



## **Domestic abuse and DWP during Corona virus/Covid-19 outbreak – newsletter #4**

Hello again all – I know this is a lengthy email but may be useful for some of you and your clients. Please see latest update from Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) re: Corona virus/Covid-19.

### **DWP Update: Covid-19 / Corona Virus**

The DWP response to Covid-19 is being reviewed daily and our intent is to support individuals and families through the crisis.

We understand people who are required to stay at home or are infected by Coronavirus may need financial support quickly. Those affected will be able to apply for Universal Credit and can receive up to a month's advance up front without physically attending a Jobcentre.

If clients believe they may have been infected, or have been in close contact with someone who has, are advised not to delay making a claim to Universal Credit. Clients should stay at home and apply at the earliest opportunity.

All Jobcentres in Cumbria are open and if a client has any concerns about attending an appointment due to a barrier to doing so such as public transport issues or they are concerned they should directly call their work coach or the local office directly. Universal credit clients can also message via Journal messaging.

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

[Information about coronavirus and claiming benefits.](#)

[Guidance for employers and businesses.](#)

[Guidance for professionals helping people in education, transport and other sectors.](#)

[Advice for the general public.](#)

[The coronavirus action plan](#), a public guide to the UK's plans to tackle the coronavirus outbreak.

### **PEOPLE AFFECTED BY COVID-19**

#### **Statutory Sick Pay**

##### What the budget announces

- Extension of Statutory Sick Pay to self-isolators and those caring for self-isolators
- Can soon use NHS 111 to get a fit note at 7 days instead of going to the GP. (DWP/DHSC to set out more details soon).

##### How it works

- Paid by employers for up to 28 weeks to employees with average weekly earnings of at least £118 per week. Usually paid from 4th consecutive day of an absence (brought forward to 1st day for CV-19 cases).

- DWP and the NHS are urgently developing the alternative which will be available in the coming weeks. The alternative will enable people who are advised to self-isolate to obtain evidence via NHS111 that they can use as evidence for absence from work, where necessary. It will be a web-based summary which people can download. Further details will be set out in due course, including provision for those who cannot access online services.

### Who is eligible

- Employees who earn over £118 per week from a single employer
- Doesn't include: People earning less than £118 per week and self-employed people

### Entitlement

- £94.25 per week
- (£95.85 from 6th April)

### **Universal Credit**

#### What the budget announces

- For those directly affected or self-isolating due to Covid-19, Universal Credit advances will be available online / via phone (no attendance requirements)
- The Minimum Income Floor will be temporarily relaxed for those self-employed claimants directly affected by Covid-19 for the duration of the outbreak
- A carer could benefit if (1) they are self-employed and therefore subject to the MIF; and (2) the person they care for has been advised to self-isolate (or they themselves are advised to self-isolate).

### Entitlement

- Paid monthly
- Standard allowance for over 25s (i.e. minimum someone would receive): equivalent to £73.34 per week
- Standard allowance for under 25s: equivalent to £58.10 per week

### Background information

- Currently there are c. 150,000 self-employed people claiming Universal Credit (3% of overall self-employed population). All of these claimants will be eligible for Minimum Income Floor relaxation if they are affected by Covid-19.
- Of the c. £5m self-employed people in the UK we estimate around 55% would be eligible for some Universal Credit support were they to be unable to work (45% ineligible from having >£16k savings)
- There are currently 2.5m households on Universal Credit.

### Minimum Income Floor

- The Minimum Income Floor (MIF) is an assumed level of earnings for self-employed people on Universal Credit. This is based on what DWP would expect an employed person to receive in similar circumstances.
- The MIF is calculated using the National Minimum Wage for an individual's age group, multiplied by the number of hours they are expected to work (up to a maximum of 35 hours per week).
- If a person's self-employed actual earnings are below the MIF, DWP will use the MIF to work out your Universal Credit award instead.

