

BenefitsBulletin

Aberdeen City & Shire Advice Forum is a local network for people working in advice services to share information and experiences.
The Forum meets quarterly throughout the year.

Monday 30th November 2020 - Issue.29



Raising awareness of carers' rights

25 November 2020



Posters have recently been designed to raise awareness of young carers' rights to coincide with Carers Rights Day on Thursday, November 26.

The theme of the awareness day is Know Your Rights. The brightly coloured leaflets and posters aim to help young carers identify themselves in a carer role, raise awareness of young carers to professionals, and the public and inform young carers of available support.

The leaflets and posters have been sent to all schools in Aberdeenshire, GP practices as well as to council services such as children and families social work.

A young carer is anyone under the age of 18, or 18 if still at school, who cares for a family member or friend due to illness, disability, mental health or addiction. Caring can be physical, emotional or practical support.

The materials were designed by Foyer Graphics (part of Foyer Enterprise Group) with input from the Mackie Academy Young Carer Group.

Quarriers are commissioned to provide a carer support service for both adult and young carers in Aberdeenshire. More information about Quarriers is available on their website: <https://quarriers.org.uk/services/young-carers-support-service-aberdeenshire/>

For further information about the support available for young carers in Aberdeenshire please visit the council website: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/community-care/caring-for-others/support-for-young-carers/>

Please email carersupport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk if you require copies of the new young carer materials or for any other carer support queries.

FREE Gaming and Gambling webinar

93% of young people in the UK play video games.

With this webinar you will learn how gaming and gambling are blurring the lines and the two worlds are starting to merge.

Tuesday 15th December 15:30-17:30 <https://bit.ly/361jFsG>

"Loot boxes, micro transactions, DLC, FTP, PTW" All these things explained and how they could be effecting young people, their mental health and how to support young people to stay safe.

Or book an exclusive FREE session for your organisation today, just email

paul@fastforward.org.uk for more information

Easy read: Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI)

Updated 25 November 2020

These easy read guides help people with learning disabilities to understand:

- what SMI is
- who can get SMI
- how to apply for SMI

www.gov.uk/government/publications/easy-read-support-for-mortgage-interest-smi

Scottish Illegal Money Lending Unit Virtual Event

The pandemic has caused untold difficulties for people from all backgrounds across Scotland. With people in financial difficulties some will turn to Illegal Money Lenders to access credit in a quick and easy manner. Research shows that it can take between 24 to 30 months for someone to report an Illegal Money Lender from the date the borrowing began. During the timespan of borrowing there will be a significant amount of stress and harm placed upon the borrowers.

One of our key priorities at the Scottish Illegal Money Lending Unit (SIMLU) is how we prevent those most at risk of falling prey to illegal money lenders and becoming their next victim.

Preventing the **need** to access illegal forms of credit is one aspect of our work and to help us achieve this we currently fund 3 projects across Scotland that look at different ways of preventing the 'need'. We are therefore delighted to invite you to our launch week of our annual winter campaign which includes a roundtable discussion on; **Why Prevention is Key in the Fight Against Illegal Money Lenders**. This virtual event will be held on the **9th of December at 2pm.**

At this event you will hear from the officers leading each of the projects and the Prevention Lead from SIMLU. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss their views on how prevention can be better achieved and how we can work closer with partners to achieve our long term aim of reducing the amount of people who need to use illegal money lenders.

To register for this free event please follow the link: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/why-prevention-is-key-in-the-fight-against-illegal-money-lenders-tickets-130771100883

Please feel free to pass this to any colleagues or other agencies you feel may have an interest in attending this event.



Social Security Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Thousands of disadvantaged young people are being helped to develop valuable digital skills through the Scottish Government's Connecting Scotland programme.

Phase 2 will open on 24 November and will close on 18 January

More than 23,000 iPads and Chromebooks are being distributed among digitally excluded low-income families and care leavers, as part of the latest phase of the £43 million programme.

As well as a new device, recipients also receive mobile data and help to use the internet confidently and safely for up to two years.

Connecting Scotland works with local authorities, public bodies and third sector organisations to reach people across the country.

Background

Connecting Scotland is a Scottish Government programme set up in response to COVID-19. It provides iPads, Chromebooks and support to develop skills for people who are digitally excluded and on low incomes and is delivered in partnership with SCVO, all 32 local authorities and hundreds of third sector organisations across Scotland.

