

OFFICIAL: SENSITIVE
COVID-19 – RESERVED BENEFITS – ROLLING BRIEF – APRIL 2020

[redacted – out of scope]

- Although we welcome the package of support for the self-employed and the changes to increase in Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit by £1,000 a year (approx. £20 per week) for the next 12 months,

[redacted – out of scope]

- While the support package from the UK Government for self-employed people is welcomed,

[redacted – out of scope]

Since 2 March the UK Government has made a number of changes to support people affected by COVID-19. These include:

- Increase in Universal Credit (UC) standard allowance and Working Tax Credit (WTC) by £1,000 a year for the next 12 months.
- This increased support is estimated to benefit nearly 380,000 families in Scotland. This includes an additional estimated 20,000 families to be brought into UC or WTC eligibility resulting from the increased payments.
- The Universal Credit Minimum Income Floor is suspended. That means self-employed people can now access, in full, Universal Credit at a rate equivalent to Statutory Sick Pay for employees.
- Around 20,000 families with at least one self-employed adult in Scotland are expected to benefit from this policy at an additional annual cost of £70 million in 2020-21.
- Deductions to Universal Credit and 'legacy' benefits for benefit overpayments and benefit debt repayments for the next three months will be suspended.
- Increase of the Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of private rents in each local area.
- This policy is estimated to result in additional spending on UC and Housing Benefit in Scotland of between £30 million and £40 million, when accounting for potential increase in UC claims due to Covid-19.

[redacted – out of scope]

- The DWP is streamlining its verification processes to reduce pressure on the current verification system, by allowing some claimants to verify their information using the Government Gateway.

[redacted – out of scope]

OFFICIAL: SENSITIVE
COVID-19 – RESERVED BENEFITS – ROLLING BRIEF – JUNE 2020

[redacted – out of scope]

- We have seen that the UK Government is capable of making changes, at pace, to benefit those facing financial hardship, including increasing Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit and the Local Housing Allowance.

[redacted – out of scope]

- While the support package from the UK Government for self-employed people was welcomed,

[redacted – out of scope]

- This highlights the vital role that Universal Credit will play in supporting family finances during the long road back to normal times.

[redacted – out of scope]

- The increase to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit was a welcome and necessary measure.

[redacted - out of scope]

OFFICIAL: SENSITIVE
COVID-19 – RESERVED BENEFITS – ROLLING BRIEF – JULY 2020

[redacted – out of scope]

- We have seen that the UK Government is capable of making changes, at pace, to benefit those facing financial hardship, including increasing Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit and the Local Housing Allowance.

[redacted – out of scope]

- While the support package from the UK Government for self-employed people was welcomed,

[redacted – out of scope]

- The increase to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit was a welcome and necessary measure.

[redacted – out of scope]

- This highlights the vital role that Universal Credit will play in supporting family finances during the long road back to normal times

[redacted – out of scope]

OFFICIAL: SENSITIVE
COVID-19 – RESERVED BENEFITS – ROLLING BRIEF – AUGUST 2020

[redacted – out of scope]

- We have seen that the UK Government is capable of making changes, at pace, to benefit those facing financial hardship during COVID, including increasing Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit and the Local Housing Allowance.

[redacted – out of scope]

- While the support package from the UK Government for self-employed people was welcomed,

[redacted – out of scope]

OFFICIAL: SENSITIVE
COVID-19 – RESERVED BENEFITS – ROLLING BRIEF – AUGUST 2020

ANNEX

[redacted – Annex out of scope]

CABINET SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SECURITY AND OLDER PEOPLE
Briefing for [redacted – out of scope]

[redacted – out of scope]

At present, DWP is quite rightly redeploying staff to deal with a record volumes of new Universal Credit applications. We support this response to the current needs in our community, as the priority it is.

[redacted – out of scope]

CABINET SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SECURITY & OLDER PEOPLE
Briefing for [redacted – out of scope]

[redacted – out of scope]

The increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit by £1,000 a year for the next 12 months, equated to an additional £20 a week, and will benefit nearly 380,000 families in Scotland.

[redacted – out of scope]

At present, DWP is quite rightly redeploying staff to deal with a record volumes of new Universal Credit applications. We support this response to the current needs in our community, as the priority it is.

[redacted – out of scope]

- **20 March:** Increase in Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit by £1,000 a year for the next 12 months. In Scotland, nearly 211,000 households on Universal Credit and 138,000 households on Working Tax Credit will benefit.

In Scotland, the additional government spend as a result of this measure is estimated at £348.5 million and the average gain for households in the lowest two income deciles is estimated at £300. These figures do not account for increased caseload over the year.

- **20 March: Support for self-employed:** The Universal Credit Minimum Income Floor is suspended. That means self-employed people can now access, in full, Universal Credit at a rate equivalent to Statutory Sick Pay for employees.

