



**BRIEFING PAPER**

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# Coronavirus: Withdrawing crisis social security measures

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A photograph of a bright green sign with the text 'job centre plus' in white and yellow. The sign is set against a brick wall background.

*job  
centre  
plus*

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## Summary

This Commons Library briefing paper follows our previous [Coronavirus: Support for household finances](#) paper.<sup>1</sup> Particularly part 4, which described social security measures taken in response to the coronavirus crisis. Here, we outline the changes made by the Department for Work and Pensions, expectations for their withdrawal and the wider plans for recovery.

Many policy issues touched upon in this paper are fast-moving areas which are subject to change. **This paper should therefore be read as correct at the date of publication (25 September 2020).**

The coronavirus outbreak, alongside the public health response to it, has had profound effects on the UK economy, and will continue to do so. These impacts have had inevitable consequences for household finances, prompting the Government to make a series of changes to the rules and operation of the benefits system, among many other measures such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Most of these changes, such as increases to benefit levels and the suspensions of work-related conditionality, face-to-face meetings at Jobcentres and disability benefit reassessments, are intended to be temporary. Some measures have set expiry dates, while others remain under review.

Looking ahead, the Department for Work and Pensions will be planning for the replacement of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme with the Job Support Scheme, the extension of the Self Employment Income Support Scheme, and a second wave of the coronavirus. During this time, it will be managing a significantly higher number of benefit claimants than it anticipated at the beginning of the year, and attempting to meet the challenge of helping people back into work.

This paper is a resource to help understand the expected process of withdrawing crisis social security measures and is split into two parts.

**Part 1: Changes to social security during the crisis**, which summarises changes and discusses publicly available information on Department for Work and Pensions plans for recovery from the crisis.

**Part 2: Details of changes and expected withdrawal dates**, which provides two resources, designed to be regularly updated:

- An up-to-date table outlining major changes to social security made during the crisis, their expected withdrawal dates and current status.
- A rolling timeline of announcements relating to the withdrawal of social security changes and recovery planning.

We cover developing policy, so the contents of this paper will be updated periodically and should be considered current as of the date on the title page.

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<sup>1</sup> [Coronavirus: Support for household finances](#), Commons Library Briefing CBP-8894, 22 June 2020

# 1. Changes to social security during the crisis

A fuller discussion of changes to the social security system made in response to the coronavirus crisis can be found in part 4 of [Coronavirus: Support for household finances, Commons Library Briefing CBP-8894, 22 June 2020](#).

## 1.1 Summary of changes

The coronavirus crisis has created multiple challenges for the social security system. Benefits have been expected to support people to isolate, shield and to facilitate social distancing. Lockdown and the reduction in activity have had huge economic effects, closing down some sectors of the economy altogether. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) attracted more than 10 million claims, but significant new demand also fell on the existing benefits system.<sup>2</sup>

The need to keep staff and clients safe through social distancing combined with increased demand from mid-March to place huge operational pressures on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

In response, the Government made a number of changes, both through new regulations and operational decisions. Many of these are outlined in the table in part 2 and are discussed in more detail in part 4 of our previous briefing, along with calls made by campaigning groups and opposition politicians for further action.<sup>3</sup> Broadly speaking, these changes fell under several categories, including:

- **Increases to the level of some benefits** - claimants of Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit now receive around £20 more a week and the amount available in housing support has increased.
- **Measures to facilitate social distancing and support those who need to isolate or shield** – changes were made to Statutory Sick Pay, sickness and carer benefits in order to help people follow public health guidelines.
- **Temporary expansions of eligibility** – rules were relaxed for some groups such as prisoners on temporary release and claimants of tax credits whose employment was affected.
- **Changes to assessments and Jobcentre appointments to allow social distancing** – nearly all face-to-face interactions with Jobcentre staff and assessors were suspended, and disability benefit reassessments were paused.
- **Suspending some features of the system in order to redeploy staff into claim processing** – features of the system

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<sup>2</sup> [Coronavirus: Support for household finances](#), Commons Library Briefing CBP-8894, 22 June 2020, pp8-10

<sup>3</sup> [Coronavirus: Support for household finances](#), Commons Library Briefing CBP-8894, 22 June 2020

requiring significant staffing resource, such as applying deductions to benefits for certain kinds of debt, were suspended.

- **Suspending conditionality** – conditions such as meeting work-search requirements and attending regular interviews at jobcentres were switched off.

Most of these changes were explicitly designed to be temporary. As the number of Universal Credit declarations<sup>4</sup> declined from a peak in late March<sup>5</sup>, the first measures to be reversed were those made in order to redeploy staff to claim processing – conditionality and deductions to repay certain kinds of debt began to resume in July.

Other changes, such as those designed to help people to follow public health guidelines are set to continue into the Autumn and will remain under review in light of the health situation.

The status of major social security changes at the time of the latest update can be found in part 2 below.

By Autumn 2020 many measures have been, or are set to be, withdrawn. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in the number of new Covid-19 cases reported in the UK.

On 24 September 2020, the Chancellor acknowledged that “for at least the next six months the virus and restrictions are going to be a fact of our lives.” He went on to outline a “winter economy plan” including a Job Support Scheme to succeed the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.<sup>6</sup> This new scheme will open in November and will cover a proportion of wage costs where employees are working reduced hours.<sup>7</sup>

However, unlike the 20 March announcement of the CJRS, which included temporary increases to certain benefits<sup>8</sup>, the 24 September statement did not include any changes to social security, or extensions of existing social security measures.

