UNIVERSAL CREDIT ADVANCES

**You can ask for an advance payment of Universal Credit to help you get by while you're waiting for your first payment. This is called an ‘advance’.**

It will take at least 5 weeks after you apply for Universal Credit to get your first payment.

**A UNIVERSAL CREDIT ADVANCE COULD HELP IF:**

* You have made a new claim for a benefit but will be in financial need until you receive your first payment. (You must have been awarded the benefit or the decision maker considers that it is likely that you are entitled to the benefit)
* You have had a change in your circumstances that will increase the amount of benefit you are entitled to.

**WILL I BE ENTITLED?**

**‘Advance’ payment** is considered if you, or any member of your family, are at serious risk of damage to their health or safety. The DWP guidance gives examples of financial hardship as including where you are without money for gas, electricity, food, relationship breakdown or when you are fleeing domestic violence.

An advance will available once your eligibility for Universal Credit has been established, but let your work coach know that you would like an advance anyway.

You can ask for an advance payment at your Universal Credit interview at the Jobcentre. Or you can phone the **Universal Credit helpline** to ask for an advance payment. Telephone: 0800 328 5644 Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

You will have to tell them how much money you need and what for, eg how much you need for bills, food, rent etc. You’ll need to explain how getting an advance payment will prevent damage to you or your family’s health or safety. For example, not enough money for food, energy bills or rent.

**HOW MUCH ADVANCE COULD I GET?**

The maximum amount of Advance Payment is based on:

* Your personal allowance as part of the benefit you have claimed, and

You have to repay the full amount of the short-term advance within 12 months.

Repayments are deducted in instalments from your monthly universal credit payments. Jobcentre Plus must tell you in writing how much will be deducted from your payments, this information can be found on your journal.

You don't pay any interest on an advance.

**Benefit Cap**

An Advance payment is treated in the same way as any other payment of benefit, so it may be included in the Benefit Cap which may limit the total amount of benefits that working-age people can receive.

**WHAT IF I AM REFUSED AN ADVANCE?**

You don't have a formal right of appeal, but you can ask them to look at their decision again if you think they did not look at the correct information or misunderstood what you told them.

**BUDGETING ADVANCES**

**If you claim Universal Credit and you're struggling to find the money for a one-off or emergency expense, you may be able to get a Budgeting Advance to help.**

It is an interest free loan and can help to pay for a one-off expense or an essential item such as: a cooker or fridge, furniture, paying rent in advance on a new home

**WHO CAN GET A BUDGETING ADVANCE?**

If you or your partner receive Universal Credit, you may get a Budgeting Advance if either one of you have been claiming any of these benefits continuously for at least six months:

* universal credit
* income-based jobseeker's allowance
* income-related employment and support allowance
* income support
* pension credit

You must also be able to show that your income for the previous six months is below £2,600 if you are single or £3,600 if you're a couple and you or your partner are not still repaying a previous budgeting advance (or social fund budgeting loan) and you are able to repay the budgeting advance (taking into account any other debts you have).

**AMOUNT YOU CAN BORROW**

The minimum amount of budgeting advance payable is £100. The Maximum amounts depend on your circumstances:

* Single and not responsible for a child or young person £348
* A couple but nor responsible for a child or young person £464
* Responsible for a child or young person £812

You pay back the budgeting advance by deduction from your monthly UC payments over 12 months. This may be extended to 18 months in exceptional circumstances.

**WHAT IF I AM REFUSED A BUDGETING ADVANCE?**

You don't have a formal right of appeal, but you can ask them to look at their decision again.