

Help to Claim

How we can help with your claim for Universal Credit

Our 'Help to Claim' service is available:

- Online at <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/helptoclaim>
- Over the telephone; call us on 0800 144 8 444
- Face to face at our offices in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow.

If you're not sure, call our local number, 01799 618840, and talk to us about the best option to help you through the process of applying for Universal Credit.

- **Benefit Check**

To find out whether you are eligible to claim Universal Credit you can:

- Call us on 0800 144 8 444
- Use the free online benefit check at www.entitledto.co.uk
- Speak to one of our generalist advisers to arrange a full benefit check. Call 01799 618840.

- **Making your claim online**

You can only claim universal credit online, there is no paper form. If you don't have access to a computer at home, you can use one of our public access computers in our offices in Saffron Walden or Great Dunmow. Our trained advisers will be available to help you if you have any problems, for example with:

- Checking you have all the information you need to make a claim
- Setting up an email address
- Setting up an online account
- Using your online account to make your claim
- Confirming your identity online

Free computer access is also available at the libraries in Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Thaxted.

If you can't apply online, for example if you have problems reading or writing, you'll need to tell the DWP why. If you need to apply by phone or in person contact the DWP Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 5644.

Speak to one of our advisers if you need help to do this.

- **Arranging your appointment at Jobcentre+**

You'll need to arrange an interview at your local Jobcentre within 7 days of applying online. If you don't arrange the interview in time your benefit may be delayed or you might have to start your application for Universal Credit again.

You should be given a phone number to call to arrange your interview after you apply online.

If getting to or taking part in the interview will be difficult for you, you should call the DWP Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 5644.

You can ask the DWP to change things to make the interview easier - this is called a 'reasonable adjustment'. For example, you can ask for a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, or for your interview to be at a place you can travel to easily.

You can ask for a home visit, but this will only happen in certain situations. For example, if you can't leave home because of a physical or mental health condition.

Speak to one of our advisers if you need help to make these arrangements.

- **Getting ready for your first payment**

It will be at least 5 weeks until you get your first payment. This starts from the date of your claim if you've sent in all the right evidence and agreed your claimant commitment. You'll have to make a new claim if you don't do this.

If you are worried that you won't have enough money to live on while you wait for your first payment, you can apply for an advance payment.

Our advisers can help you apply for an advance payment. They can also help you to access other benefits, financial support or support services, including:

- Direct payments to landlords
- Council tax reduction
- Budgeting advice
- Debt services
- Help with applications for disability benefits
- Housing support from the council
- Grants to help with home improvements or adaptations
- Foodbank referrals
- Emergency grants for food or electricity / gas top-ups

You may be able to self-refer to some of these services via www.uttlesfordfrontline.org.uk

- **If you think your first payment is wrong**

If your first payment is delayed, wrong or incomplete, call the DWP Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 5644. Speak to one of our advisers if you need help to make this call.

- **If your claim is unsuccessful**

If you disagree with the decision about your Universal Credit claim, you can ask the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to change it. You'll need to ask for 'mandatory reconsideration' - this means the DWP will look at the decision again.

If you still disagree with the DWP, you can take your challenge to an independent tribunal. The tribunal will look at your arguments and make a decision. They're overseen by a judge and separate from the DWP.

For information about how to ask for a mandatory reconsideration, or take your challenge to an independent tribunal go to the Citizens Advice website

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit/>

or speak to one of our advisers.