Parliamentarians and campaigning groups have been pushing to extend measures. This has included calls to continue the suspension of the Minimum Income Floor in Universal Credit<sup>9</sup>, and think again about the reintroduction of work-related conditionality.<sup>10</sup> Others have called for further measures to be taken, such as an increase to Child Benefit and abolishing the benefit cap.<sup>11</sup>

One issue that has gained particular attention during this time is the status of the temporary increases to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit, which are expected to expire in April 2021. Parliamentarians

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<sup>4</sup> The first step in making a claim

<sup>5</sup> See [Coronavirus: Support for household finances](#), Commons Library Briefing CBP-8894, 22 June 2020, p.10

<sup>6</sup> [HC Deb 24 May 2020 c1153](#)

<sup>7</sup> HM Treasury, [Job Support Scheme policy paper](#), 24 September 2020

<sup>8</sup> HM Treasury, [The Chancellor Rishi Sunak provides an updated statement on coronavirus](#), 20 March 2020

<sup>9</sup> [HC Deb 25 September 2020 c1164](#)

<sup>10</sup> All Party Parliamentary Group on Universal Credit, [Cross-party coalition of MPs call for reforms to Universal Credit in wake of Covid pandemic](#), 10 September 2020

<sup>11</sup> Child Poverty Action Group, [Poverty in the pandemic: The impact of coronavirus on low-income families and children](#), 25 August 2020

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from across the House such as former Conservative Work and Pensions Secretary Stephen Crabb<sup>12</sup>, Labour's Neil Coyle<sup>13</sup> and the SNP's David Linden<sup>14</sup> have raised the issue. The Treasury Committee, in its 11 September report on the 'Economic impact of coronavirus: the challenges of recovery', argued:

The Government has raised Universal Credit and made it easier to access. However these changes are time-limited for a year. The Government should consider extending the measures increasing the generosity and accessibility of Universal Credit put in place in March 2020.<sup>15</sup>

The Resolution Foundation, in its response to the 24 September announcements, outlined the importance of benefit levels at a time of higher unemployment.

[A]s well as the likely rise in unemployment this winter hitting living standards, there is a risk of a further blow in the spring, because on current plans, policy is still set to change from supporting incomes to cutting them. In the early months of the crisis, changes in benefit policy – not least a very welcome £20 a week boost to tax credits and UC – meant that the incomes of the poorest were relatively well-protected. But this boost is currently only intended to go up to March 2021.

The planned withdrawal of the £20 a week (£1,040 a year) boost would be a significant mistake. It is inconceivable that the labour market will be in full health by April, even assuming a rapid vaccine roll-out: the crisis will by no accounts be 'over'. Second, there is the question of the basic adequacy of the benefit system. The £20 a week boost can be seen as a reflection of the fact that out-of-work support was not adequate when we entered the crisis and – without the boost – certainly won't be adequate in future. And third, ending the boost would mean withdrawing perhaps £8 billion from disposable incomes in 2021-22, precisely from those groups and places that need it most to support spending and the economic recovery in 2021-22.<sup>16</sup>

For discussion of how Universal Credit has fared during the crisis, and the debate around its future, see [Coronavirus: Universal Credit during the crisis](#), Commons Briefing Paper CBP-8999, 4 September 2020.

### 1.2 Plans for recovery

Looking forward, the DWP is preparing for a period of dramatically higher benefit caseloads that will create medium-term challenges even if the health situation continues to improve. The total number of people on Universal Credit in Great Britain rose from around 3 million in March to a provisional figure of nearly 5.6 million in August<sup>17</sup>. The claimant

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<sup>12</sup> See for example [HC Deb 24 September 2020 c1163](#), [HC Deb 15 September 2020 c173](#) and Huffington Post, [Exclusive: PM Warned Not To Cut Furlough Scheme By Ex-Work And Pensions Secretary](#), 31 August 2020

<sup>13</sup> [PQ 85056 10 September 2020](#)

<sup>14</sup> [HC Deb 15 September 2020 c159](#)

<sup>15</sup> Treasury Committee, [Eighth Report: Economic impact of coronavirus: the challenges of recovery](#), 11 September 2020, HC 271, para 80

<sup>16</sup> Resolution Foundation, [The Winter \(Economy Plan\) is coming](#), 25 September 2020

<sup>17</sup> Source: DWP Stat-xplore People on UC and Starts to UC datasets (accessed September 2020)

count for unemployment related benefits has also risen sharply since the crisis began.<sup>18</sup>

As the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self Employment Income Support Scheme are planned to wind down and end this Autumn, yet more still may make claims on the benefits system. The Office for Budget Responsibility's 'central scenario' assumes the unemployment rate will rise to 10.1% in 2021 (3.5 million people).<sup>19</sup>

### **Staffing changes and getting people back into work**

In the initial weeks of the crisis, plans were made for 10,000 staff to be redeployed within the DWP and from other departments in order to process the unprecedented numbers of claims<sup>20</sup>. Given the considerably higher predicted caseloads and difficult economic conditions, the Department also began to hire new staff.<sup>21</sup>

As the rate of new claims slowed, the planned focus returned to 'business as usual', redeploying staff to their previous jobs and helping new claimants back into work. All of this is made more challenging by social distancing requirements and the public health situation.

Discussing these issues at the Work and Pensions Committee on 23 April, Neil Couling, Change Director General at the DWP, said:

The complicating factor from a normal recession plan—and I have led various bits of the Department through a couple of recessions—is the social distancing. It constrains our ability to deploy recruits. We are going to have to use in the short term more digital means to help people into work and reach out across the sector to our colleagues who also provide help in this place to try to put some provision in place for individuals.

