

Increase to Working Tax Credits – what this means



As part of a [number of measures](#) to support the country during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the basic element of Working Tax Credit has been increased by £1,045 to £3,040 from 6 April 2020 until 5 April 2021.

The amount a claimant or household will benefit from will depend on their circumstances, including their level of household income. But the increase could mean up to an extra £20 each week.

The government is also uprating Child Benefit, other tax credits rates and thresholds, and Guardian's Allowance by 1.7% with effect from 6 April 2020. You can read the [full list of Rates and Allowances](#).

These increases came into effect on the 6 April, but individual payment dates will vary depending on circumstances.

You don't have to take any action and you will receive any increased payments automatically.

Use the [tax credits calculator](#) to get an estimate of how much you could get in tax credits in a 4-week period.

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UK launches whole genome sequence alliance to map spread of coronavirus

- Government and scientific community back new genome sequencing consortium to map spread of COVID-19
- £20 million investment will allow scientists and clinicians to unlock secrets of the disease
- the genetic code could arm public health agencies and clinicians with a unique, cutting-edge tool to combat COVID-19

The government and the UK's Chief Scientific Adviser have today (Monday 23 March) backed the UK's leading clinicians and scientists to map how COVID-19 spreads and behaves by using whole genome sequencing. Through a £20 million investment, the consortium will look for breakthroughs that help the UK respond to this and future pandemics, and save lives.

COVID-19 Genomics UK Consortium – comprised of the NHS, Public Health Agencies, Wellcome Sanger Institute, and numerous academic institutions – will deliver large scale, rapid sequencing of the cause of the disease and share intelligence with hospitals, regional NHS centres and the government.

Samples from patients with confirmed cases of COVID-19 will be sent to a network of sequencing centres which currently includes Belfast, Birmingham, Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Norwich, Nottingham, Oxford and Sheffield.

The Wellcome Sanger Institute, one of the world's most advanced centres of genomes and data, will collaborate with expert groups across the country to analyse the genetic code of COVID-19 samples circulating in the UK and in doing so, give public health agencies and clinicians a unique, cutting-edge tool to combat the virus.

By looking at the whole virus genome in people who have had confirmed cases of COVID-19, scientists can monitor changes in the virus at a national scale to understand how the virus is spreading and whether different strains are emerging. This will help clinical care of patients and save lives.

Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance said:

Genomic sequencing will help us understand COVID-19 and its spread. It can also help guide treatments in the future and see the impact of interventions.

The UK is one of the world's leading destinations for genomics research and development, and I am confident that our best minds, working as part of this consortium, will make vital breakthroughs

to help us tackle this disease.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

At a critical moment in history, this new consortium will bring together the UK's brightest and best scientists to build our understanding of this pandemic, tackle the disease and ultimately, save lives.

As a government we are working tirelessly to do all we can to fight COVID-19 to protect as many lives and save as many jobs as possible.

The UK Consortium, supported by the government, including the NHS, Public Health England, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and Wellcome, will enable clinicians and public health teams to rapidly investigate clusters of cases in hospitals, care homes and the community, to understand how the virus is spread and implement appropriate infection control measures.

Professor Sharon Peacock, Director of the National Infection Service, Public Health England, said:

This virus is one of the biggest threats our nation has faced in recent times and crucial to helping us fight it is understanding how it is spreading. Harnessing innovative genome technologies will help us tease apart the complex picture of coronavirus spread in the UK, and rapidly evaluate ways to reduce the impact of this disease on our society.

Professor Sir Mike Stratton, Director of the Wellcome Sanger Institute, said:

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Sanger Institute will deploy its large-scale sequencing platform alongside regional sequencing centres to support UK Public Health Agencies, regional NHS centres and several Universities to better understand the coronavirus outbreak in the UK.

Samples from substantial numbers of confirmed cases of COVID-19 will be whole genome sequenced and, employing the Sanger Institute's expertise in genomics and surveillance of infectious diseases, our researchers will collaborate with other leading groups across the country to analyse the data generated and work out how coronavirus is spreading in the UK. This will inform national and international strategies to control the pandemic and prevent further spread.

Sir Jeremy Farrar, Director of Wellcome, said:

By bringing together public health expertise from Public Health England and genomic science from the Wellcome Sanger Institute the UK can crack the code of this virus, and we should give everyone involved huge credit for that.

Rapid genome sequencing of COVID-19 will give us unparalleled insights into the spread, distribution and scale of the epidemic in the UK. The power of 21st century science to combat this pandemic is something that those going before us could not have dreamt of, and it is incumbent on us to do everything we can to first understand, and then limit, the impact of COVID-19.

Professor Fiona Watt, Executive Chair of the Medical Research Council, part of UK Research and Innovation said

The UK is a leader in cutting edge genome sequencing science. We are now applying specialist expertise in our fight to slow the spread of coronavirus and accelerate treatments for those affected.

The ambitious and coordinated response of our research community to the COVID-19 challenge is remarkable.

This investment and the findings from the consortium will help prepare the UK and the world for future pandemics.

UK Research and Innovation

UKRI works in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities, and government to create the best possible environment for research and innovation to flourish. We aim to maximise the contribution of each of our component parts, working individually and collectively. We work with our many partners to benefit everyone through knowledge, talent and ideas. Operating across the whole of the UK with a combined budget of more than £7 billion, UK Research and Innovation brings together the 7 research councils, Innovate UK and Research England.

Public Health England and the COVID-19 Genomics UK Consortium

Public Health England aims to address urgent threats to health in the 21st century. The organisation has been central to the national response to COVID-19, and has led this proposal to develop a national capability to sequence the causative virus and use this to inform public health interventions. The COVID-19 Genomics UK Consortium will be led by Sharon Peacock as a collaborative initiative to capture information on the virus and from patients so as to reduce the impact from the COVID-19 epidemic in the UK.

