefits including tax credits may be entitled to Additional Financial Support. This support is not owned by DWP and is administered by other organisations.
- Eligibility criteria for each is determined by the government department, devolved administration or utility company that owns it and it is they who define the entitlement criteria.
- Following a move to Universal Credit, some customers may lose entitlement to existing financial support. Extra protections have been put in place for the transition in some circumstances. For example, the Department for Education will ensure anyone making the transition to Universal Credit will keep access to free school meal entitlement until March 2025 or the end of their child's current school phase (primary or secondary).
- The number of households affected is anticipated to be low as not all financial support from passported entitlement applies different rules for those on Universal Credit.
- Customers need to check if entitlement to Additional Financial Support continues after moving to UC. Examples include free NHS prescriptions, school meals and healthy start vouchers.
- Organisations may conduct checks to confirm entitlement with the NHS carrying out checks on patient claims. If the NHS cannot confirm a patient is entitled to claim free NHS prescriptions or NHS dental treatment, an enquiry letter will be sent asking for confirmation of entitlement. If the customer does not respond within 28 days, they'll be sent a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN).
- To find out more information about what customers may be entitled to, based on their particular circumstance, please visit the [Other Financial support](#) section of the Universal Credit page on [gov.uk](#).
- We would also recommend using the independent benefit calculators such as those on the benefit calculator pages to provide an informed understanding on what extra support customers may be entitled to, based upon their circumstances.

Childcare Offer

- If customers require childcare while they are in **paid** work, regardless of the number of hours they work, Universal Credit may provide help with childcare costs. This supports the wider [government childcare](#) offer which includes free childcare hours and tax-free childcare (other eligibility criteria apply).
- For couples, both members of the household must be in **paid** work or starting a job within the next month. If one of the couple is unable to care for children due to ill-health, they may be entitled to childcare costs, as long as they satisfy eligibility criteria.
- Help with childcare costs may be claimed over and above the free childcare hours where more childcare is needed to work.
- Childcare must be with a 'registered' childcare provider, and customers will need to provide proof of the childcare provider registration number and the payments they make. Childcare may include nurseries, childminders, holiday clubs, after-school clubs, breakfast clubs and more.
- Customers pay for their childcare costs upfront, and then report them to Universal Credit via their online account. Universal Credit will then pay up to 85% of the childcare costs back to the customer.
- Childcare costs may be claimed for all the children in the household until the 31 August after their 16th birthday.
- Additional help with upfront childcare costs may also be available to support parents when they first move into work or increase their hours.

Council Tax Reduction

The Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme, that replaced Council Tax Benefit, is for households that have a low income which may result in them having to pay reduced or, in some cases, no council tax. Customers will need to contact their local authority to make a claim <https://www.gov.uk/apply-council-tax-reduction>.

- To qualify for a CTR, customers must:
 - Be on a low income or be on eligible benefits.
 - Be the person responsible for paying the Council Tax.
- What they get depends on:
 - Where they live - each council runs its own scheme.
 - Their circumstances (for example income, number of children, benefits, residency status).
 - Household income - this includes savings, pensions and income (both customers and partners).
 - Any children living in the household.
 - Any other adults living in the household.
- Customers will not normally qualify for a CTR if they have savings or investments of more than £16,000.

Mixed age couples (where one party of the couple is over Pension Credit qualifying age and the other under that age) entitlement to a CTR will be assessed under the working-age rules based upon the council's local scheme.

Move to Universal Credit: Useful Links

Useful Sources of Information & DWP Publications

To assist in your conversations there is a wide range of resources available:

- [Move to Universal Credit - Move to Universal Credit \(ucmove.campaign.gov.uk\)](https://ucmove.campaign.gov.uk)
- [How to claim Universal Credit: step by step - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Universal Credit: information for stakeholders and partners - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Transitional Protection - if you receive a Migration Notice letter](#)
- [Tax credits Debt in Universal Credit](#)
- [Universal Credit for the self-employed - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Housing costs and Universal Credit: Living in a property you own - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Health conditions, Disability and Universal Credit: Overview](#)
- [Universal Credit: information for employers](#)
- [Conditionality](#)
- [Sanctions](#)
- [Written statements - Supporting People to Claim Universal Credit\(link is external\)](#) - 11 March 2024
- [Move to Universal Credit – insight on tax credit migrations and initial Discovery activity for wider benefit cohorts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) - 29 February 2024
- [Completing the Move to Universal Credit: learning from initial tax credit migrations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) – 15 August 2023
- [Autumn Statement 2022 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk) - Chapter 5.15 - November 2022