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
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 1st assessment period
• Can then contact HMRC for reinstatement of WTC/CTC
Tax Credits/UC

• Onus on claimants to take action within 1st 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