



# Information Pack

# CONTENTS

<b>What is Universal Credit?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What you can do to prepare</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Your Universal Credit journey</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Universal Credit roll out</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Checklist</b>	<b>8</b>

## What is Universal Credit?

- ❖ Universal Credit is a new benefit for working age people designed to support people who have a low (or no) income with their basic living expenses and housing costs.
- ❖ Universal Credit replaces the following benefits:
  - Housing Benefit;
  - Child Tax Credit;
  - Income Support;
  - Working Tax Credit;
  - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; and
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.

Other benefits will continue to be paid separately such as Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and Carer's Allowance. Child Benefit will also continue to be paid separately.

Benefits based on National Insurance contributions, such as contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance and contributory Employment and Support Allowance, will not be replaced and will work alongside Universal Credit.

- ❖ Universal Credit is paid in arrears on the same date each month. If you live with someone as a couple and you are both entitled to claim Universal Credit, you will get one monthly joint payment paid into a single bank account.

- ❖ Although Universal Credit is made up of different elements it is paid to you as one amount. This means the money to help with your housing costs is usually paid direct to you and not to the Association, so you will be responsible for ensuring your rent is paid.
- ❖ It usually takes 5 weeks for your claim to be assessed and your first payment to arrive. You will continue to receive Housing Benefit for 2 weeks after making your claim.
- ❖ If you don't have enough to live on while you wait for your first payment or have a change in circumstances, you may be able to get a Universal Credit advance payment. You will normally be notified of the decision the same day you apply. The advance payment is a loan - you'll have to pay it back, but you won't pay any interest. The repayments will be automatically deducted from your Universal Credit payments over a 12 month period.
- ❖ If you receive a Council Tax Reduction it is important that you claim for this separately to Universal Credit. Council Tax Reduction is no longer automatically awarded following your claim and you will need to contact your local council to apply.

## **What you can do to prepare!**

### **Step 1 – Rent Account**

Ensure that your rent account is clear and at least a month in advance in line with your Tenancy Agreement. It is strongly advisable to start making payments now in preparation for the switch over. **The delay in Universal Credit payments will not change the requirement that rent needs to be paid in full and on time.**

### **Step 2 – Internet Access**

Universal Credit Full Service is an internet online system only. It is important you have internet access in order to manage your claim. You must still phone the jobcentre to book an appointment for ID verification, if this cannot be done online, and to arrange a work coach interview. You will need to provide a mobile phone number and email address as these are required for your claim.

### **Step 3 – Bank Account**

Universal Credit is paid once a month, into your bank, building society or credit union account. If you do not have one of these accounts you will need to set one up to make and receive your payments.

### **Step 4 – Budgeting**

As Universal Credit will be paid in one single payment it will be helpful to draw up a monthly budget. Go to [www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk](http://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk) to complete your own budget planner or contact the office on 01790 754219 if you would like assistance.

# Your Universal Credit Journey

1

You will receive a notification of your transfer to Universal Credit from the DWP.

2

You must make your Universal Credit Claim online at [www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit).

3

Inform the Association of your switch over to Universal Credit and discuss rent payment methods.

## UC *Universal Credit*

With the introduction to Universal Credit well underway we have mapped out your journey so you know what to expect.

4

An interview will be scheduled at the jobcentre to complete the claim and provide any additional evidence.

5

It will take 5 to 6 weeks for your claim to be assessed and your first payment to arrive.

6

You will receive your UC decision letter by post with the payment schedule included.

7

Contact the Association to inform us of when and how your rent payments will be made.

# Universal Credit Roll Out

## Stage 1

### 2015-2016

The digital service changed its name to 'full service' and from May 2016, the DWP started rolling out the full service to existing live service areas in Great Britain. Claimants already claiming UC in these live service areas were transferred to the full service shortly after the full-service reached their postcode area.

## Stage 2

### 2016-2019

In January 2018, the DWP announced the closure of live service for most brand new claims and by April 2019, all live service claimants were moved across to the full service. Any change in your circumstances would now trigger a move to UC.

## Stage 3

### April 2019 – December 2023

All existing benefit and tax credit claimants who do not have a change of circumstance will be migrated onto Universal Credit. You will be informed by the Department of Work and Pensions when this change is due to take place.





# Checklist

## Universal Credit Checklist

With the introduction of Universal Credit fast approaching, we have created a checklist of actions you can use to help you prepare.

### UC Universal Credit

- 1 Internet Access**  
The new Universal Credit system is online only. It is important you have internet access in order to manage your claim.
- 2 Bank Account**  
Make sure you have the right bank account.  
Go online to [www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk) to find out more!
- 3 When will you be affected?**  
Go to our website to see when Universal Credit is expected to be rolled out in your area.  
[www.lrha.co.uk](http://www.lrha.co.uk)
- 4 Arrears**  
A legal requirement of the Tenancy Agreement is that your rent must be 4 weeks in advance. It may take up to 5 weeks before you get your first payment, it is important to start making additional payments now to avoid falling into arrears.
- 5 Budget**  
You will receive your Universal Credit payment monthly. It will be helpful to draw up a monthly budget and remember your priority outgoings.
- 6 Payment options**  
Decide how to pay your rent. The most convenient option is to set up a Direct Debit.

**If you have any difficulties or worries please contact the office staff who are happy to help!**