

Coronavirus update – benefit reviews and reassessments suspended

This temporary measure, effective from tomorrow, is being taken to reassure vulnerable people about the continuity of their benefits during the coronavirus outbreak and to ensure the Department's resources are focused on enabling access to financial support for new claimants. This follows on from a previous announcement to suspend all face-to-face assessments in order to safeguard potentially vulnerable claimants.

Work and Pensions Secretary of State Thérèse Coffey said:

“As this country ramps up its efforts to support people through coronavirus, we will do whatever it takes to protect claimants and our staff.

“We are automatically extending all awards and reassessments for health and disability benefits to provide that reassurance to those in receipt of them.”

What this means for claimants:

- There will be no new reviews or reassessments across all benefits for three months – this includes Universal Credit (UC), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance and the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit.
- As previously announced, face-to-face assessments for all sickness and disability benefits have been suspended for the next 3 months including for any new claims.
- For PIP, if an assessment has already taken place this will continue to be processed. If an assessment has been scheduled, claimants will be contacted by the assessment provider to discuss how this will be taken forward.
- For ESA and UC, claimants whose cases have been referred to the provider will be contacted to take this forward.

Additional information for claimants:

- The suspension will be kept under regular review and extended if necessary.
- If people experience a change in their needs they are still encouraged to contact the Department to ensure they are receiving the correct level of support.
- Where awards are due to expire, we will be extending end-dates so that claimants continue to receive financial support at their current rate during this period.

On Thursday (19 March) it was also announced people receiving benefits do not have to attend jobcentre appointments for at least 3 months. People will

continue to receive their benefits as normal, but all requirements to attend the jobcentre appointments in person are suspended.

People can still make applications for benefits online if they are eligible. Jobcentres remain open, and will continue to support people who are not able to use phones and online, including homeless people.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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