The task now is to disengage the emergency support we have put in and replace that with recruited staff and get the people who were doing important jobs before the pandemic back to doing those important jobs. The Minister for Disabled People was talking about the fewer numbers he has currently administering disability benefits. They have to go back to administering disability benefits.<sup>22</sup>

As plans for recovery developed, Thérèse Coffey, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, told the Lords Economic Affairs Committee on 2 June that the Department is looking at doubling the number of Work Coaches.

We have not quite got to that level of detail. I think we have about 13,500 now. There are different scenarios. I am not going to reveal all the different details, but we would probably be looking, in a worse-than-OBR-type scenario, at doubling that number. We still need to understand how the economy is going

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<sup>18</sup> See Figure 3 of DWP, [Alternative claimant count statistics January 2013 to May 2020](#), 16 July 2020

<sup>19</sup> Office for Budget Responsibility, [Fiscal sustainability report – July 2020](#), 14 July 2020, p.8

<sup>20</sup> [HC Deb 4 May 2020 c421](#) and Q118 in the Work and Pensions Committee oral session, [DWP's response to the coronavirus outbreak](#), 23 April 2020

<sup>21</sup> See Q72 in the Work and Pensions Committee oral session, [DWP's response to the coronavirus outbreak](#), 23 April 2020

<sup>22</sup> Neil Couling speaking in the Work and Pensions Committee oral session, [DWP's response to the coronavirus outbreak](#), 23 April 2020

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to reshape and bounce back, hopefully, or whether it is a slightly gentler glide back.

We anticipate that the interactions with universal credit claimants may be somewhat different from an era where we have had very low unemployment. Although vacancies are down, there are still vacancies.<sup>23</sup>

Since then, the Government has confirmed £895 million in additional funding to double the number of Work Coaches in order to deal with increased caseloads and 'enhance work search support.'<sup>24</sup> Neil Couling told the Work and Pensions Committee on 15 July that the Department plans to hire 4,500 of the new Work Coaches by the end of October.<sup>25</sup>

Describing the DWP's wider "Getting Britain Back to Work" plan, Mims Davies, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Employment outlined the other key elements of the package:

**Kickstart Scheme** – a £2b fund to create hundreds of thousands of high quality 6-month work placements aimed at those aged 16-24 who are on Universal Credit and at risk of long term unemployment.

**Expanded Youth Offer** – increasing the intensive support offered to those 18-24 in the Intensive Work Search group in Universal Credit. Further support will be available through Youth Hubs with specialist Youth Employment Coaches.

**Expansion of the Work and Health Programme** – to introduce additional voluntary support for those on benefits in England and Wales that have been unemployed for more than 3 months.

**Flexible Support Fund (FSF)** – increase the funding for the FSF by £150m to increase the capacity of the Rapid Response Service (RRS), supporting those facing redundancy.

**Expanding sector based work academies** – increase participation in our sector-based work academy programmes, offering training, work experience and a guaranteed interview. We will establish bespoke opportunities, working with employers and training providers to support claimants to fill job vacancies and pivot into new careers, including in priority sectors such as construction and social care.

**Job finding support service** – £40 million to fund additional capacity to introduce an online, one-to-one service to help those who have been recently unemployed.<sup>26</sup>

At the end of June, Thérèse Coffey announced that from July the Department would begin the process of reopening Jobcentres and "starting to return to normal" in order to "help people to get ready again for the world of work."<sup>27</sup> The first 4,500 new Work Coaches will work in existing Jobcentres, but accommodating further new Work Coaches may involve opening new Jobcentres<sup>28</sup> and reopening some

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<sup>23</sup> Therese Coffey speaking in the Lords Economic Affairs Committee, [The economics of Universal credit](#), 2 June 2020

<sup>24</sup> MH Treasury, [A Plan for Jobs](#), 8 July 2020, p.9

<sup>25</sup> Neil Couling speaking in the Work and Pensions Committee oral session, Universal Credit: the wait for first payment, 15 July 2020, Q232

<sup>26</sup> [PQ 69565 9 July 2020](#)

<sup>27</sup> [HC Deb 29 June 2020](#) c17

<sup>28</sup> [PQ 74611 29 July 2020](#)

that have closed in recent years.<sup>29</sup> Giving an update on 8 September Mims Davies stated that:

Over 300 new work coaches have now started and our plans will see over 4500 start by 31 October with a further 9000 starting by 31 March 2021.<sup>30</sup>

Along with the reopening of Jobcentres, the conditionality and sanctions regimes are also being reintroduced. The Government has been careful to stress that it will take a 'phased approach' and that it will empower local staff to make appropriate decisions on work-related conditionality and sanctions.

To support our re-implementation of Claimant Commitments in July, we are issuing guidance to Work Coaches and Case Managers. We are managing this in a phased approach to deliver a tailored and effective service for our customers, recognising the individual and prevailing circumstances including COVID restrictions. We have not needed to issue new guidance on benefit sanctions. We trust and empower our job centre managers and Work Coaches to work with their customers appropriately.<sup>31</sup>

While conditionality was suspended, people who made Universal Credit claims did not go through the normal process of drawing up a [claimant commitment](#). On 9 July Mims Davies said that the DWP will therefore be 'contacting claimants to introduce a personalised claimant commitment.'<sup>32</sup> The initial approach will involve conducting 'interviews by phone and testing a 30-minute commitment appointment.'<sup>33</sup>

A 'coronavirus special' edition of DWP's Touchbase magazine for advisers – issued on 3 July – stated:

We are working with local managers to start expanding our service offer in jobcentres to help get Britain back into work. Work Coaches are calling claimants – no one needs to contact us.