Phase 1 (April – July 2020) focused on those who were at high risk of contracting coronavirus because they were in the **extremely high vulnerability group** ('shielding') or the **higher risk of severe illness** group.

Phase 2, round 1 launched on 18 August and is focused on households with children, or where a child is normally resident (this includes pregnant women with no child in the household) and care leavers up to the age of 26 (in line with eligibility for aftercare support).

The next round of phase 2 will open on 24 November and will close on 18 January at 11am. Applications can be made by organisations who support eligible groups via the **Connecting Scotland** website.

Almost 6,000 people received a Funeral Support Payment in its first full year, according to recently published statistics.

Since it started making payments last September, Social Security Scotland has paid out £8.7 million to people who have lost a loved one.

Eligible applicants currently receive an average of £1,761 to help with the costs of a burial or cremation and expenses such as travel and flowers.

Funeral Support Payment replaced the UK Government's Funeral Expense Payment in Scotland.

Background:

The full report is available at: [scot/publications/funeral-support-payment-high-level-statistics-to-30-september-2020](https://www.scot.nhs.uk/scotpublications/funeral-support-payment-high-level-statistics-to-30-september-2020)

Funeral Support Payment can help cover burial or cremation costs (these costs vary throughout the country, therefore reasonable local costs are published on [scot/burial-cremation-costs-scotland](https://www.scot.nhs.uk/scotpublications/burial-cremation-costs-scotland))

The payment includes a flat rate for any other expenses - £1,000 for the majority of applications and £122.05 if the person who died had made provision for their funeral through a funeral plan. It can also cover some travel, document, and medical costs

Clients can find pre-application advice which includes eligibility and award amounts and apply at mygov.scot/funeral-support-payment

Clients can choose to apply online, via a paper application form or by calling our specially trained Funeral Support Payment team on **0800 182 2222**.

Transition Fund #TrySomethingNew

Are you aged 16-25, and living with a disability in Scotland? You could be eligible for up to £1,500 in funding, for 1 year, from the Transition Fund! We can support you to try new activities and experiences that will enhance your independence, confidence and help you to spend more time with other people.

Apply online or download an application at <https://ilf.scot/transition-fund/>

If you need more information or help with your application, please give us a call on 0300 200 2022 or email enquiries@ILF.scot.



The Government has issued a new Treasury Direction in relation to the third payment under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

Direction confirms that claims for SEISS 3 must be made on or before 29 January 2021

Following the [Chancellor's announcement on 5 November 2020](#) that a third SEISS grant is to be paid to cover February to April 2021, a further Treasury Direction has been made under [section 71](#) and [section 76](#) of the *Coronavirus Act 2020* which confirms that SEISS 3 is a modification and extension of SEISS and accordingly all the provisions of [SEISS](#) and [SEISS Extension](#) will apply.

In addition, the Schedule to the Direction clarifies that -

- a claim for SEISS 3 must be made on or before 29 January 2021;
- a claim may only be made for a SEISS 3 payment in respect of the period beginning on 1 November 2020 and ending on 29 January 2021 in relation to a trade of which the business has suffered reduced activity, capacity or demand in that period due to the adverse effect on the business of coronavirus (COVID-19) disease.

The [Further Treasury Direction made under Sections 71 and 76 of the Coronavirus Act 2020](#) is available from gov.uk

Social Security Benefit and Pension Up-rating 2021/22

Statement made on 25 November 2020 by the Secretary of State for Works and Pensions

I have concluded my statutory annual review of benefit and State Pension rates. The new rates will apply in the tax year 2021/22, and come into effect on 12 April 2021. The Social Security (Up-rating of Benefits) Act 2020 enables me to increase the basic and new State Pensions and the Standard Minimum Guarantee in Pension Credit by providing a discretion to increase them for one year even though there has been no growth in earnings.

State pensions will be increased by 2.5%, in line with the Government's manifesto commitment. The full rate of the new State Pension will now be worth £179.60 per week. The Standard Minimum Guarantee in Pension Credit will also increase by the same cash amount as the basic State Pension, rising by 1.9%.

All other benefits will be increased in line with CPI - which was 0.5% in the relevant reference period. This includes working-age benefits, benefits to help with additional needs arising from disability, carers' benefits, pensioner premiums in income-related benefits, Statutory Payments, and Additional State Pension.

Separate to the uprating review, I can confirm that the increase to Local Housing Allowance rates in April this year will be maintained in cash terms in 2021/22. The assumption in the forecast is that rates will remain at these levels in future years, subject to the Secretary of State reviewing annually in the usual way.

