

## Coronavirus and Claiming Benefits

### **If your patient is in work and not claiming benefits**

**If your patient cannot work due to coronavirus** and are eligible for pay they will get it from day one, rather than from the fourth day of their illness. DWP intends to legislate so this measure applies retrospectively from 13 March 2020.

**Statutory Sick Pay** will be payable if they are staying at home on Government advice, not just if they are infected by coronavirus. This will apply from 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

If they are a gig worker and/or on a zero hours contract, they may be entitled to sick pay. They can check their [eligibility for Statutory Sick Pay](#).

**If they need to provide evidence to their employer** that they need to stay at home due to having symptoms of coronavirus an **Isolation Note** can be obtained from [NHS 111 online](#). If they live with someone that has symptoms, an **Isolation Note** can be obtained from the [NHS website](#). **They do not need to contact/see a GP for this.**

If they are not eligible to receive sick pay, they can [apply for Universal Credit](#) and/or [apply for New Style Employment and Support Allowance](#).

They can also apply for these if they are prevented from working because of a risk to public health.

### **If your patient is already claiming benefits**

#### **Changes to jobcentre appointments**

**People receiving benefits do not have to attend jobcentre appointments for three months, starting from Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020.**

People will continue to receive their benefits as normal, but all requirements to attend the jobcentre in person are suspended.

People can still make applications for benefits online if they are eligible.

**Jobcentres remain open**, and will continue to support people who are not able to use phones and online, including homeless people.

If your patient is already claiming Universal Credit and think they may have been affected by coronavirus, please advise them to **contact their work coach** as soon as possible. They can do this by:

- using their [online journal](#), or
- calling the Universal Credit [helpline](#)

## **Changes to health assessments**

In light of the current coronavirus outbreak, the **Department for Work and Pensions has taken the precautionary decision to temporarily suspend all face-to-face assessments for health and disability-related benefits.** This is aimed at reducing the risk of exposure to coronavirus and safeguarding the health of individuals claiming health and disability benefits, many of whom are likely to be at greater risk due to their pre-existing health conditions.

**If your patient already has an assessment appointment arranged,** they do not need to attend. Their assessment provider will contact them to discuss their appointment and explain the next steps to them.

**If they have made a claim for Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Universal Credit or Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB)** but do not have a date for an assessment appointment, they do not need to do anything. They will be contacted shortly by telephone or letter to let them know what will happen next.

**If they are already receiving PIP, ESA, Universal Credit or IIDB** they will continue to receive their current payments as normal.

**If they have made a new claim or wish to make a new claim,** DWP will continue to take claims for all benefits.

Please advise your patient to read the current [NHS guidelines on coronavirus](#), including advice on those who should stay at home.

## **Changes to how much your patient will get**

From 6<sup>th</sup> April the government is increasing the [standard allowance](#) in Universal Credit and the basic element in [Working Tax Credit](#) for one year. Both will increase by £20 per week on top of planned annual up-rating. This will apply to all new and existing Universal Credit claimants and to existing Working Tax Credit claimants.

This means that for a single Universal Credit claimant (aged 25 or over), the standard allowance will increase from £317.82 to £409.89 per month.

From April, [Local Housing Allowance](#) rates will be increased to the 30th percentile of market rents. This will apply to all private renters who are new or existing Universal Credit housing element claimants, and to existing [Housing Benefit](#) claimants.