We don't want to sanction anyone. These are difficult, uncertain times for many people and we want to do everything we can to help them find work or increase hours, where that is possible for them. No sanction will be used until the claimant has an up-to-date Claimant Commitment in place. After that, a sanction will only be used where a claimant has not provided good reason for meeting the agreed requirements in the Claimant Commitment. Claimants who are shielding, have childcare responsibilities because of COVID restrictions, etc. will have their Claimant Commitment tailored to reflect their circumstances and will not be asked to do anything unreasonable.<sup>34</sup>

Expressing disappointment that they had not been able to influence the decision to reimpose conditionality, The Public and Commercial Services Union, which represents many DWP staff, disclosed some additional detail about the proposed timetable:

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<sup>29</sup> Neil Couling speaking in the Work and Pensions Committee oral session, [Universal Credit: the wait for first payment](#), 15 July 2020, Q232

<sup>30</sup> [PO 83896 \[on DWP recruitment progress\] 8 September 2020](#)

<sup>31</sup> [PO 68348 \[on reintroducing conditionality\] 7 July 2020](#)

<sup>32</sup> [PO 69562 9 July 2020](#)

<sup>33</sup> [PO 69561 13 July 2020](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Expanding our service offer in jobcentres](#), Touchbase magazine, 3 July 2020

DWP have advised PCS that they will manage the reinstating of conditionality using a phased approach to ensure that they have the capacity to deliver an effective service to customers. Universal Credit will test the process for new claims from 1 July 2020 in three Jobcentres and from 8 July 2020 they will roll-out for all new claims. This means that the department will agree a Claimant Commitment for all appropriate new claims from that date and then deliver fortnightly interventions with them. They also advised that once implemented they will then design a process for current claims made during COVID-19 and implement, and then review existing claims made pre-COVID-19. They will then move to New Style JSA new claims from 22 July 2020 with all stock claimants following after that.<sup>35</sup>

### **Disability benefit reviews and reassessments**

The crisis prompted significant changes to assessments and reassessments for health and disability benefits. These have been suspended or, where necessary, carried out without face-to-face contact. The Department is gradually resuming reassessment activity from July 2020, and is also looking to learn lessons from “forced changes” in its forthcoming Green Paper on health and disability support.

Face-to-face assessments for health and disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payment and the Limited Capability for Work-Related Activity (LCWRA) element in Universal Credit were [suspended for three months](#) on 17 March. A [6 July press release](#) states that ‘face-to-face assessments [are] to remain suspended, but [will be] kept under review’.

Assessments have continued, at a reduced pace, since March.<sup>36</sup> During this period anyone with an assessment appointment will be contacted to discuss next steps and alternative arrangements, which might involve telephone or paper-based assessments.

DWP also [announced on 23 March](#) that reviews and reassessments for all disability benefits were suspended for at least three months. Where benefit awards are due to expire, the DWP will extend end-dates so that people continue to receive their existing level of financial support. A [6 July press release](#) states that ‘Some review and reassessment activity [is] to gradually resume from July 2020 for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA)’.

Speaking in Committee on 23 April Justin Tomlinson, the Minister for Disabled People, Work and Health clarified how the DWP is handling assessments and reassessments during suspension:

For those who would be due for reassessment in the next three months, we have automatically extended their benefit by six months. If their condition has deteriorated and they feel they would be entitled to more money, they can still request a reassessment but otherwise they are automatically extended.

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<sup>35</sup> Public and Commercial Services Union statement on [Reinstating Labour Market conditionality](#), 29 June 2020

<sup>36</sup> [PO 58015 17 July 2020](#)

For new claimants, the terminally ill and for those who ask for it, we are seeking to do it by telephone and by paper-based reviews, adopting a very sympathetic, claimant-supportive view of this because we recognise that there are increasing challenges to being able to get adequate medical evidence, so we are relying very much on the claimants' cases as they explain them.<sup>37</sup>

These changes took place at the same time the Government had launched a "Health Transformation Programme" to develop a new, integrated service, supported by a single digital system, for Personal Independence Payment and Work Capability Assessments, from 2021. The integrated service is intended to provide "a more joined up experience" for claimants.<sup>38</sup>

In the weeks before lockdown, on 2 March 2020, Justin Tomlinson provided a further update on progress in creating a single assessment service with a single digital platform developed by the DWP. He noted that the Department would initially develop the new service on a small scale "in a defined part of the country, a Transformation Area."<sup>39</sup>

The crisis interrupted these plans, but also imposed "forced changes" to the assessment process from which the Department is planning to learn. Mr Tomlinson told the Work and Pensions Committee on 23 April that the Department would seek to learn lessons from experiences during the crisis:

As a side issue, this is beneficial for us because we were due to publish the Green Paper that was looking at the assessment process and claimant experience, recognising there is anxiety among claimants, and what more we could do to reduce that. Through the forced changes we have had to do to handle the Covid-19 emergency, we are testing those. When we return to a normal state, there will be some valuable lessons about how we can better use medical evidence and oral evidence from claimants and increase the proportion of cases that are done as paper-based reviews.<sup>40</sup>

Providing further update on contracts for assessment services and the progress of the Green Paper on 9 July 2020, Mr Tomlinson issued a written statement stating that while there had been no change to the Government's "ambition" to create a single, integrated health assessment service underpinned by a single digital platform developed by DWP, and creating a "Transformation Area" to test ideas and processes, owing to Covid-19 it had had to review its commercial approach. The statement continued:

We had previously announced that we would be undertaking a procurement exercise to establish contracts for conducting Work and Capability Assessments (WCA) and PIP health assessments from 1 August 2021. The impact of Covid-19 means it is not possible to launch that procurement at this time.