- For example, if your earnings drop because you are sick, this would not be automatically reflected in the amount of UC you receive. That is why the government is temporarily relaxing the MIF for people who are unable to work because they are self-isolating in line with government guidance.
- For example:
  - A single self-employed plumber is expected to work 35 hours a week. Their MIF is therefore set at 35\*NLW. They currently work 37 hours per week and so their total UC award is based on their actual earnings.
  - The plumber has to self-isolate and therefore can't work. For the month they therefore only manage to work an average of 20 hours per week. However, currently, their UC award would still be based on assumption that they worked 35 hours per week, as that is the level of their MIF.
  - Under Budget changes, the plumbers' UC award would increase to reflect their actual earnings – reflecting the fact they only manage to work 20 hours per week and therefore require additional support from the benefit system.

### **'New Style'/Contributory Employment and Support Allowance**

#### What the budget announces

- Contributory Employment and Support Allowance will be eligible for people unable to work because they are directly affected by COVID-19 or self-isolating according to Government advice from the first day of sickness, rather than the eighth.

#### How it currently works

- Paid fortnightly, in arrears. Usually requires a GP 'fit note' after 7 days. Prior to this budget not payable for first 7 days of a claim. Can be claimed alongside Universal Credit.

#### Who is eligible and how do they claim?

- Paid to either self-employed or employed people who are unable to work with two years' full NICs record.
- Claimants can declare themselves unable to work in accordance with Government advice without the need to show medical proof for first 7 days followed by fit note (soon to be available NHS 111)
- Anybody who is advised to self-isolate and therefore can't work get ESA. This includes carers who have been advised to self-isolate because the person they care for is sick/ self-isolating. You get ESA for as long as you are incapable of work, up to a year.
- These changes would help a self-employed person (e.g. a plumber) who has made full National Insurance Contributions for the last two years. He/she will now be entitled to ESA support from Day 1 of their claim, not Day 8, and will be able to make a claim if they are self-isolating but not symptomatic.

#### Entitlement

- For over 25s: £73.10 per week
- For under 25s: £57.90 per week

#### Face-to-face health assessments for benefits suspended amid coronavirus outbreak

- Claimants on disability benefits will no longer be required to attend face-to-face assessments & the change also covers health checks for Universal Credit

Face-to-face assessments for all sickness and disability benefits will be suspended for the next three months, the Government announced 16<sup>th</sup> March.

The temporary move, effective on Tuesday, is being taken as a precautionary measure to protect vulnerable people from unnecessary risk of exposure to coronavirus as the country's response ramps up in the 'delay' phase. We will ensure those who are entitled to a benefit continue to receive support, and that new claimants are able to access the safety net.

It affects claimants of Personal Independence Payment; those on Employment and Support Allowance and some on Universal Credit; and recipients of Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit.

The suspension of face-to-face assessments also covers new claims to those benefits.

Work and Pensions Secretary Therese Coffey said:

"As we move into the next phase of our response to coronavirus, it is right we take steps to protect those with health problems.

"Temporarily suspending face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits will allow us to ensure we continue to provide a safety net for those in need, while removing unnecessary risk of exposure to this disease."

Anyone who has a face-to-face assessment appointment scheduled from Tuesday 17 March onwards does not need to attend and will be contacted to discuss next steps and alternative arrangements, which could involve either telephone or paper-based assessments. We expect this measure will be in effect for the next three months but we will be regularly reviewing the position in line with Public Health advice.

No further action is required by any claimant as a result of this change. They will be contacted with advice on next steps.

Suspending face-to-face health assessments is a precautionary measure which reflects the Prime Minister's decision to trigger the 'delay' phase. It is important to note that this change does not affect or change any existing public health advice. The current NHS guidelines on Coronavirus, including advice on those who should stay at home can be found [here](#).

Further information is available on [Gov.UK](#) and is being updated on a regular basis.

It would be appreciated if you can bear with us and await further information. We are constantly receiving requests for information and the SoS along with DWP Senior leadership team are taking the correct steps. As and when we receive messages to share with you we will do so promptly.

Thanks Shane

**Shane M Byrne | Employer & Partnership Manager | Department for Work and Pensions | Cumbria | Tel 07596547536 | [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)**