

# Universal Credit - Pathfinder (April 2013 - phase 1) proposed claimant experience

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## Claiming Universal Credit from April 2013

The Universal Credit (UC) Pathfinder starts in April 2013. The Universal Credit on-line service will be available at .gov.uk

This site will be signposted from existing Government websites including the DWP corporate homepage

There will **NOT** be a paper claim form for Universal Credit



Universal Credit will go live in Greater Manchester and Cheshire area from April 2013, six months before national roll-out in October

It will be delivered in four Local Authorities – Oldham, Tameside, Warrington and Wigan

Four Jobcentres will be involved – Ashton-under-Lyne, Oldham, Warrington and Wigan

Claimants deemed eligible to receive Universal Credit will be able to apply.

All other claimants will continue to apply for legacy benefits

The claimant will be able to securely access the Universal Credit site at a time of their choice to register their details and make a claim



A telephone number will be available during office hours, for help and advice on setting up the account

If technical problems prevent access to the Universal Credit service or if the claimant is using a non-compatible browser a plain webpage will be displayed giving alternative contact arrangements



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## New claim On-line activity

The claimant will be asked to input their personal details including their NINO

They will be advised to have all the information ready as input needs to be completed in the one session



The claim data gathering process will be supported by a secure CAPTCHA facility so that DWP knows that it is a person applying and not an attack on the system by an outside organisation



A set of filter/strike out questions will be presented at the start of the claim to determine eligibility

A message will appear on the screen to advise the claimant if they are not eligible



Any claimant advised of their ineligibility will be directed to the appropriate benefit information website



In April 2013 - The initial data gathering process will be on-line during Pathfinder. All subsequent enquiries or change of circumstance will be carried out either over the phone or through face to face interventions



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## New claim On-line activity



The claimant will be shown a summary of the information they have entered and asked to confirm the details

They will be able to go back and correct any mistakes at this stage before they give final confirmation that the information is correct



Straight away, based on the information given an indicative figure will be displayed showing what someone in their circumstances is likely to get to cover their household needs. **Universal Credit is paid to the household and includes housing costs**



The claimant will also be advised what their responsibilities are in order to receive Universal Credit



Payments will be received monthly, with some flexibility possible in certain circumstances – claimants will be advised of this through a message on-screen

The claimant then submits their claim, the date of claim will always be the date of submission



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All future actions will be face to face, by post or through the telephony support service

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## Telephony support and work search interview

From April 2013, the initial data gathering process for the claimant to set up a Universal Credit account will be performed on-line during Pathfinder

All on-going claim activity will be conducted either by phone, face to face or by post

A telephone support service will be available, Mon – Fri, 8.00am – 6.00pm



The claimant will be told of the date of their personalised work search interview (by text primarily, landline or post where necessary)

At this interview the claimant will:

- Sign a copy of their claim details
- Meet their adviser who will discuss job search and draw up a claimant commitment with them, they will be given a copy of this to take away
- Be advised of support for example through Universal Jobmatch
- Be reminded of their responsibilities and next steps

If the claimant does not sign the claimant commitment the claim will be terminated

**Looking for work is a full time job!**

The claimant will receive one monthly payment to cover their household needs. They will also be informed that their decision letter can be used as proof of their claim when applying for passported benefits, this will be posted to them



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## Change in circumstance and fluctuating earnings

For Pathfinder the system will issue a SoS notification by post where a change of circumstances is reported and in every case where the amount of Universal Credit has changed from the previous SoS decision. This will help the claimant budget. This could mean that notifications are issued for changes in payment/award eg if a claimant starts work and has fluctuating earnings

A link to the on-line HMRC service listing employers registered on RTI will be provided. The claimant will be able to search for their employer under their name or employer PAYE number

The Claimant will need to notify any changes to their earnings to the telephony service if their employer is not registered for RTI

A Universal Credit agent will determine any changes to their claimant commitment

Where a claimant has indicated they are employed, there is an expectation that earnings will be received for that claimant. Payment should be suspended where there is reason to suspect failure to report earnings

The claimant should report the end of any employment through the telephony channel

The claimant is responsible for reporting **all** changes of circumstance. Changes of circumstances will not generally be backdated, but overpayments will be raised if the change reduces the Universal Credit amount



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## Change in circumstance adding a partner and claim closure

If the claimant becomes part of a couple, both partners will be required to attend an adviser interview, if they fall into the conditionality group. If the claimant's new partner has an existing legacy benefit, that claim will need to be closed



**Once on Universal Credit the claimant stays on Universal Credit**

The claimant will stay on Universal Credit even if their circumstances change as long as their conditions of entitlement are still met

If a claimant's earnings exceed their Universal Credit amount the RTI feed will remain open for 6 months to determine if the claimant could be re-entitled to Universal Credit



If the claimant moves outside the Pathfinder area (within GB), their claim stays with the service centre

Face to face delivery will be through the Jobcentre Plus office and Local Authority Services at the new location