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<sup>37</sup> Justin Tomlinson speaking in the Work and Pensions Committee oral session, [DWP's response to the coronavirus outbreak](#), 23 April 2020

<sup>38</sup> [HCWS1376](#)

<sup>39</sup> [Written Statement HCWS138](#)

<sup>40</sup> Justin Tomlinson speaking in the Work and Pensions Committee oral session, [DWP's response to the coronavirus outbreak](#), 23 April 2020

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We recognise that it is vital for our claimants to have a safe and stable service. Consequently, my Department intends to explore options to extend the current contracts for up to two years, which will ensure continuity of services when the current contracts end on 31 July 2021. We will continue to review these extensions to ensure we only extend for the time we need to effectively respond to the consequences of Covid-19.

The extension period will provide time to fully understand and evaluate the impacts of Covid-19 on these critical services, ahead of future procurements.

We recognise that there are positive lessons to be learned from our experience of delivering our services during Covid-19, and the changes we introduced. We are reviewing these and they will inform future delivery, where appropriate. We expect these to be reflected in our wider transformation plans, including the forthcoming Green Paper and subsequent policy decisions regarding the delivery of health assessments.<sup>41</sup>

## 2. Details of changes and proposed withdrawal dates

### 2.1 Table of social security changes, expected withdrawal dates and current status

This table contains a list of major changes to the UK social security system made in response to the coronavirus crisis. It also outlines when they are expected to be withdrawn and notes their current status as of the date this briefing was published. Many of these changes have been implemented through new statutory instruments (secondary legislation), although others were operational changes announced by ministers.

Most of these changes relate to ‘reserved benefits’ and therefore apply across Great Britain (GB). Where changes were made by legislation, we have indicated their **territorial extent**. Where this is Great Britain-wide, it should be noted that corresponding and generally equivalent regulations have usually been made for Northern Ireland. Where applicable, we have also included specific changes relating to devolved benefits in Scotland.

We have not included one-off payments to local authorities such as the [‘hardship fund’ of £500 million](#) in England, the [£350 million fund](#) provided by the Scottish Government to support “welfare and wellbeing” in local communities, or the Welsh Government’s [£30 million package](#) for local authorities. For further information on these, see section 4.3 of [Coronavirus: Support for household finances, Commons Library Briefing CBP-8894, 22 June 2020](#).

Change made and territorial extent	Announcement or rule change	Expected withdrawal dates	Current status
<b>Benefit increases</b>			
<b>GB:</b> Universal Credit standard allowances and <b>(UK)</b> Working Tax Credit basic element: increased by £1,000 per year.	Universal Credit standard allowances: <a href="#">The Social Security (Coronavirus) (Further Measures) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/371)</a>  Working Tax Credit basic element: <a href="#">Coronavirus Act 2020 section 77(1)</a>	<b>April 2021.</b> The <a href="#">Coronavirus Act 2020</a> states that these increases are to be disregarded for the purposes of the statutory annual review of benefit rates relative to price inflation.  Will Quince, The Minister for Welfare Reform, <a href="#">confirmed</a> on 4 May that increases are temporary, but added: “All things of this nature will be kept under review.”	Current

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<p><b>GB:</b> Local Housing Allowance rates: reset to the 30th percentile market rent in each broad rental market area.</p>	<p>Rent Officers Order, Regulation 4 of <a href="#">The Social Security (Coronavirus) (Further Measures) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/371)</a></p>	<p><b>None.</b> Secretary of State <a href="#">told the Lords Economic Affairs Committee</a> on 2 June that the increase was a “permanent uplift.”</p>	<p>Current</p>
<p><b>GB:</b> Suspending the Minimum Income Floor (MIF).</p>	<p>Regulation 2 of <a href="#">The Social Security (Coronavirus) (Further Measures) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/371)</a></p>	<p><b>13 November 2020.</b> Regulation 10 states regulation 2 will ‘cease to have effect at the end of the period of eight months beginning on 13th March 2020.’</p>	<p>Current</p>
<p><b>Scotland:</b> Additional payment of £230.10 made in Carer’s Allowance Supplement from April to September 2020.</p>	<p>Schedule 1(6) of <a href="#">Coronavirus (Scotland) (No. 2) Act 2020</a></p>	<p><b>30 September 2020.</b></p>	<p>Current</p>
<p><b>Scotland:</b> Increase in the Council Tax Reduction earnings disregard to take account of the temporary increase in the Working Tax Credit basic element.</p>	<p>Regulation 2 of The <a href="#">Council Tax Reduction (Scotland) Amendment (No. 3) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 (SSI.No.2020/108)</a></p>	<p><b>4 April 2021</b> (matching the timescale for ending the WTC increase).</p>	<p>Current</p>
<p><b>Rule changes to support social distancing, isolating and shielding</b></p>			
<p><b>GB:</b> Statutory Sick Pay made payable from the first day of illness.</p>	<p>Regulation 2 of <a href="#">The Statutory Sick Pay (Coronavirus) (Suspension of Waiting Days and General Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/374)</a></p>	<p><b>Unknown.</b> Explanatory note states: ‘The Secretary of State will keep the provisions under review in line with corresponding provision in the Coronavirus Act 2020.’</p>	<p>Current</p>

