

Paid work is the best way to improve your family's future. Universal Credit will help thousands of families like yours to take their first steps into work.

It will provide the right incentives and support to meet your needs. It will also combine in and out of work benefits, making it easier for you to start work and stay in work.

Support for your children

Universal Credit will be paid as a single monthly payment. This includes amounts to help support your children.

The **child element** helps with the costs of bringing up a child. It is made up of two rates:

- one for your first child, and
- a lower rate for your second and any subsequent children.

Universal Credit will include this element until:

- the end of August following each child's 16th birthday, or
- the end of August after their 19th birthday for each child still living at home and taking a non-advanced course at school or college, or taking part in approved training.

The **disabled child addition** helps with the extra costs of bringing up a disabled child. The disabled child addition will be paid at either a lower or higher rate:

- the **lower rate** – for a child who receives any rate of either component of DLA (mobility or care) except the highest rate of the care component; a Personal Independence Payment, or
- the **higher rate** – for a child who receives the highest rate of the care component of DLA; the enhanced rate of the Personal Independence Payment daily living component; or a child who is registered blind.

The **childcare cost element** helps you to pay for registered childcare while you are working. You will be able to claim back 70% of your actual paid out childcare costs. In any month this payment is capped so you could receive a maximum childcare payment of £532.29 for one child or £912.50 for two or more children.

You can get the childcare costs element as soon as you are working. It can start up to a month before you begin work if you have a job offer. It can also run on for up to two months after your job finishes. This will help you to maintain childcare as you move between jobs.

Free school meals and milk

If your family is receiving Universal Credit between April 2013 and March 2014 you will be entitled to free school meals for your children. You may also be entitled to free milk if your child attends a school where milk is provided. You should make a claim for free school meals to your school or local authority.

Child Benefit

Child Benefit will continue to be paid separately and will not affect Universal Credit.

Child maintenance

If you receive child maintenance payments this will not affect your Universal Credit payments.

Universal Credit for parents

If you are a lone parent, or the nominated responsible carer in a couple, with a child under the age of five you won't be asked to work in return for your Universal Credit. When your child reaches the age of one you will be asked to attend interviews to discuss plans for a future move into work. If you do choose to work, Universal Credit will help you with your registered childcare costs.

When your youngest child reaches five (or an older child where the child has exceptional care needs), you will be expected to look for work in line with your caring responsibilities, for example during your child's school hours.

When your youngest child reaches 13, you will normally be expected to look for full time work. If agreed by your adviser, your requirements may be adjusted to take into account your caring responsibilities.

Making it easier for you to work

Universal Credit will help you to combine working with being a parent. Universal Credit makes it easier to move into work, even if it's just for a few hours a week. You will simply need to let DWP know if you start a job and your Universal Credit payment will be adjusted accordingly. Under Universal Credit, you will keep more of the money you earn.

When you start work, your employer may enrol you into a workplace pension. If you stay enrolled, you will begin to save for your future as you earn. This means extra money, because your employer pays in each month too. Your Universal Credit payment won't be affected by your workplace pension.

When will this happen?

Universal Credit is being introduced gradually. The changes will affect people at different times, depending on the benefit they are claiming. You may need to claim a different benefit until Universal Credit is open to you.

The Universal Credit [online planning tool](#) is available through GOV.UK and can help you to prepare for making a claim to Universal Credit. You provide the answers to some basic questions and it will tell you how ready you are for Universal Credit. It will also provide advice on what you need to do next and the best sources of advice on offer. It will not tell you how much Universal Credit you will get as this will depend on your circumstances when you claim.



Universal Credit and free school meals (FSM)

Multi-page article

Updated: 18 April 2013

Universal Credit: aims

The government plans to introduce Universal Credit in order to simplify the benefits system, and to ensure that work pays. Universal Credit will replace the current system of means-tested out-of-work benefits, tax credits and housing benefits with a single benefit.

It aims to encourage people to work by allowing them to keep more of their income as they move into work, and by introducing a smoother and clearer reduction of benefits when they increase their earnings.

It will replace:

- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers' Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit

It will not replace:

- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

Timetable for introduction

The Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) **Welfare Reform Act** allows the government to gradually introduce Universal Credit between 2013 and 2017.

DWP have launched the **Universal Credit partner toolkit** on their website. The toolkit includes topic-based guides as well as an overview and frequently asked questions. The toolkit will be updated regularly to reflect the latest information.

Connected to this

Links

- [DWP Welfare Reform Act](#)
- [Social Security Advisory Committee](#)
- [Social Security Advisory Committee passported benefits](#)
- [Department for Work and Pensions - Universal Credit partner toolkit](#)