



Coronavirus – Money and benefits information

Updated: 1 October 2021

Guidance for employed people

Statutory Sick Pay

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is a benefit paid to employees by employers. It can be paid for up to 28 weeks to people who normally earn at least £118 per week. It's currently £95.85 per week and rises to £96.35 from April 2021. You may get more than this from your employer when you're ill. This is because your contract for your job might allow for this. Anything over the SSP rate is called occupational sick pay or contractual sick pay.

In regards to coronavirus, SSP now covers people who are ill, people who have to self-isolate (with or without symptoms) and people caring for those self-isolating in the same household. If your illness is not related to coronavirus, you'll usually be paid from the fourth day of sickness.

If you're not entitled to SSP or your SSP entitlement has run out you might also be entitled to New Style ESA (previously known as Contribution-based ESA) if you have worked and paid enough National Insurance contributions, usually in the last two complete tax years.

Until coronavirus you also had to get a medical certificate (sick note or fit note) from your GP after the first seven days of illness, but your employer can now use discretion not to ask for medical evidence. From 20 March 2020 you can get an online isolation note from the NHS 111 website or the NHS app.

Find out more on the gov.uk website: <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>

Staying on tax credits - employed people

Key information which applies to those who are off work due to infection or self-isolation, or are caring for a child who's infected or in isolation.

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You can continue to be entitled to tax credits if you're absent from work and you are:

- getting SSP as an employee.
- self-employed and would otherwise have qualified for SSP.
- getting Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).
- getting credits on your National Insurance record for limited capability for work.

These periods must start immediately after working and can continue for a maximum of 28 weeks.

HMRC has told claimants not to update working hours if working less due to the coronavirus. It's treating this as a temporary exceptional change and has said Working Tax Credits will not go down because you're working less.

Guidance for self-employed people

Advice for those who are self-employed

Self-employed people with reduced or no income can claim Universal Credit and/or New Style/Contribution-based ESA. Although they're not entitled to Statutory Sick Pay they can claim Universal Credit and/or New Style (Contribution-based ESA) if they're too sick to work or having to self-isolate due to coronavirus.

Contact HMRC's helpline for businesses on 0300 456 3565 for support.

Staying on tax credits – self-employed people

If you're self-employed, you remain entitled to Working Tax Credits as long as you continue to meet the definition of self-employed as 'organised and regular, on a commercial basis, with a view to making a profit' and you continue to put in sufficient hours.

The minimum income floor (MIF)

If you're self-employed and receive Universal Credit, the DWP usually assume a minimum income from your self-employed earnings. This is whether or not you actually receive this amount. This is called the minimum income floor, based on the national minimum wage for your age group. It's also based on the total hours you agreed to work when you discussed your conditionality agreement and claimant commitment.

The suspension of the MIF ended from 1 August 2021. However, there will be some discretion allowed for claimants whose earnings are adversely affected by the pandemic. This will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Guidance for those currently claiming benefits or in need of financial support

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Universal Credit

The £20 a week uplift to Universal Credit ends from 1 October 2021. For new or existing claims for Universal Credit if the Monthly Assessment Period (MAP) for that claim falls on or after 6 October 2021, the amount received will be reduce back to pre-covid levels. This equates to a drop of £87 per month. A single person aged 25 or over will see their personal standard allowance reduce from £411.51 per month to £324.84 per month. For a couple aged 25 or over this will reduce from £596.58 to £509.91 per month.

An advance payment can be made on application without attending an appointment at the Jobcentre. Visit www.gov.uk/guidance/universal-credit-advances for details.

There's no need to call the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in most cases when making a new claim. If the DWP need to check any information provided as part of the claim they'll call you. The DWP have confirmed that claimants don't need to call to verify their accounts so this now means claimants should expect a call instead.

Anyone already claiming Universal Credit who thinks they may have been affected by coronavirus, should contact their work coach using the online journal or call the Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 5644.

Household support fund

There's a new £500m fund to support vulnerable households who are struggling to pay for essentials such as food, clothing and utilities. The new fund will run over winter and those in need of support should contact their local council for help.

Jobcentre appointments and Universal Credit

Access to Jobcentres continues to be limited with members of the public only attending if they're directed to do so with a booked appointment. Only the most vulnerable claimants who cannot access DWP services any other way will be invited to attend. In the meantime, services should be accessed online and over the phone if required.

