

## Coronavirus and Benefits

The government has introduced a range of new measures to help people manage financially during the Coronavirus pandemic. These include:

**Job Retention Scheme** – this scheme provides a grant to employers to enable them to pay the wages of their workforce who remain on payroll but who are temporarily not working during the Coronavirus outbreak. The grant will cover the lower of: 80% of an employee's wages or £2,500 a month. The scheme will be open for 3 months and backdated to 1st March 2020.

**Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.** Under this scheme the government will pay self-employed people who are eligible for the scheme a taxable grant worth 80% of their average monthly profits over the last three years, up to £2,500 a month.

**Jobcentre appointments and medical assessments** – you will not be to attend appointments at the jobcentre in person for at least 3 months, starting from Thursday 19 March 2020. The DWP have also postponed all **medical assessments** for UC, ESA, PIP and IIDB until at least 19th June 2020.

**JSA and UC work availability and work search requirements have been suspended** for at least 3 months.

The DWP have suspended recovery of certain debts.

A new **Council Tax Hardship fund** will reduce Council Tax Bills by up to £150 for anyone in receipt of Council Tax Support / Rebate.

If you have children eligible for **free school meals** who are not attending school you will still receive help - generally in the form of a voucher.

If you have had a baby you will be able to claim Child Benefit without having to register the child's birth first.

### **Statutory Sick Pay**

This is now payable from day 1 of sickness (rather than day 4). As getting a fit note could be problematic, employers are urged to use their discretion about what evidence, if any, they ask for. Where you need one, you are able to get an 'isolation note' from the NHS 111 Online service. If you are classed as 'self-isolating' or 'shielding' you are treated as being incapable of work.

### **New-Style Employment and Support Allowance**

This is now payable from day 1 of sickness (rather than day 8). You are not required to produce a 'fit note' or 'isolation note'. If you are self-isolating you are treated as having a limited capability for work.

### **Jobseekers Allowance**

Those getting Jobseekers Allowance will be treated as being capable of work when self-isolating i.e. due to having Coronavirus, having symptoms or being in same household as someone with Coronavirus or having symptoms. This period will not

therefore be counted as a period of sickness and a JSA claimant will not lose entitlement to Jobseeker's Allowance because of Coronavirus disease.

### **Universal Credit**

The Standard Allowance increased by £20 a week for 12 months from 6th April 2020 and the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) suspended for everyone during the Coronavirus outbreak.

You will not be required to produce a 'fit note' or 'isolation note' to prove you have Coronavirus or are self-isolating.

If you have contracted Coronavirus or are self-isolating AND have written notification that you are not allowed to go to work you are treated as having a Limited Capability for Work (LCW) and therefore entitled to a work allowance if treated as having LCW on date their UC award is assessed

You can receive an Advance Payment without having to physically attend a JobCentre.

### **Working Tax Credit**

The basic element of Working Tax Credit is also increased by £20 a week for 12 months from 6th April 2020.

A Working Tax Credit award will continue for 8 weeks if you have been furloughed or your hours have been cut.

If you need further advice about any of the above please check out the information here or contact the Financial Inclusion Team on 0300 111 0000 or by email on **moneyadvice@wchg.org.uk**