

Statement from DWP on coronavirus (COVID-19)

The department is fully prepared for all eventualities and has conducted extensive planning against reasonable worst case scenarios. I have been in discussions with the chancellor and will continue to work across government to prepare.

If claimants cannot attend their jobcentre appointment in person because of self-isolation, work coaches can exercise discretion, so claimants should engage with them and they will not be sanctioned – as long they let us know before the appointment.

And as my Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister set out last week ‘nobody should be penalised for doing the right thing’.

That’s why the government’s safety net also extends to those who are self-employed or who work in the gig-economy. They can apply for Universal Credit or new-style ESA. Advances are available for Universal Credit immediately.

Madame Deputy Speaker, these are exceptional circumstances and we will support workers to do the right thing for their health and the protection of public health.