

# Adviser Network Meeting

**COVID 19 Update:  
Social Security**

27 March 2020



# General

- No attendance at F2F appointments
- Relaxation of Deadlines
- Priority to process and pay

# Universal Credit

- 15-25 March – 23,000 new claims
  - 10x increase than normal
- Averaging 3,500 calls per day
  - 3x increase than normal
- Staff reduction 1/3

# Universal Credit

- F2F appointments cancelled
- Engagement Online  
or
- Telephony - where unable to use online
- Additional resources being moved to address demand

# Universal Credit

- If difficulty - first contact will be treated as date of claim.
- Exceptionally - F2F appointments to assist applications if not possible by internet/phone (kept under review)

# Universal Credit

- Surge in Applications
- Verification can be done by telephone
  - 2/3 questions to verify
- 0800 012 1331 – to book appt for call back
- UC calls on withheld number

# Universal Credit

- Staff reduction by 1/3 to date
- Therefore trying to save phone lines for those unable to claim online.
- May have to eventually reduce telephony
- Contingencies in place

# Universal Credit

- Resource added to journal responses to protect phones
- Request traffic directed online where possible to protect phones for vulnerable
- If you have a vulnerable client who cannot access via phone please call us!



# Universal Credit

- Most uploaded evidence will be accepted and trusted
  - Tenancy Agreements
  - Childcare arrangements
  - Etc.

# Universal Credit

- Big word for non English Speakers
- NASS NINO verification by phone

# Universal Credit

- INCREASED standard allowance  
**£20/wk**
- NO CHANGE re Income & Capital
- NO CHANGE - 5 week wait

# Universal Credit

- Claimant Commitment can be agreed online
- Can also be agreed via telephone
- Should reflect current circs
- Priority is applications and payments

# Universal Credit Advances

- Apply online once verified
- Can defer repayments for 3 months for hardship
  - Request by journal entry
  - Proof won't be necessary
- DfC: standard allowance increase likely covers advance repayment (£87/mth)

# Contingency Fund

- Does not have to be repaid
- Significant underspend – funding available
- Not possible to apply online:  
0800 587 2750

# Discretionary Support

- Additional Telephony/DM resources being added from non-priority areas
- Expanding grant criteria to include Covid 19 cases
- Initial application now possible online for Covid 19 living expenses

# Discretionary Support

Regs:

*the grant is to provide assistance in the form of living expenses where the **claimant or their immediate family is diagnosed with COVID-19 or is advised to self-isolate** in accordance with guidance published by the Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Well-being*



# Debt Recovery

- Operationally difficult to suspend without DWP
- Individual application on hardship grounds can be processed
- Suspension of recovery of all new UC Overpayments

# School Meals

- Education Authority to pay applicable families
- This will not be counted as income for benefit purposes

# WCAs - UC & ESA

- Covid 19 cases automatically in WRAC without need for Med Cert
- Non Covid 19 cases require med cert.
- IF not possible to obtain med cert - claims will still be processed

# WCAs - UC & ESA

- All F2F assessments cancelled
- Assessments conducted by paper and phone

# ESA

- Some difficulties by telephone
- Plans to get claim form online

# New Style JSA

- Priority to receive and process claims
- Can now apply online
- All JSA signing on appointments cancelled

# New Style JSA

- Telephone claimants will be phoned back to complete form
- Triage system in place to identify if contribution conditions satisfied
- If not signposted to UC

# PIP

- WSPs Extended
- F2F assessments suspended – replaced by Telephony assessments
- DfC to explore if telephony assessments can be recorded



# PIP

- Any award due to end in next 3 months will be extended
- Time limits to return forms extended – no disadvantage
- Committed to review further evidence received in relation to outstanding appeals

# Attendance Allowance

- Only a few fixed term awards due to expire – will also be extended
- If any missed let DfC know

# DLA - Children

- No invitations to claim PIP – 3 months
- Existing awards will continue until invited to claim PIP and decision made
- Therefore awards will not cease

# Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit

- Awards due to end in next 12 weeks will be extended

# Child Benefit

- No change but...
- Individuals with £60k+ income may wish to now claim CB if income has dropped

# Tax Credits/UC\*

- Surge of UC claimants with lay offs
- Those subsequently on 80% employee retention may be better off on WTC
- Can cancel UC claim online within 1<sup>st</sup> assessment period
- Can then contact HMRC for reinstatement of WTC/CTC

# Tax Credits/UC

- Onus on claimants to take action within 1<sup>st</sup> assessment period
- HMRC/DfC will not be proactive
- Advisers should do better off calc 1st

# Tax Credits/UC

- This is info received from DfC but to date Tax Credit adviser are saying that it is not possible to reinstate WTC
- Developing issue awaiting clarification



# Questions

- We will deal with questions raised ASAP
- Advice Line is open 9-5 for enquiries:  
**028 90 244401**
- Further updates to come