From 1 April

Universal Credit

Citizens Advice Sheffield can help you claim

What is Universal Credit?

Universal Credit replaces 6 existing working age means-tested benefits.

- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit

Universal Credit is paid in a **lump sum** and on a **monthly** basis, and **includes help to pay your rent**. Usually, all the Universal Credit is paid straight to you, so you have to pay your rent out of this money.

Universal Credit **does not include** help with your **Council Tax**. You must claim Council Tax Support separately from Sheffield City Council.

It will take at least **5 weeks** before you get your first payment, but you can ask for an **advance payment** if you don't have enough money to last that long.

Who is affected?

Universal Credit came into full service in Sheffield at the end of 2018.

This means that if you're making a new benefit claim or if you are currently claiming benefits and your circumstances have changed, you may have to move to Universal Credit. However, exclusions apply and you should get advice before making a claim to Universal Credit.

You can find out more about these exclusions from : **www.entitledto.co.uk/help/changes_that_trigger_Universal_Credit**

If you need to claim you should do so as soon as possible as claims for Universal Credit can not be backdated except in exceptional circumstances.

If you already claim benefits and your circumstances aren't changing, then you don't need to do anything now.

For an assessment of whether you need to claim Universal Credit and to get help with claiming, call **Citizens Advice Help to Claim on 0800 144 8444**

Help claiming from Citizens Advice Sheffield

Phone Citizens Advice Help to Claim Freephone: on 0800 144 8444, Monday – Friday, 8.00am–6.00pm

Get a face-to-face initial assessment at one of our outlets – details of how to contact us across the city can be found at:
www.citizensadvicesheffield.org.uk

Follow up appointments take place in our main neighbourhood sites

Next steps...

After you've completed your application online, you'll need to arrange an interview at your local Job Centre within 7 days.

You should be given a phone number to call to set this up. You'll need your National Insurance Number when you make the call. If a number is not provided, call the **DWP Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 5644** to arrange your interview.

Remember: You only have 7 days. If you don't arrange the interview in time, you may have to start you application again.

You can get further help and Information on Universal Credit here.

Citizens Advice: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit

Entitledto: www.entitledto.co.uk

Gov.uk: www.gov.uk/universal-credit

Sheffield City Council: www.sheffield.gov.uk/benefitchanges

If you need to contact the Jobcentre about your claim call **DWP Universal Credit helpline: 0800 328 5644**

You will need to claim Council Tax Support separately as this isn't included:
www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/benefits/council-tax-support.html

Making a Claim

Getting online...
Most people have to claim for universal credit online. You will need access to the internet and a computer, tablet or smartphone. You will need an email address too.

You can apply for Universal Credit at **www.gov.uk/universal-credit**

If you are unable to claim online or need help to do so, call **Citizens Advice Help to Claim on 0800 144 8444**

Banking and budgeting...
You need to have a bank or credit union account to receive the benefit. You will have to wait at least 5 weeks before you receive your first universal credit payment.

In certain circumstances, you may be able to ask to be paid differently such as having your housing costs paid directly to your landlord or having your universal credit paid more frequently instead of monthly.

Getting ready to claim universal credit ...
Getting all your details together in advance will save you time and make it easier to apply. If you have a partner, you will need to make a joint claim and will need their details too.

You will need the following details:

- **National Insurance Number**
- **Housing details**
- **Details of any income and savings**
- **Childcare situation**
- **Other benefits, if you already get any**
- **If you have a partner, you will also need their details**

A full list of what you will need is available here: **www.citizensadvice.org.uk/documents/advice%20(public)/beta/Applying-for-Universal-Credit.pdf**

Confirming your identity...
Once you have made your claim you will be asked to 'Verify your identity online'. This takes you to a government system called 'Verify' to confirm your identity.

Verify can be difficult to complete. If you're having problems, go back to your Universal Credit account and click on 'I can't do this online'. You can then skip this step and confirm your identity at the Jobcentre instead.

You can ask for an **advance payment** of Universal Credit to help you get by while you're waiting for your first payment. The advance payment is a loan - you'll have to pay it back, but you won't need to pay any interest. You can apply for an advance through your online account or ask your work coach at your first interview. Or you can call the **DWP Universal Credit helpline: 0800 328 5644**

Arranging your Universal Credit Interview

If you can't get to your interview call the **DWP Universal Credit helpline: 0800 328 5644** straight away. You will only be able to rearrange your interview if you have a good reason, e.g. you're ill or dealing with an emergency.

If you miss your interview, the DWP might close your claim. This means you'll have to start your application again and your first payment might be delayed. You might be able to challenge your claim being closed.

If you have a long-term illness or disability which means taking part in the interview will be difficult or you need a 'reasonable adjustment' to be made to make the interview easier, call the **DWP Universal Credit helpline: 0800 328 5644 or textphone: 0800 328 13 44**

For example, you can ask for a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, or for your interview to be at a place you can travel to easily. In certain situations, you can ask for a home visit. For example, if you can't leave home at all because of a physical or mental health condition or you are in hospital.

Preparing for your interview...
You'll have to take documents to prove you've given the right details in your online application. If you don't take your documents with you, your payment may be delayed.

You will also have to give details about your skills, qualifications and the type of job you're looking for. You should tell your work coach about anything that affects your ability to work or look for work, including caring responsibilities, a disability or health condition, homelessness, difficulties with reading or writing or treatment for drug or alcohol problems.

A checklist to help you prepare for your interview can be downloaded at: **www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Documents/Advice%20(public)/beta/uc-checklist.pdf**