Some of these benefits are devolved to Scotland; in respect of these, the Scottish Government will bring forward corresponding legislation in the Scottish Parliament.

The statutory annual review is separate from the temporary £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit, which was announced by the Chancellor as a temporary measure in March 2020, and enacted for one year under different legislation to support those facing the most financial disruption as a result of the public health emergency. As the Government has done throughout this crisis, it will continue to assess how best to support low-income families, which is why we will look at the economic and health context in the new year.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-11-25/hcws600>

Child maintenance: how we work out payments: leaflet

Updated 25 November 2020

This leaflet explains how the Child Maintenance Service works out how much child maintenance a paying parent must pay.

A step-by-step guide to how child maintenance is worked out by the Child Maintenance Service. It tells you the information used and the things that can affect how it's worked out.

You will only get a printed copy of this guidance from the Child Maintenance Service if they are dealing with your case. If this applies to you and you've not received your copy, please [contact the Child Maintenance Service](#).

Find out more about [child maintenance](#).

www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-we-work-out-child-maintenance

Child maintenance: receiving payments through the Child Maintenance Service: leaflet

Updated 25 November 2020

This leaflet explains how you will receive child maintenance if you have a Collect & Pay arrangement with the Child Maintenance Service.

Collect & Pay is when we work out an amount of child maintenance which the paying parent legally has to pay. We then collect payments from them and pass them on to the receiving parent.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/receiving-child-maintenance-via-the-child-maintenance-service

Touchbase

Roundup of recent DWP announcements 27 November 2020



Attendance Allowance update

Attendance Allowance (AA) review processes are reverting to previous arrangements, after changes were made in response to COVID-19.

The first customers to be affected will be those whose AA awards expire on or after 8 March 2021. These customers will receive renewal packs in the coming weeks and will have the normal 20 week period to complete and return their packs prior to their award expiring.

Awards that were due to expire before 8 March 2021 will be automatically extended and will continue to receive payments until they are subject to a review at a later date.

If someone claiming AA has a change of circumstances they still need to inform DWP.

Find out more

Self-Isolation Payments

People who are receiving certain benefits could be eligible for a payment of £500 if they have been told to self-isolate, are unable to work from home, and will lose income as a result of self-isolating.

Eligible benefits include Universal Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support and Pension Credit. Other eligibility rules apply. People who are not eligible but who will still face hardship as a result of having to self-isolate may be able to get a discretionary payment instead, depending on their individual circumstances.

Neither self-isolation support payments nor discretionary payments will affect DWP benefit eligibility or payments.

Read more on eligibility criteria and how to apply where you live:

Self-Isolation Support Grant

Letters sent to UK nationals to prepare for the Brexit transition

The Government has sent out 365,000 letters to UK State Pensioners and benefit recipients living in the EU to advise them to take action to prepare for the end of the UK transition. The letters included advice on how to register for residency and healthcare and also confirmed recipients would continue to receive their State Pensions as they do now.

The UK Government has allocated £3 million for charities and community voluntary organisations across Europe to assist UK Nationals who may need additional help to register or apply to protect their residency rights. This includes potentially at-risk groups, such as pensioners and disabled people and those living in remote areas or who have mobility difficulties.

UK Nationals can find the most up to date information on actions they may need to take on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) for their country.

Recently updated DWP Guidance

Benefit overpayment recovery: staff guide

Last updated 26 November 2020

A DWP staff guide about how overpayments of benefits are recovered.

This guide is for DWP staff. It explains how overpayments of benefits administered by DWP are recovered, including advances of benefits and hardship payments.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-overpayment-recovery-staff-guide>



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Decision makers' guide: Vol 1: Decision making and appeals: staff guide

Last updated 26 November 2020

This guidance is for DWP staff who make decisions about benefits and pensions. It helps them make decisions that are accurate and consistent.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/decision-makers-guide-vol-1-decision-making-and-appeals-staff-guide>

Decision makers' guide: Vol 2: International subjects: staff guide

Last updated 26 November 2020

Guidance for DWP decision makers on decision making and appeals.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/decision-makers-guide-vol-2-international-subjects-staff-guide>

The introduction of Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment affects the guidance DWP staff use.

