

Biggest number of new Universal Credit claims paid in a single day

Press release

More than 135,000 new claims were made to Universal Credit on 30 and 31 March 2020. People who claimed on these two days will receive payments today.



Of the eligible claims, around 93% have been paid in full and on time. Where people haven't been paid, it is often due to the claimant needing to provide information, such as a correct bank number, and staff will attempt to contact claimants to fill in any blanks.

Since the pandemic began, around 1.8 million claims have been made to Universal Credit and almost 700,000 advance payments made to people.

Secretary of State Therese Coffey said:

Five weeks ago today, more than 135,000 people made a claim to Universal Credit in just over 48 hours – more than we usually have a month.

Our hero workforce here at Department for Work and Pensions has been working flat out to process claims. Just this week we are paying more than £200 million to around 300,000 households who made their claim at the end of March.

The system has proved itself in the face of unprecedented demand over the last few weeks and scrutiny over the last few years.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

Follow DWP on:

Published 6 May 2020

[New reagent available to support global diagnostic testing of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

The reagent is intended to be used in tests that confirm whether an individual is currently infected with the virus.

The reagent can be used as a positive control for the testing systems used to detect the presence of COVID-19. A positive control is included in tests by means of a sample that contains a known amount of the coronavirus genetic material. This acts as a confirmatory sample that assures the test is working correctly.

The reagent is non-infectious genetic material from SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic. An initial batch of 1,500 vials is available from the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC) with production of a further batch currently underway.

An expert centre of the MHRA, NIBSC has fast-tracked the development and production of this reagent. It is to be made freely available globally and will help more laboratories to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Nicola Rose, Head of the Division of Virology at the NIBSC, said:

Accurate diagnostic tests are a vital component in the fight against COVID-19.

This reagent is a great example of the NIBSC rapidly responding to public health needs in the response to COVID-19. The development of the research material is a prelude to the production of established standards and reference materials that laboratories can use in their own work on COVID-19, and we will continue to make producing this material an absolute priority.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

We have built the largest diagnostic testing industry in British history from scratch in a matter of weeks.

Thanks to our world-leading scientists and clinicians, we've now

been able to fast-track a new biological reagent to help the UK and countries across the globe carry out even more tests and develop ever more accurate ways of diagnosing the virus.

“It’s yet another example of the UK’s pioneering life sciences sector leading the way in the fight against coronavirus.

The rapid availability of biological materials is a key component in global response efforts to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak. The availability of the reagent also supports the Government’s new national testing strategy, which involves testing in NHS and PHE laboratories, as well as in a completely new network of labs, mobile testing units and home testing kits across the UK, to boost testing capacity.

Additional [SARS-CoV-2-related research materials](#) are also available from the NIBSC.

[A message of thanks from Peter Schofield](#)

News story

A personal message from Peter Schofield, Head of the Operational Delivery Profession (ODP).



As you’re aware, the UK is facing some of the most difficult times in recent history. Now, perhaps more than ever before, our citizens are becoming reliant on the vital public services that you deliver every day.

That we have come together as a community to meet these challenges head on makes me immensely proud of the Operational Delivery Profession. Despite significant changes to our working environment and practices you continue to

uphold our commitment to support, assist and protect every customer that depends on us.

That's why I wanted to make absolutely clear my appreciation of the work you do. In a period that is unsettling for all of us, you continue to provide reassurance by being there for the people that need us; often some of the most vulnerable people in society. Your work is recognised and thoroughly appreciated.

So I'd like to send you my personal and heartfelt thanks. It is clear to me from the responses I see every day from members of the profession that by working together, and by being there for each other, we can overcome the challenges we face.

Thank you again for making me so proud to be your Head of Profession.

Peter Schofield Operational Delivery Head of Profession; and Permanent Secretary of Department for Work and Pensions.

Published 6 May 2020

[Over 69,000 loans approved in the first day of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme](#)

News story

More than 69,000 Bounce Back Loans worth over £2 billion have been approved during the first 24 hours of the scheme, the Chancellor has announced.



More than 69,000 Bounce Back Loans worth over £2 billion have been approved during the first 24 hours of the scheme, the Chancellor has announced.

The seven largest lenders (Barclays, Danske, HSBC, Lloyds, RBS, Santander and Virgin Money) received more than 130,000 Bounce Back Loan Scheme applications on the first day of the scheme (4 May). Over 69,000 of these have been approved on the first day, and lenders are working hard to process and approve the rest as quickly as possible.

Bounce Back Loans are helping thousands of small firms get finance quickly at a low, affordable rate and with a 100% government-backed guarantee.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

Small businesses will be the driving force of our recovery from the pandemic, creating jobs and securing economic growth.

These loans will help them bounce back from this crisis – getting money fast – so it’s great to see more than 69,000 business benefitting in just the first day.

It’s vital this speedy progress continues in the days and weeks ahead.

The Bounce Back Loan scheme is one part of the government’s package of business support that includes: £8 billion to pay the wages of furloughed staff at 800,000 firms, nearly 700,000 business properties benefiting from £8.6 billion of business grants, generous VAT deferrals and scrapping businesses rates.

Published 6 May 2020

Business rates revaluation postponed

A revaluation of business rates will no longer take place in 2021 to help reduce uncertainty for firms affected by the impacts of coronavirus, Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP has announced.

Legislation had been introduced to bring the next revaluation forward by one year from 2022 to 2021, but following the recent economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic ministers want to ensure businesses have more certainty during this difficult time.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

We have listened to businesses and their concerns about the timing of the 2021 business rates revaluation and have acted to end that

uncertainty by postponing the change.

Now is the time for us to continue to focus on supporting businesses affected by the pandemic, including through our unprecedented package of almost £10 billion in business rates relief.

The government is continuing work on the fundamental review of business rates, with the key aims of reducing the overall burden on businesses, improving the current business rates system, and considering more fundamental changes in the medium-to-long term. The call for evidence for the review will be published in the coming months.

The postponement comes on top of the government's support package for business and workers during the economic emergency including:

- businesses are set to receive a [discount of almost £10 billion](#) on their rates bills this financial year in response to coronavirus, after the business rates retail discount was increased to 100% from 50% for 2020 to 2021
- over £12 billion for local authorities to deliver grants of up to £25,000 to eligible businesses. As of 3 May, over £8.6 billion has been paid out to over 697,000 business properties
- [protections for UK high street shops and other companies](#) under strain will be protected from aggressive rent collection and asked to pay what they can during the coronavirus pandemic
- the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) where small and large employers will be eligible to apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month, backdated to March 1 and available for at least 3 months. The first grants have been paid.
- a deferral of the next quarter of VAT payments for firms, until the end of June – representing a £30 billion injection into the economy
- a total of £330 billion worth of government backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses

The Non-Domestic Ratings (List) Bill 2019-20 was introduced to bring the date of the next revaluation forward from 2022 to 2021.

The government remains committed to frequent revaluations to ensure that business rates receive bills that more accurately reflect up-to-date property rental values.

A revaluation is the review of the rateable values of all business and other nondomestic property in England at a particular point in time.

Revaluations are done to maintain fairness in the system by redistributing the total amount payable in business rates, reflecting changes in the property market.

A property's business rates bill is based on a precise estimate of the premises' rental value. Business rate bills are calculated using specific valuation methods. It is important for rateable values to be regularly

updated through revaluations to ensure bills stay accurate. With changing circumstances as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the next revaluation will not go ahead in 2021.