

# [Press release: Citizens Advice to provide support to Universal Credit claimants](#)

The support scheme will help claimants through every step of making a [Universal Credit](#) claim. It will offer people the comprehensive and practical support they need to get their first payment on time and be ready to manage it when it arrives.

[Universal Support](#) provides advice and assistance to help claimants manage their Universal Credit claim, with a focus on budgeting advice and digital support. Since 2017, Universal Support has been delivered by individual local authorities, funded by grants from DWP.

From April 2019 [Citizens Advice \(England and Wales\)](#) and [Citizens Advice Scotland](#) will take on the responsibility for delivering a strengthened Universal Support service, a move which will ensure a consistent and streamlined service for claimants across the country.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Esther McVey said:

Since becoming Secretary of State in January, I have listened to the concerns of claimants, constituents, charities, welfare organisations and colleagues and I have made significant changes to the system, like extra support for those with mental health conditions, more support for vulnerable young people and more support for families who look after other family members' children.

I have always said we will steer a new direction and work with partners to deliver vital services, and get Universal Credit right. The state cannot, and should not work in isolation and must reach out to work with independent, trusted organisations to get the best support to vulnerable people.

This brand new partnership with Citizens Advice will ensure everyone, and in particular the most vulnerable claimants, get the best possible support with their claim that is consistently administered throughout the country.

Citizens Advice are an independent and trusted organisation, who will support people as we continue the successful rollout of Universal Credit.

Gillian Guy, Chief Executive of Citizens Advice, said:

We offer independent and confidential advice to millions of people

every year, and have already helped nearly 150,000 people with Universal Credit. We've seen first-hand what can happen when people struggle to make a claim and their payments are delayed.

We welcome the opportunity to provide even more people with the help they need with Universal Credit, and deliver a consistent service through the Citizens Advice network across England and Wales.

Delivering this service will give us even greater insight into the Universal Credit system. We'll continue to share our evidence with the government to help make sure Universal Credit works for everyone.

Derek Mitchell, CEO of Citizens Advice Scotland, said:

In person through local CAB, by phone and online, our network offers top quality advice and support to people applying for Universal Credit in Scotland. This announcement brings an opportunity to further enhance the support we provide, and we are pleased that the impact Universal Credit has on potential applicants – and on local CAB services in Scotland – has been recognised.

We expect the numbers of people in need of independent advice on Universal Credit applications will continue to increase, and delivering this service will help us as we do all we can to meet that need. We will continue the work that the Citizens Advice network in Scotland has always done: supporting individuals to resolve the problems they face, and advocating nationally to address the root causes of those problems.

Universal Credit means monthly payments and housing costs are paid directly to claimants and requires people to be responsible for managing their monthly payments and bills.

Universal Support currently helps with digital support, such as using a computer to make or maintain their claim, and assistance in budgeting and managing their finances.

DWP will enter into the new partnership with Citizens Advice immediately, and they will run their developing service alongside local authorities until 31 March 2019, when they will deliver the full service solely from April 2019.

DWP will provide £39 million of funding from April 2019 to Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland to provide this service. DWP will fund Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland a further £12 million to set up delivery in the run up to April 2019 to ensure a smooth transition to the new delivery model. This funding is from Universal Support's £200 million budget, which was launched in 2015.

Last year, the Citizens Advice network in England and Wales helped more than 2.6 million people through their face-to-face, phone and online advice services. They are located in over 2,500 locations and have over 29,000 trained volunteers and paid staff. Citizens Advice Scotland helped over 295,000 people, has over 3,200 staff and volunteers, and operates from almost 300 locations.

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