As lockdowns are eased the DWP can work with local managers to start expanding the services in Jobcentres. This will help get Britain back into work and work coaches are currently calling claimants to offer advice.

The above changes were put in place initially for three months from 19 March 2020 but continue to operate until advised otherwise by the DWP.

New Style Employment and Support Allowance (also known as Contribution-based Employment Support Allowance)

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New Style Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is a non-means-tested benefit paid by the DWP to people who don't get Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if they're not well enough to work. This can be claimed on its own, or in addition to Universal Credit. New Style ESA is an individual benefit which you can claim whether or not you have a partner and isn't affected by other income or savings.

To make a new claim for New Style ESA, you must have worked for at least 26 weeks and paid National Insurance in one of the tax years during 2018/19 or 2019/20. New Style ESA starts at £74.35 from April 2020 and can be increased later, depending on the severity of any illness or disability.

New Style ESA now covers people who are ill, people who have to self-isolate and people caring for a child who is ill or self-isolating with coronavirus. Until coronavirus many people didn't get New Style ESA until the eighth day of illness. These waiting days have now been suspended.

The DWP are introducing Claimant Commitments (CCs) and Action Plans (APs) for all ESA claimants in a phased approach. Work coaches continue to work with claimants to ensure that CCs and APs are reasonable and tailored for their circumstances. This allows people to continue to adhere to coronavirus guidance, whilst considering how they can move closer to getting work.

For all new claims to New Style ESA, processed from 26 April 2021, claimants will be required to have an appointment with a work coach and agree a CC. For claims processed prior to 26 April 2021, the requirement for an agreed CC will be introduced from 28 June 2021. This also applies to ESA legacy claimants who need an AP.

Visit the gov.uk website for details: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-style-employment-and-support-allowance>

End to suspension of face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits

Face-to-face assessments have started to resume for PIP and work capability assessments for Universal Credit and ESA. People will be invited for their assessment by letter, which will set out what to expect during the appointment.

Face-to-face assessments will take place alongside existing paper-based and telephone assessments and telephone assessments, which will continue where suitable.

Tax credits

The previous increase to Working Tax Credits has stopped and a one off £500 payment was made to eligible claimants in April 2021. The increase to the additional earnings disregard in housing benefit, in line with the Working Tax Credit increase has also stopped.

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If your work has permanently stopped, or your hours have permanently decreased below the qualifying limit there is a four-week run-on period for Working Tax Credit. If you don't find new work in this time, your Working Tax Credit will be stopped.

When calling HMRC, an automated message states that you do not need to inform them if your hours have reduced due to coronavirus. If after eight weeks you've not returned to your normal hours, visit www.gov.uk/working-tax-credit for further guidance.

If you've been furloughed, are still on your employer's payroll and expect to return to work, HMRC will treat you as still being at work, so your tax credit claim can continue. You can also count as in work during sickness periods of up to 28 weeks.

Claim Child Benefit by phone or post

HMRC is reminding new parents that they'll still be able to claim Child Benefit despite coronavirus. Even though many General Register Offices remain closed for now, parents can still claim Child Benefit without having to register their child's birth first.

NHS Test and Trace support payment

Everyone is required by law to self-isolate to help stop the spread of coronavirus. This applies to people who have coronavirus, people who are experiencing symptoms or those contacted by the [NHS Test and Trace system](#).

This is supported by a Test and Trace support payment of £500 for people on a lower income who can't work from home and have lost income as a result.

To be eligible for the payment, you must:

- have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace due to having coronavirus or having been in close contact with someone who does.
- be employed or self-employed.
- be unable to work from home and will lose income as a result.
- be currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.
- not be able to work from home and will lose income by self-isolating or staying at home to care for a child.

Local authorities will be working to set up these self-isolation support schemes. Those who start to self-isolate from 28 September 2020 will receive backdated payments once the scheme is set up in their area.

If you do not fulfil the above criteria, you could be eligible for a £500 discretionary support payment. The discretionary payment is not conditional on you receiving the benefits mentioned for the standard scheme. However, you do have to show that you're experiencing financial hardship.

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Visit the gov.uk website for more information: <https://www.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payment>

Getting in touch with HMRC

HMRC have updated their contact details to ensure those needing help and support can keep reaching their advisers. Visit <https://www.gov.uk/contact-hmrc> for up to date contact details relating to different queries.

Useful links

If you need more advice on changes to money and benefits, take a look at some of the useful links below:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-for-employees>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>