UNIVERSAL CREDIT

What does that mean?

Definitions for Universal Credit’s Key Terms

**Claimant Commitment:** The agreement made with your work coach about what you will do to find work / prepare for work. This agreement is tailored to your individual circumstances and can change with your circumstances, as they are updated regularly.

**Work Related Activity:** All the tasks that you must do in order to find work or get prepared for work. This could be training, job search, practice interviews, preparing a CV, attending interviews with your work coach.

**Sanctions**: This is when part of your Universal Credit is reduced for a period of time because you have not fulfilled part of your claimant commitment. Only your standard allowance can be reduced.

**Hardship:** If you have been sanctioned for Universal Credit, you can apply for a hardship payment if you are unable to meet your basic needs around accommodation, heating, food and hygiene, or the needs of a child you are responsible for. Claimants can only receive one hardship payment per Assessment Period and only if they have been sanctioned at 100% rate for singles or 50% rate for couples.

Ask your work coach

**Conditionality**: The Universal Credit group that you are placed in has conditions about what type of activities you have to do to find work / prepare for work. You will have to provide medical evidence if your diagnosis restricts your ability to work / find work.

**Legacy Benefits:** The benefits being replaced by Universal Credit.

Legacy benefits are; Income Support, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), Income-based Employment & Support Allowance (ESA), Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credit, and Child Tax Credit.

**Alternate Payment Arrangements:** Universal Credit payments will include an amount for your housing costs, which you then must pay to your landlord. Many people will find this difficult to manage. If you cannot cope with managing rent payments, you can request an Alternate Payment Arrangement so the rent goes direct to your landlord. There are 3 different types of APAs:

* Managed payment to landlord – This is where the housing element of the UCFS award goes directly to the landlord.
* More frequent payments – Where claimants can get paid every 2 weeks instead of monthly provided they show enough evidence that they cannot manage monthly payments. A Decision Maker makes a decision regarding this.
* Split payments – Only for joint claims where the couple is in dispute and would like the joint UCFS award to be split between the two.

**Ask your work coach**

**Benefit Cap:**  This refers to the limit of how much Universal Credit you can receive, regardless of your circumstances. Exemptions apply

**Advance:** This is a loan to help you financially until you receive your first Universal Credit payment (after around 5 weeks). The loan is then taken directly from your Universal Credit regular payments.

**Ask your work coach**

**Mandatory Reconsideration: I**f you believe a decision was wrong, this is what you ask for. You must ask within one calendar month of the date of the decision. A decision maker will then look again at the decision. If you still disagree, you can ask an Independent Tribunal to look again at the decision.

**Contact Citizens Advice if you need help doing this.**

**Backdating:** If you want you claim to cover a period before you actually applied, you can ask for backdating. Universal Credit backdating rules are very strict and only cover a maximum of 1 month for reasons such as health or disability preventing the claim being made. You will need to provide medical evidence. Other reasons may qualify you, ask your work coach in your first meeting.

**Assessment Period:** It is the monthly period which Universal Credit payment is based. You are paid up to 7 days after the end of each assessment period.

e.g. Tom is unemployed. He claims Universal Credit on 4th August 2016.

Waiting days have been abolished for claims made after 14/02/2018

His first monthly assessment period starts on 4th August and ends on the 3rd of September.

He his payment is paid one month’s Universal Credit into his bank account on 10thof September and on the same day of each month after that.