The Wellcome Sanger Institute

The Wellcome Sanger Institute is a world leading genomics research centre. We

undertake large-scale research that forms the foundations of knowledge in biology and medicine. We are open and collaborative; their data, results, tools and technologies are shared across the globe to advance science. Our ambition is vast – we take on projects that are not possible anywhere else. We use the power of genome sequencing to understand and harness the information in DNA. Funded by Wellcome, we have the freedom and support to push the boundaries of genomics. Our findings are used to improve health and to understand life on Earth.

Wellcome

Wellcome exists to improve health by helping great ideas to thrive. We support researchers, we take on big health challenges, we campaign for better science, and we help everyone get involved with science and health research. We are a politically and financially independent foundation.

[Coal Authority to coordinate tip safety work in Wales](#)

The Coal Authority is undertaking an urgent review of all coal tips throughout Wales to assess any risk posed to people or property.

We are working closely with the Welsh Local Government Association, local authorities and Natural Resources Wales and good progress is being made.

Lisa Pinney, Chief Executive at the Coal Authority, said:

We're working quickly to collect data from our partners and, based on the information assessed and categorised so far, we've drawn up an inspection schedule for the coal tips in Wales.

These inspections are already taking place and drone flights have also been arranged for some of the high-priority sites.

Collating more information about the surrounding areas enables us to compile a comprehensive spatial database on Welsh coal tips.

We'll be able to use this to ensure a consistent approach is applied to understanding and managing risk at these historical coal mining sites in the future.

We're pleased that all relevant agencies are working together to share resources and we are, as always, happy to help and support others wherever we can.

We also understand the concerns of the local communities affected in Wales and we want to assure them that the key focus of this work is to keep people safe and provide peace of mind.

[Read more about the review of historical spoil tip sites in Wales](#)

[VMD incoming post](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Request to notify the VMD if you are planning to send items through the post.

[Coronavirus – Business support to launch from today](#)

- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme will provide government-backed loans of up to £5 million to small and medium businesses.
- The Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility will provide a quick and cost-effective way to raise working capital for those large firms who need it.
- A business information campaign has launched to ensure that businesses are aware of support available.

Businesses will be able to access government support from today (Monday 23 March) to keep operating in the face of the global economic emergency brought on by coronavirus. Details of two new loan schemes are being confirmed and an information campaign launched so that businesses know how to get help.

More than £330 billion of loans and guarantees to help firms continue operating will be available for applications from the two schemes launching today – as the government delivers on its commitment to do everything it can to support business and manage cashflows during this difficult time.

For small and medium sized businesses, the new Coronavirus Business

Interruption Loan Scheme is now available for applications. This scheme will help any viable business with a turnover of up to £45m to access government-backed finance of up to £5 million. Interest payments and any lender-levied fees for businesses will be covered by the Government for an initial period of up to twelve months.

The government will provide lenders with a guarantee of 80% on each facility to give lenders further confidence in continuing to provide finance to SMEs. The scheme is available through more than 40 accredited lenders, which are listed on the British Business Bank website.

The Bank of England's new lending facility for larger firms – the Covid Corporate Financing Facility – will also be open for applications to participate from this morning. By purchasing short-term corporate debt – known as commercial paper – the scheme provides a quick and cost-effective way to raise working capital for companies who are fundamentally strong but are experiencing severe disruption to cashflows, helping businesses across a range of sectors to pay wages and suppliers. The scheme is open to firms that can demonstrate that they were in sound financial health prior to the impact of Coronavirus. Companies who wish to use the scheme do not need to have issued commercial paper before.

A government information campaign has also launched today to ensure businesses are aware of the support available to them and how to access it. In addition to a new central website, the campaign will use media channels including radio, social media and television to reach businesses eligible for help.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

We are working round the clock to do whatever it takes to protect our people and businesses. That means that we are not only taking unprecedented action but doing so at unprecedented speed, because we know that businesses and their employees need help now.

Business Secretary, Alok Sharma, said:

We know that businesses are in urgent need of access to funding during these unprecedented times. The Business Interruption Scheme will make it easier for banks to lend and businesses to borrow. This will ensure that credit keeps flowing to where it is needed, when it is needed.

Bank of England Governor, Andrew Bailey, said:

The Bank of England has taken a number of steps in recent weeks to support the UK economy through the economic shock caused by covid-19. On Monday a new lending scheme, the Covid Corporate

Financing Facility, will open to help businesses manage through this period of uncertainty. Combined with steps taken by the Government, this will help companies through this difficult time and support the needs of the people of this country.

This builds on the Chancellor's announcement on Friday of further support for firms and employees, meaning that businesses should have the access to the funds they need during this difficult period. Further measures will be announced to ensure larger and medium sized businesses will be able to access the credit they need.

Further information

- Information on the Covid Corporate Financing Facility, including which lenders to contact, is [available on Bank of England's website](#) and will be updated in the course of Monday 23 March. Businesses can talk to their lenders from the start of the day about accessing these loans.
- Information on the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan is [available through the British Business Bank](#). Interest and fees on the loans will be paid by the government the first twelve months, making them interest free to customers. This period may be shorter for firms in the fishery, aquaculture and agriculture sectors.
- These support schemes sit alongside the announcement by the Chancellor on Friday of a Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme under which will provide a grant to employers to keep their workers on rather than make them redundant. Salaries will be paid at 80% of their current level up to a maximum of £2,500. These grants will be available by the end of April and in the meantime £30bn of cash flow relief has been provided through the deferment of VAT bills.
- The Chancellor's statement of 20 March 2020 is [available here](#)
- The new business information campaign has gone live with [updated information available here](#).