DWP decision makers now use [Advice for decision making](#) (instead of the DMG) for decisions that involve:

- Universal Credit
- Personal Independence Payment
- contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance and contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance for [people who are eligible for Universal Credit](#)



Ask an immigration question for a solution to your immigration problem

- Do you have an immigration problem?
- Need a legal solution to an immigration question?
- Want a fresh new strategic expert approach to an immigration dilemma?
- Need friendly and focused legal representation?

Email your immigration question to Alice Muzira, Aurex Legal Solicitors, alice.muzira@aurexlegal.co.uk, providing your name and contact telephone number for a same day response.

[Source](#)

New regulations to wipe free movement from the statute book



We look forward to reading this out on the next podcast: the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020 (Consequential, Saving, Transitional and Transitory Provisions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 ([SI 2020 No. 1309](#)).

These new regulations follow hard on the heels of the [Immigration Act 2020](#). Where that Act provides for the high-level repeal of EU free movement laws, these regulations make dozens of changes to the plumbing of the immigration system to bring EU migrants fully within its scope. (But they should not affect existing residents with EU Settlement Scheme status, nor Irish citizens full stop.)

For example, there are various amendments to the laws on [getting married in the UK](#) as a foreign national and on [sham marriage investigations](#). Like non-EU citizens today, EU citizens will in future have to give notice at a Register Office if they wish to get married in the UK (even to a British citizen). But as the explanatory memo explains, "Irish citizens and individuals with status under the EUSS (or who have a pending application under the EUSS submitted by the deadline of 30 June 2021) will continue to be exempt". The change will nonetheless cost the Church of England [up to £1.9 million](#) over ten years in lost fees from Reading of the Banns, an alternative to Register Office notification that will now be closed to many Anglican couples.

Article dated 23rd November [here](#)

The government's plan to introduce a minimum award length for personal independence payment (PIP) has been delayed until April 2021, the Office for Budget Responsibility has said.

OBR Economic Outlook reports that delay is due to COVID-19 pandemic limiting the DWP's ability to conduct PIP assessments

First outlined in the [Queen's Speech December 2019](#) and then confirmed in [Budget 2020](#), the government had said that - 'We are introducing a minimum award length for the personal independence payment because we know that the assessment process can be burdensome for some disabled people and we want the benefit system to work better for those it supports. We will ensure no one will be reassessed for at least 18 months from their last review, unless they tell us their needs have changed. This will provide greater certainty for those in receipt of PIP.'

However, in its [Economic and fiscal outlook - November 2020](#) (at paragraph A.37) the OBR highlights that the original timescale for the roll-out of the change has been pushed back -

'... this Budget 2020 measure has been delayed to April 2021 from June 2020. The delay is due to the pandemic limiting DWP's ability to conduct PIP assessments.'

Elsewhere, at paragraph 3.98 of the report, the OBR also highlights further predicted impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on disability benefit spending - that includes spending on disability living allowance (DLA), PIP and attendance allowance - advising that -

'We have revised spending up by £0.9 billion a year on average [between 3 and 4 per cent of its annual forecast spending], reflecting higher caseloads, partly related to the assumed increases in labour market inactivity and associated health conditions as a result of the pandemic.'

These could be directly related to the virus (e.g. 'long covid') or indirectly related (e.g. increased prevalence of mental health conditions due to economic conditions or lockdowns).'

NB - the OBR also confirms that the migration of DLA claimants to PIP has been delayed by a further two years as a consequence of the pandemic and will now mean that migration is expected to be complete by 2025, nine years behind the original schedule.

For more information, see [Economic and fiscal outlook - November 2020](#) from obr.uk

The government has 'no plans' to change the benefit cap grace period, the Minister for Employment Mims Davies has confirmed.

Minister confirms that, as at August 2020, there were more than 160,000 households with a grace period due to end in December 2020, but clarifies that not all of these will necessarily be in scope of the cap

Responding to a written question about the number of universal credit claimants who are currently within a nine-month benefit cap grace period, that is due to end in December 2020, Ms Davies clarified that -

'As at August 2020, there were 160,300 universal credit households with a grace period due to end in December 2020. The grace period is applied irrespective of whether or not the household has sufficient benefit income to be in scope for the cap. This ensures that a claimant will benefit from the grace period exemption should any change of circumstances bring them into the scope of the cap during that period. This does not necessarily mean that all of these claimants will actually be capped in December when their grace period ends.'

Pressed on what plans the Department had to amend the length of the benefit cap grace period - that applies if a household has a sustained work record with monthly earnings of at least £604 for the past year prior to earnings falling below that level - Ms Davies added -

'There are currently no plans to change the benefit cap grace period. The benefit cap provides fairness for hard-working taxpaying households, whilst providing a reasonable safety net of support for the most vulnerable.'