In Scotland, around 15,000 self-employed are estimated to benefit from this measure at an estimated additional cost of £56 million.

- **20 March: Support for renters:** They will be increasing the generosity of housing benefit and Universal Credit, so that the Local Housing Allowance will cover at least 30% of market rents in a given area.

In Scotland, this measure is expected to benefit up to 85,000 families at an estimated additional spend of up to £60 million.

[redacted – out of scope]

Other changes made by the UK Government, such as the increased LHA rates and changes to the standard allowance in Universal Credit, may raise the amount a household receives for their housing costs reducing pressure on Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs).

[redacted – out of scope]

CABINET SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SECURITY & OLDER PEOPLE
Briefing for [redacted – out of scope]

[redacted - out of scope]

[redacted – s.38(1)b]

[redacted – out of scope]

- Like us, DWP staff face the challenges of the current reality, and they are under additional pressures to manage record volumes of new Universal Credit applications, which the department has rightly prioritised.

[redacted – out of scope]

- We have seen that the UK Government is capable of making changes, at pace, to benefit those facing financial hardship, including increasing Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit and the Local Housing Allowance.

[redacted – out of scope]

- , which DWP is unable to provide while rightly focusing on the current increase in Universal Credit applications.

[redacted – out of scope]

- At present, DWP is quite rightly redeploying staff to deal with a record volumes of new Universal Credit applications. We support this response to the current needs in our community, as the priority it is.

[redacted – out of scope]

- **20 March:** Increase in Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit by £1,000 a year for the next 12 months. In Scotland, nearly 211,000 households on Universal Credit and 138,000 households on Working Tax Credit will benefit.

In Scotland, the additional government spend as a result of this measure is estimated at £348.5 million and the average gain for households in the lowest two income deciles is estimated at £300. These figures do not account for increased caseload over the year.

- **20 March: Support for self-employed:** The Universal Credit Minimum Income Floor is suspended. That means self-employed people can now access, in full, Universal Credit at a rate equivalent to Statutory Sick Pay for employees.

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CABINET SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SECURITY & OLDER PEOPLE
Briefing for [redacted – out of scope]

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In Scotland, this measure is expected to benefit up to 85,000 families at an estimated additional spend of up to £60 million.

[redacted – out of scope]

CABINET SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SECURITY & OLDER PEOPLE
Briefing for [redacted – out of scope]

[redacted – out of scope]

[redacted – s.38(1)b]

[redacted – out of scope]

- We have seen that the UK Government is capable of making changes to social security and welfare provision, at pace, to benefit those facing financial hardship as a result of Covid-19.

[redacted – out of scope]

- We have seen that the UK Government is capable of making changes, at pace, to benefit those facing financial hardship, including increasing Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit and the Local Housing Allowance.

[redacted – out of scope]

From: [redacted - s.38(1)b]

Sent: 30 March 2020 11:03

To: Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People
<CabSecSSOP@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted - s.38(1)b]@gov.scot, McVie A (Ann) <Ann.McVie@gov.scot
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s.38(1)b]@gov.scot; [redacted - s.38(1)b]@gov.scot; [redacted -
s.38(1)b]@gov.scot; Kerr S (Stephen) (Social Security Director)
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Subject: SCANCE Note - COVID-19 update on DWP welfare changes

PS/ Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People

[redacted – out of scope]

Since 2 March 2020, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has made a number of changes to the UK welfare system to support people affected by COVID-19. These changes will temporarily increase the generosity of the system and relax conditionality for working age benefits. The key changes relate to Universal Credit and Employment Support Allowance, Statutory Sick Pay and Carers Allowance.

Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance

- Increase in Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit by £1,000 a year (approx. £20 per week) for the next 12 months, starting 6 April 2020.
- Increase in Local Housing Rates for private renters claiming Universal Credit housing element or housing benefit.
- Advances for all new Universal Credit claimants are now available online / via phone.
- Relaxation of the Minimum Income Floor for all self-employed claimants , ensuring their Universal Credit award will increase to reflect their lower earnings.

[redacted – out of scope]

Speaking note

- I welcome the changes made so far by the DWP, some of which, for example, the increase in Universal Credit standard allowance and improvement in support for renters, are in response to representations colleagues and I have made direct to the UK Government.

[redacted – out of scope]

Kind regards,

[redacted - s.38(1)b]

OFFICIAL: SENSITIVE
COVID-19 – RESERVED BENEFITS – ROLLING BRIEF – 04 AUGUST 2020

[redacted – out of scope]

- We have seen that the UK Government is capable of making changes, at pace, to benefit those facing financial hardship during COVID, including increasing Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit and the Local Housing Allowance.

[redacted – out of scope]

While the support package from the UK Government for self-employed people was welcomed,

[redacted – out of scope]