	<a href="#">Earlier, time limited, regulations</a> were superseded.		
<b>GB:</b> Statutory Sick Pay extended to cover those self-isolating through the provision of 'isolation notes' instead of fit notes.	Regulation 3 of <a href="#">The Statutory Sick Pay (Coronavirus) (Suspension of Waiting Days and General Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/374)</a>  <a href="#">Earlier, time limited, regulations</a> were superseded.	<b>Unknown.</b> Explanatory note states:  'The Secretary of State will keep the provisions under review in line with corresponding provision in the Coronavirus Act 2020.'	Current
<b>GB:</b> Statutory Sick Pay extended to people who are shielding (shielding "paused" from 1 Aug).	<a href="#">The Statutory Sick Pay (General) (Coronavirus Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/427)</a>	<b>1 August. Guidance</b> (updated 4 September 2020) states that:  'As of 1 August, you are no longer eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) on the basis of being advised to shield by the government.'	Resuming
<b>GB:</b> Removing the 'waiting days' rule for New Style ESA.	Regulation 2 of <a href="#">The Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit (Coronavirus Disease) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/289)</a>	<b>13 November 2020.</b> Regulation 5 stipulates that regulations will expire eight months after they come into force.  Regulations also state that 'The Secretary of State must keep the operation of these Regulations under review.'	Current
<b>GB:</b> For ESA and UC, anyone affected by coronavirus can be treated as having a limited capability for work.	Regulation 3 of <a href="#">The Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit (Coronavirus Disease) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/289)</a>	<b>For ESA - 13 November 2020.</b> Regulation 5 of SI 2020/289 stipulates that the regulations will expire eight months after they come into force.  The regulations also state that 'The Secretary of State must keep the operation of these Regulations under review.'	Current (resumed for UC)

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		<b>For UC - 30 March 2020.</b> Regulation 10(3) of <a href="#"><i>The Social Security (Coronavirus) (Further Measures) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/371)</i></a> provided that these changes no longer had effect from that date so far as they applied to UC.	
<b>England and Wales:</b> Carer's Allowance – continued entitlement during breaks in caring if carer or disabled person has covid-19 or self-isolating because of symptoms.	Regulation 9 of <a href="#"><i>The Social Security (Coronavirus) (Further Measures) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/371)</i></a>	<b>13 November 2020.</b> Regulation 10 states regulation 9 will 'cease to have effect at the end of the period of eight months beginning on 13th March 2020.'	Current
<b>Scotland:</b> Carer's Allowance – continued entitlement during breaks in caring if carer or disabled person has covid-19 or self-isolating because of symptoms.	Regulation 2 of <a href="#"><i>The Carer's Allowance (Coronavirus) (Breaks in Care) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/117)</i></a>	<b>3 December 2020.</b> Regulation 3 states that this will cease 'to have effect at the end of the period of 8 months" following 3 April (when the regulations came into force).	Current
<b>Temporary expansions of eligibility</b>			
<b>GB:</b> Extending entitlement to means-tested benefits, such as Universal Credit, to prisoners on temporary release.	<a href="#"><i>The Social Security (Coronavirus) (Prisoners) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/409)</i></a>  In Scotland, justice policy is devolved, and prisoners are released under different powers. Therefore, means-tested benefits can be paid to them as they no longer	<b>13 November 2020.</b> Regulation 6 stipulates that regulations will 'cease to have effect at the end of the period of eight months beginning on 13th March 2020.'	Current

	count as a 'prisoner' for benefit purposes and should be able to claim the appropriate benefit if they need to do so. See <a href="#">Child Poverty Action Group guidance</a> .		
<b>GB:</b> Furloughed workers given entitlement to Maternity Allowance and other statutory family-related benefits.	<a href="#">The Maternity Allowance, Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Paternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay, Statutory Shared Parental Pay and Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay (Normal Weekly Earnings etc.) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/ 450)</a>	<b>October.</b> Amendments 'apply where a person is a furloughed employee for the purposes of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme', which is due to end in October.	Current
<b>UK:</b> Working Tax Credit will not be affected if a claimant's working hours have been reduced.	Regulation 2 of <a href="#">The Tax Credits (Coronavirus, Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/534)</a> Announced in <a href="#">4 May press release</a> . <a href="#">Gov.uk guidance</a> (updated 24 September) states:  'If you're currently getting tax credits and you cannot work or you're working fewer hours because of coronavirus, you do not need to tell HMRC about this change as long as you're still employed or self-employed.'	<b>October.</b> The press release states that:  'We will treat customers as working their normal hours <b>until the Job Retention Scheme closes</b> , even if they are not using the scheme.'	Current
<b>UK:</b> Time limit for critical workers to report changes of circumstances	Regulation 4 of <a href="#">The Tax Credits (Coronavirus, Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/534)</a>	<b>October.</b> Explanatory notes state:  'The extension of time only applies to claimants who are critical workers... and <b>only for the</b>	Current

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for tax credit purposes extended from one month to three.		<b>duration of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme'</b>	
<p><b>Scotland:</b> Application time limits extended for devolved benefits where a delay in applying is due to Covid-19. Applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pregnancy and Baby Payment</li> <li>• Early Learning Payment</li> <li>• School Age Payment</li> <li>• Young Carer Grant</li> <li>• Funeral Support Payment</li> </ul>	<p>Schedule 7(4) of the <a href="#">Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020</a>.</p> <p>The announcement on the devolved benefits to which this measure applies was made by Social Security Scotland on 14 April 2020: '<a href="#">Making sure people impacted by Covid-19 get our support</a>'.</p>	<p><b>30 September 2020</b></p> <p>The Act also provides the power for Scottish Ministers <b>to alter</b> this date by regulations, including in Section 12(3) to extend it to 31 March 2021 or 30 September 2021.</p> <p>Other provisions in the Act were <a href="#">proposed for extension</a> on 28 August, but this did not include Schedule 7(4).</p>	Current
<b>Social distancing in benefit assessments and Jobcentre appointments</b>			
Suspending all face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits.	Announced in a <a href="#">16 March press release</a> .	<p><b>Unknown, but under review.</b> Initially for a three-month period.</p> <p>21 July Parliamentary written answer (<a href="#">PQ 75473</a>) states:</p> <p>'Face-to-face assessments for health and disability related benefits continue to be suspended since 17 March [...] We are regularly reviewing this position in line with public health advice, and will also review our estates requirements as part of this work.'</p> <p>Gov.uk <a href="#">guidance for New Style Employment and Support Allowance</a> was updated on 10 August:</p>	Current