[Ms Davies' written answer](#) is available from parliament.uk

Thousands of disabled people could be eligible for £4,600 a year – in tax credits

If you have a disability and are receiving Personal Independence Payment, then you could be eligible for a bonus – from the taxman (or woman).

If you are still able to work, you might also be able to get the disability element of Working Tax Credit, totalling up to £3,220 a year, or up to £4,610 if your disability is severe.

Gov.uk's tax calculator can help you find out how much you could receive – [you can do it here](#).

It is true that tax credits have been replaced by Universal Credit for most people, so usually you can only make a new claim for tax credits if you also receive the severe disability premium, are entitled to it, or if this was the case within the past month.

If you can't make a new claim for tax credits, you may still be able to apply for Universal Credit (or Pension Credit if you and your partner are State Pension age or over).

You have nothing to lose.



Send your fit note for your ESA claim

You'll be told during your application for [Employment and Support Allowance \(ESA\)](#) or 'new style' ESA, when you need to send fit notes (sometimes called 'sick notes' or a 'statement of fitness for work').

You'll need:

- your fit note signed by your doctor
- your National Insurance number
- a phone or tablet with a camera, or a computer with a saved photo or copy of your fit note

You do not need to send a fit note if you cannot work while you are self-isolating because of coronavirus (COVID-19).

[Start now](#)

You can post your fit note. If you need to send any other medical evidence, you must post it.

Send your fit note or other medical evidence to:

Freepost DWP ESA 26

Benefit cap: number of households capped to August 2020

Published 26 November 2020

Statistics on households that have had their benefits capped between 15 April 2013 and August 2020.

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/benefit-cap-number-of-households-capped-to-august-2020

This is the [Spending Review](#) 2020 update in full.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered his Spending Review to Parliament on 25 November 2020.

Further supporting and related documents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents>

Find out about money taken off your Universal Credit payment

Help to understand debts and deductions taken from Universal Credit payments and who to contact about your debts and deductions if you're struggling financially.

Universal Credit can take money off your payment if you have a debt. You will see this on your Universal Credit statement.

To find your statement, sign into your online account and go to 'Payments'. On your statement, look for 'What we take off – deductions'.

Who to contact about money taken off your payment

This depends on what the deduction is for. [Find out who to contact](#).

Types of debt

Advance payments

This is your repayment of a Universal Credit [advance](#).

Universal Credit overpayment

This is when you have been paid too much Universal Credit. To find out more about your overpayment, sign into your online Universal Credit account. Go to your journal and look for a message about overpayments.

If you believe you have been overpaid but have not heard from Universal Credit, you need to contact Universal Credit to tell them about this.

Benefit overpayment

This is when you have been paid too much for any benefit other than Universal Credit. It includes Tax Credit and housing benefit overpayments.

Penalties can be added to a benefit overpayment.

If you have been overpaid, you will have a journal message or letter explaining what the overpayment is for.

If you believe you have been overpaid but have not heard from DWP, you must [report it immediately](#). If not, you may be prosecuted or have to pay a penalty.

Recoverable hardship payment

You can apply for a hardship payment if your Universal Credit payment has been reduced because of a fraud penalty or sanction.

You will need to pay this back once your fraud penalty or sanction has ended. When the amount you pay back has been agreed it cannot be changed.

Budgeting and crisis loan repayment

This is your repayment of a [budgeting or crisis loan](#). How much you pay back is agreed at the time you accept the loan.

Other debts you owe – 'third party deductions'

Third party deductions are when money is taken off your Universal Credit to pay your debts for things including:

- utilities, like electricity, gas and water
- Council Tax
- child maintenance
- rent
- service charges
- court fines

Only 3 third party deductions can be taken at any one time.

Universal Credit will send you a message in your online journal when a third party deduction starts.

How much will be taken off your Universal Credit payment

Universal Credit calculate the amount taken from your payment at the end of every assessment period (one calendar month).

The amount taken off may change if your:

- earnings change
- other benefits change

It is not possible to tell how much will be taken before this calculation takes place.

Normally the most that can be taken from your payment is 30% of your [Universal Credit Standard Allowance](#). This is the basic amount you are entitled to, before money for things like childcare and housing costs are added.

