

Citizens Advice Universal Credit Campaign Outcomes

Locally and nationally Citizens Advice have been campaigning since July 2017 for the government to pause and fix Universal Credit (UC).

This is because our evidence shows that UC can leave people unable to pay essential bills and can risk pushing them into debt and hardship whilst they wait for their first payment. More than 7 million households will receive UC by 2022, and Citizens Advice has already helped people with over 100,000 UC issues since it was introduced.

Over recent months the Government have announced a number of changes, including a £1.5 billion package of support for UC. These changes should make a significant difference to the millions of people who will be claiming UC by the time it's fully implemented. Citizens Advice will continue to keep a close eye on the roll-out of UC and make sure they do.

| <u>We campaigned to:</u> | In response, the government: |
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| Remove the 7 waiting days at the start of a claim. | Will remove the 7 waiting days at the start of UC claims from February 2018. We estimate this means 1.6 million families will get a their payment a week sooner and get a week's extra payment. |
| Make sure everyone moving to UC is told they can get an Advance Payment. | Issued new guidance to Jobcentres that all UC claimants should be informed about advances. |
| Make the UC helpline free of charge. | Made the UC helplines free on 29 November 2017 (UC live service: 0800 328 9344 and UC full service: 0800 328 5644). |
| Pause the roll out of UC. | Slowed down the rate of new areas moving on to UC from over 50 Jobcentres in December to a pause in January and only 10 Jobcentres a month from February to April 2018. |
| Give those who need it a payment within 2 weeks, which they do not need to pay back. | Announced that from April 2018, new UC claimants previously in receipt of housing benefit will receive an additional two week housing payment during the wait for the first UC payment, which they do not need to pay back. This will help 2.3 million people by giving them an average of £233 whilst they wait for their first payment. |
| Improve people's financial incentives to work. | Committed to look at work incentives in the Budget : "The taper rate will be kept under review and [we] will continue to consider the case for further changes." |
| Ensure people have access to a minimum standard of support to help them access and adapt to UC. | Committed to exploring with Citizens Advice the scope for greater collaborative working to help claimants locally as they move to UC. |
| Make UC less complicated. | Announced new claims for the old version of UC - live service - will cease on 31 December. |

Timetable of upcoming UC changes announced in the Budget 2017

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| December 2017 | <p>New guidance will be issued to UC staff to ensure that claimants in the private rented sector who have their housing benefit paid directly to landlords are offered that option when they join UC.</p> <p>New claims for UC in live service areas will cease on 31 December.</p> |
| January 2018 | <p>Advance Payments of up to 100 percent of notional entitlement with up to a 12 month repayment period will be available from January 2018.</p> <p>This is in addition to previous changes which allow people to receive multiple Advance Payments up to their first payment. This means for new claimants in December 2017, they will be able to get a 50% Advance Payment that month and apply for another 50% in January 2018 if they haven't already received their first UC payment.</p> |
| February 2018 | <p>7 waiting days at the start of UC claims will be abolished.</p> <p>UC will be rolled out more gradually between February 2018 and April 2018, and roll-out to all Jobcentres will be complete in December 2018.</p> |
| April 2018 | <p>Stays in temporary accommodation will be paid through Housing Benefit.</p> <p>New UC claimants who were previously in receipt of Housing Benefit will receive an additional Housing Benefit run on payment of two weeks.</p> |
| Spring 2018 | <p>It will be possible to apply for Advance Payments online.</p> |
| 2018 - 2019 | <p>A very small number of Local Housing Allowance rates will increase in 2018-19, in areas where affordability pressures are greatest.</p> |
| January 2019 | <p>UC claims from a family with three or more children will be routed back to tax credits until the end of January 2019 (extension from November 2018).</p> |