		<p>'to explain that Work Capability Assessments are currently taking place over the phone because of coronavirus (COVID-19).'</p> <p>Speaking in the House on 23 September, the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work <a href="#">spoke about</a> "bringing in telephone assessments" for Work Capability Assessments, a measure already taken for PIP assessments.</p>	
<p>Reviews and reassessments for all disability benefits were suspended.</p>	<p>Announced in <a href="#">23 March press release</a></p>	<p>Initially for a three-month period. <b>Gradual resumption from July.</b></p> <p><a href="#">6 July press release</a> states that 'Some review and reassessment activity to gradually resume from July 2020 for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA)'. 3 September written answer (<a href="#">PO 82089</a>) explains that reassessments for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit remained suspended.</p>	<p>Resuming</p>
<p>No-one should visit a Jobcentre "unless directed to do so for an exceptional purpose."</p>	<p>Guidance on the <a href="#">Gov.uk understanding Universal Credit website</a>.</p> <p>This was amended by 25 September to read: 'You do not need to attend the jobcentre unless we ask you to do so. If you need to contact us the quickest way to do this is online or by phone. If you need to attend a jobcentre, they are open and one of our colleagues will be</p>	<p><b>From July 2020.</b> As explained in section 1.2, the Department began reopening Jobcentres from July 2020.</p>	<p>Resuming</p>

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	able to assist you. You will be required to wear a face covering when entering a jobcentre, unless you are in an exempt category. Please also follow the latest government guidance on meeting with others safely and local restrictions.'		
<b>Conditionality and sanctions</b>			
<b>GB:</b> All work-related requirements had been suspended for Universal Credit and 'New Style' Jobseekers Allowance	Regulation 6 of <a href="#">The Social Security (Coronavirus) (Further Measures) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/371)</a>	<b>Resuming from 1 July.</b> Explored in section 1.2 above.	Resuming
<b>Other operational changes</b>			
'Move to Universal Credit' pilot in Harrogate suspended.	Following the coronavirus outbreak, the DWP's Universal Credit Engagement Team <a href="#">wrote to stakeholders</a> announcing that the pilot had been temporarily suspended.	<b>Unknown.</b> Baroness Steadman-Scott provided <a href="#">an update on 22 September 2020</a> . This outlined the suspension of the pilot, but did not indicate a resumption date.	Current
Pausing the recovery of legacy benefit overpayments, Social Fund loans, and Tax Credit debts from UC.	Announced in <a href="#">3 April press release</a> . 'Deductions for the recovery of Universal Credit and legacy benefit overpayments, Social Fund loans and Tax Credit debts will be paused.'	<b>June 2020.</b> Press release paused recoveries for three months.  6 July email from the Communications Directorate at the Department for Work and Pensions, <a href="#">published on Rightsnet</a> , confirm the debt recoveries are recommencing.	Resuming
<b>GB:</b> From 21 May, people not entitled to UC because of income from the Self Employment Income	Regulation 3 of <a href="#">The Universal Credit (Coronavirus) (Self-employed Claimants</a>	None.	Current

<p>Support Scheme don't need to reapply to get it.</p>	<p><a href="#"><i>and Reclaims) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/532)</i></a></p>		
<p>Child Benefit – parents can claim without having to register their child's birth.</p>	<p>Announced in <a href="#">7 April press release</a></p>	<p><b>Unknown.</b> At 24 September the <a href="#">Gov.uk website states</a>:  'If you're not able to register the birth of your child because of coronavirus (COVID-19), you can still make a claim to receive Child Benefit.'</p>	<p>Current</p>

## 2.2 Timeline of announcements on the status of temporary changes since June

This table provides a rolling timeline of major announcements relating to the withdrawal of social security changes (outlined in part 2.1) since June when several of them were due to expire. It should be noted that the first of these temporary measures to reach the end of its period as originally announced was the suspension of face-to-face disability and sickness benefit assessments, which was set to expire on 17 June – although it was later confirmed on 25 June that this had been extended. The following should be read as current as of the date of publication.

Date and summary	Announcement
<b>25 June.</b> Extended suspension of face-to-face assessments.	Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work <a href="#">stated (PQ 61450, 25 June 2020)</a> :  Face to face assessments remain suspended while we review what activity we can gradually start reintroducing in line with the latest public health advice. We will confirm next steps as soon as possible.
<b>29 June:</b> Reintroduction of conditionality.	Secretary of State for Work and Pensions <a href="#">told the House (HC 29 June 2020 c3)</a> :  It is important that as the jobcentres fully reopen this week we reinstate the need for a claimant commitment. It is an essential part of the contract to help people start to reconsider what vacancies there are, but I know that I can trust the work coaches and jobcentre managers, who are empowered to act proactively with people.
<b>6 July:</b> Recovery of certain debts owed to the Government to resume.	Email from the DWP Communications Directorate at the Department for Work and Pensions, <a href="#">published on Rightsnet</a> , confirmed that debt recoveries are recommencing.
<b>6 July:</b> Face-to-face disability and sickness benefit assessments to remain suspended.	DWP <a href="#">press release</a> stated:  Face-to-face assessments to remain suspended, but kept under review.
<b>6 July:</b> Gradual resumption of reassessments for disability benefit assessments.	DWP <a href="#">press release</a> stated:  Some review and reassessment activity to gradually resume from July 2020 for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