You may have more than 30% of your Standard Allowance taken off if you pay a 'last resort deduction'. A 'last resort deduction' helps to prevent you from being evicted or having your utilities cut off. It is paid directly to the person or organisation you owe money to.

What to do if you're struggling to repay your debt

If you're struggling, you can ask for a financial hardship decision to reduce the amount of benefit debt you pay.

You may be considered for this if you have money taken from your Universal Credit for:

- benefit debt
- Budgeting Loan and Crisis Loan repayment
- advances
- rent arrears (if they're taken at a rate greater than 10% of the standard allowance)

If a decision is made to reduce the amount you pay, it will be applied automatically to your next Universal Credit assessment period.

Find out [who to contact about money taken off your Universal Credit payment](#).



How do I challenge a Universal Credit (UC) decision?

Mandatory reconsideration

If you think a decision made about your Universal Credit (UC) entitlement is wrong, you can contact Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and ask them to look at the decision again, explaining why you think it is wrong. This is called '**mandatory reconsideration**'.

This could be because you were:

- unhappy with a decision following your Work Capability Assessment
- sanctioned when you shouldn't have been
- paid the wrong amount or refused universal credit when you should be allowed to claim

There are four ways to ask the DWP for a mandatory reconsideration:

- Write a message in your online Universal Credit account.
- Write a letter (send it to the address on the decision letter). If you send in a letter, make sure you keep a copy and send it by recorded delivery so you can prove you sent the letter in time.
- Fill out a **CRMR1 mandatory reconsideration form**.
- Call the DWP if you're close to the deadline. Universal Credit helpline Telephone: 0800 328 5644

You will need to include the following information when you ask for a Universal Credit mandatory reconsideration:

- The date of the original decision.
- The specific reasons you disagree with the DWP's decision.
- Your name, address and National Insurance number.
- Any supporting evidence you have to back up your reasons for disagreeing with the decision.

If your UC claim has been closed, you will not be able to leave messages in your journal. If you want to challenge a decision on a closed claim (including the decision to close the claim), you will need to call the DWP helpline 0800 328 5644 and ask for the address to which to send your written request for mandatory reconsideration. You can **use the Challenge a decision made by the Department for Work and Pensions form to complete your request**. Make sure you keep a copy of the form you send.

What to do if you have missed your mandatory reconsideration deadline

You are expected to have asked for a mandatory reconsideration within one month of the decision date.

However, you may be able to ask for a mandatory reconsideration after the month deadline if:

- You have a good reason for the delay.
- You asked for a mandatory reconsideration as soon as possible, and the decision date was less than 13 months ago.

Examples of a good reason for being late:

- Your partner or relative has been ill.
- You have been mentally or physically unwell.
- You have had problems receiving post at your address.

You will need to contact the DWP through your Universal Credit online account, by letter or over the phone to explain why you have missed your mandatory reconsideration deadline.

The DWP can still refuse your application if it's late, but if you applied within 13 months of the date on your decision letter, you could appeal their decision at a tribunal.

You will receive a '**mandatory reconsideration notice**' in response. The decision may be changed or you may receive an explanation of why it remains the same.

If you still think the decision is wrong after receiving the mandatory reconsideration notice, you can make an appeal to a tribunal. This means that someone independent of the DWP will look at the decision and if they think it is wrong they can change it.

Appeal

You will be expected to have followed the mandatory reconsideration process before appealing. You will be asked for the mandatory reconsideration notice or details from it.

The quickest way to appeal is to **fill in an online appeal form** on GOV.UK.

You'll need:

- your National Insurance number
- details of anyone helping with your appeal
- your mandatory reconsideration notice

If you can't use the online form and want to appeal by post, you'll need to **fill in an SCS1 form** on GOV.UK. You can fill in the form online before you print it, or print a blank form and fill it in by hand.

You have one month from the date of the mandatory reconsideration notice to submit your appeal. If you have missed this deadline, you can still appeal but you will need to explain why your appeal is late. There is a risk that it might not be allowed to go ahead.

Your mandatory reconsideration notice will be uploaded on to your journal. To send it with your appeal, you will need to print it off. If you don't have a printer, you might be able to use one at a library. If you manage your claim over the phone, you will need to call and ask for a copy of the mandatory reconsideration notice to be posted to you.

If your Universal Credit account has been closed, you might have difficulty getting a copy of your mandatory reconsideration notice. You should ask your local Jobcentre to give you a copy of the mandatory reconsideration notice.

If you do want to challenge a decision, you can get help with this by contacting a benefits adviser.