

## CORONAVIRUS AND BENEFIT INFORMATION

This information is correct on 23/03/2020. As with all Coronavirus Updates, the official guidance changes regularly so it is important to check government sources or seek advice

### Some advice for tenants regarding benefits and the impact of the Coronavirus

#### If you are an existing benefit claimant,

Face to face health reassessments have been suspended for 3 months from 17<sup>th</sup> March. If you have an appointment for one of these you do not need to attend. Your benefit will continue to be paid until alternative arrangements are made. You do not need to do anything.

The DWP will contact you to discuss what happens next- they may do a paper assessment or a telephone consultation. Your benefits will continue to be paid as normal while you are waiting on a medical assessment.

From 19<sup>th</sup> March people receiving benefits do not have to attend jobcentre appointments for the next 3 months. If you have symptoms of coronavirus or are self-isolating you should let your work coach know and should not be sanctioned for failing to attend. If you do have problems with sanctions please get in touch with the welfare rights officers.

If you normally have work search and availability requirements for JSA or Universal Credit and are showing symptoms of coronavirus or are self-isolating, let your workcoach know and you will be treated as being sick and have those requirements removed for a period of sickness.

If you are already in receipt of Universal Credit you should continue to check your journal regularly and maintain contact with the DWP this way. Changes to your income will result in a change to the amount of Universal Credit paid at the end of your assessment period.

If you are self-employed the minimum income floor will not apply if your business is affected by the economic impact of the virus or if you have symptoms or are self-isolating.

#### For people who need to make a new claim for benefits

If you have to claim contribution based ESA or Universal Credit(UC) due to not being able to work as a result of illness or self-isolation, the DWP will not expect you to hand in sick-lines.

If you have had a down-turn in work, and have to make a **new claim** for UC or ESA due to coronavirus symptoms or you are self -isolating, the government have stated that the usual 7-day waiting period will be suspended, so you can be paid your benefits from day one.

If you have claimed UC, you will not need to attend the Jobcentre and you can request a **benefit advance** (this is an interest-free loan which is repayable)

If you have worked and paid national insurance in the past few years, you could be entitled to contribution based ESA if you are sick or self-isolating, or **new style JSA** if

*As our working hours are restricted to 10AM to 3PM with only a skeleton staff our phone lines are very busy so please in the first instance contact Moira or Morag by emailing us at the following addresses and they will call you back.*

[moira@hillheadhousing.org](mailto:moira@hillheadhousing.org) or [morag@hillheadhousing.org](mailto:morag@hillheadhousing.org)

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you lose your job completely. This can be paid even if you have a partner who is still earning a good wage. Universal Credit, on the other hand, will count your partner's earnings and savings and you might not get it. You can contact the welfare rights officers for advice on this.

You can claim new style JSA online at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-style-jobseekers-allowance> if you think it applies to you.

**You should be aware that any claim for Universal Credit will end any existing tax credit or housing benefit claims you have so seek advice about what is best for your own circumstances.**

### **If you are employed or self-employed,**

The government has made changes to Universal Credit and Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) for those who may be sick or have to self-isolate due to the virus.

This includes:

- From 13/03/2020, people who cannot work due to coronavirus and are eligible for Statutory Sick Pay. They will get it from day one, rather than from the fourth day of their illness
- Statutory Sick Pay will be payable to people who are staying at home on government advice, not just those who are infected. You do not need to go to your doctor for a sick note.
- The government have set up an online service to get an 'isolation note' for your employer if you have to miss work for more than 7 days. ( a self certificate should cover you for those first 7 days) . These isolation notes can be obtained via the NHS website at <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note>
- After answering a few questions, an isolation note will be emailed to you If you don't have an email address, you can have the note sent to a trusted family member or friend, or directly to your employer. The service can also be used to generate an isolation note on behalf of someone else so contact us if you need help with this.
- self-employed claimants on Universal Credit who are required to stay at home or are ill as a result of coronavirus will not have a Minimum Income Floor (MIF)(an assumed level of income) applied for a period of time while affected. As said before, if you have a down turn in business due to coronavirus the MIF should not apply in that case either.

However, the government have also announced they will help employers pay up to 80% of your wages so that they don't need to pay you off. Hopefully this will help alleviate some of your concerns and you should speak to your employer about this.

**Lastly, if you find yourself in a real crisis with no money to meet your immediate needs you can claim a CRISIS GRANT by contacting the local council welfare team on 0300 1234510**

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**Remember, any decision made in relation to your benefit can still be challenged through mandatory reconsideration and appeals if necessary so ask for help if you get refused or are not happy with a decision.**

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