<p><b>7 July:</b> £895 million announced to double the number of Work Coaches.</p>	<p>Detail available on page 9 of HM Treasury, <a href="#">A Plan for Jobs, published on 8 July 2020</a>.</p>
<p><b>9 July:</b> Update on Health Transformation Programme and forthcoming Green Paper.</p>	<p>Minster for Disabled People, Health and Work provides <a href="#">written statement (HCWS353)</a> explored above in part 1.2.</p>
<p><b>13 July:</b> Claimants to be contacted by telephone to draw up claimant commitments.</p>	<p>Minister for Employment <a href="#">stated (PQ 69561, 13 July 2020)</a>:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">As we re-introduce claimant commitments we are initially conducting these interviews by phone and testing a 30-minute commitment appointment.</p>
<p><b>15 July:</b> DWP considering re-opening previously closed Jobcentres.</p>	<p>Neil Couling <a href="#">told the Work and Pensions Committee</a>:</p> <p>We are looking, certainly, at one of the closed [Jobcentres] that I know of at the moment to try to set up a demonstration of how we do this. We are going to adopt probably a different design than we have in existing jobcentres, partly because we need to make them Covid-compliant quickly. Some of our old estate will not be very good; the jobcentres we closed were quite small.</p>
<p><b>15 July:</b> Plans to hire 4,500 new Work Coaches by end of October.</p>	<p>Neil Couling <a href="#">told the Work and Pensions Committee</a> that the DWP plans to hire 4,500 of the 13,500 planned new Work Coaches by the end of October.</p>
<p><b>21 July:</b> Minister for Disabled People, Work and Health provides update on reopening PIP assessment centres.</p>	<p>Parliamentary written answer (<a href="#">PQ 75473</a>) states:</p> <p>Face-to-face assessments for health and disability related benefits continue to be suspended since 17 March. This temporary suspension was brought in to protect vulnerable people (and assessment centre staff) from unnecessary risk of exposure to COVID-19. We are regularly reviewing this position in line with public health advice, and will also review our estates requirements as part of this work.</p>
<p><b>28 July:</b> Secretary of State responds to Social Security</p>	<p>Therese Coffey <a href="#">wrote to SSAC</a> outlining the Government's position on:</p>

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<p>Advisory Committee recommendations for further changes in response to the crisis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levels of benefit payments and recommended increases to “legacy benefits”.</li> <li>• The Shared Accommodation Rate.</li> <li>• The Benefit Cap.</li> <li>• Department for Work and Pensions communications.</li> </ul>
<p><b>29 July:</b> Minister of State for Employment provides update on opening new Jobcentres.</p>	<p>Parliamentary written answer (<a href="#">PQ 74611</a>) states:</p> <p>DWP is currently evaluating the estates capacity needed to respond to the economic consequences of the pandemic, this is being done in line with recruitment, which is already underway. Whilst there may be a few exceptions, in general we expect that this will be new estate, rather than jobcentres where leases have been surrendered, as new estate will be easier to make Covid-secure. Further details will be provided to Parliament when our plans have been finalised.</p>
<p><b>6 August:</b> Social Security Advisory Committee announces “Rapid review of post-lockdown changes to social security benefits”.</p>	<p>In <a href="#">a blog</a> SSAC set out the areas of concern they will be focussing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the reintroduction of conditionality will work.</li> <li>• The provisions for self-employment.</li> </ul> <p>Changes to sickness and disability benefits.</p>
<p><b>8 September:</b> Minister for Employment provides update on DWP recruitment</p>	<p>Parliamentary written answer (<a href="#">PQ 83896</a>) states:</p> <p>Work Coach recruitment commenced in June with an initial cross government campaign and followed by a further 12 targeted external campaigns at the beginning of July. Additional external campaigns will be launched on Wednesday 9 September with further adverts launching on a weekly basis over the following 4 weeks.</p> <p>Over 300 new work coaches have now started and our plans will see over 4500 start by 31 October with a further 9000 starting by 31 March 2021.</p>
<p><b>24 September:</b> Chancellor Rishi Sunak announces the Job Support Scheme and extension of</p>	<p>In an oral statement to the House of Commons (<a href="#">HC Deb 24 September 2020 c1153</a>), Mr Sunak explained the following:</p>

<p>Self Employment Income Support Scheme Grants</p>	<p>I am announcing today the new jobs support scheme. The Government will directly support the wages of people in work, giving businesses that face depressed demand the option of keeping employees in a job on shorter hours, rather than making them redundant.</p> <p>The job support scheme is built on three principles. First, it will support viable jobs. To make sure of that, employees must work at least a third of their normal hours and be paid for that work as normal by their employer. The Government, together with employers, will then increase those people’s wages, covering two thirds of the pay they have lost by reducing their working hours. The employee will keep their job.</p> <p>Secondly, we will target support at firms that need it most. All small and medium-sized businesses are eligible, but larger businesses only when their turnover has fallen through the crisis.</p> <p>Thirdly, it will be open to employers across the United Kingdom, even if they have not previously used the furlough scheme.</p> <p>The scheme will run for six months, starting in November. Employers retaining furloughed staff on shorter hours can claim both the job support scheme and the jobs retention bonus.</p>
<p><b>30 September:</b> Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to give evidence to the Work and Pensions Committee</p>	<p>As part of <a href="#">its inquiry into the DWP’s response to the coronavirus outbreak</a>, Thérèse Coffey and Director General, Work and Health Services, John Paul Marks, will be giving evidence to the Committee.</p>

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