



## **WELFARE & BENEFIT FACTSHEET**

ClwydAlyn is offering support and advice regarding welfare and benefits during the current situation involving Covid 19. We are providing this information to assist our residents and staff.

### **RENT PAYMENTS**

We understand your finances may be impacted at this time. Whilst your rent is a priority payment, we can offer you support if you are affected by any change in circumstance. It's important that you let us know straight away as any delay could result in you missing out on any benefits or financial support you may be entitled to. If you are already receiving any welfare benefits, state pension or pension credits, you will continue to receive your current payments as normal.

### **REPAIRS & HOME VISITS**

ClwydAlyn will now be delivering an emergency repair service only. When everything returns to normal, we will reintroduce the repairs service you are used to. We would ask all residents to continue to report repairs and we will categorise the repair and tell you if it is an emergency or not. For non-emergency repairs we will record the repair and carry it out in the future.

### **WELFARE & INCOME TEAMS**

Our Officers can be contacted via Facetime, WhatsApp, Skype & mobile calls. To contact a ClwydAlyn Officer, please call our Contact Centre on 0800 183 5757.

### **WELFARE & BENEFIT UPDATES:**

- Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) for those eligible can now be claimed from day 1 of your absence if you are unable to work because you are self-isolating in line with government advice, not just if you are infected with Covid 19. This applies retrospectively from 13 March 2020. Speak to your employer regarding your eligibility for this benefit. You may have to contact your GP for a FIT note to be eligible.
- Although new measures and easements have been introduced, the 2 child limit & the benefit cap remain in operation.
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme applies to employees who have been asked to stop working, but who are being kept on the pay roll, otherwise described as 'furloughed workers'. HMRC will reimburse 80% of their wages, up to £2,500 per month. This is to safeguard workers from being made redundant.
- For those who are not eligible for their employer's sick pay scheme or SSP, you can apply for Universal Credit or the new-style Employment Support Allowance via <https://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit> or <https://www.gov.uk/how-to-claim-new-style-esa> Anyone claiming the new style ESA will not have to provide a FIT note.

- If you are on a low income, you may be eligible for council tax reduction. Please contact your local authority for more information.
  - All face to face assessments & planned reviews for all sickness and disability benefits have been suspended for the next 3 months as of 17/03/2020. If you already have an assessment appointment arranged, you do not need to attend. The assessment provider will contact you to discuss your appointment and explain the next steps to you.
  - If you need to provide evidence to your employer that you are self-isolating due to Covid 19, you can apply online via <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/> . Please DO NOT visit your GP to request a FIT note.
  - **NEW CLAIMS FOR UNIVERSAL CREDIT** – if you are struggling to verify your ID online or to call to request a telephone appointment to verify your ID due to delays with the DWP, put a note on your journal requesting a call . The DWP are working to try and resolve this delay. Anyone claiming UC due to Coronavirus will not have to provide a FIT note.
  - You can call the Citizens Advice 'Help to Claim' helpline on 08000241220 for assistance in making a new claim for Universal Credit
  - Current recovery payments in UC have been suspended & no new debts are being taken on If repayment of an Advance Payment is causing hardship then can request a 3 month 'holiday' from this - case by case basis though
  - Any claimant commitments to search/prepare for employment are currently suspended for all UC claimants. Existing claimants of Universal Credit do not have to go into the Job Centre for ANY appointments. Any questions ask through your online journal. Only contact the Service centre if your enquiry is urgent.
  - If you are self-employed and claiming Universal Credit, and are required to stay at home or are ill as a result of coronavirus, the Minimum Income Floor (an assumed level of income – normally £16000 per year) will not be applied for a period of time whilst you are affected and has also been relaxed for the duration of the outbreak. New claimants will not need to attend the jobcentre to demonstrate gainful self-employment.
  - Should you require urgent advice from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), contact the Rapid Response Service , Jobcentreplus -0800-169-0190  
[rrs.enquiries@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:rrs.enquiries@dwp.gov.uk)
  - Cases of mortgage repayment holidays are being taken on a case-by-case basis, and the length of any suspension can vary between banks.
- Other support for individuals facing financial difficulties owing to the virus includes:
- Refunds on credit card cash advance fees
  - The option of applying for a temporarily increased credit card borrowing limit
  - Asking for an increased cash withdrawal limit of up to £500
  - For self-employed people who have already filed tax returns with HMRC, the Self-employment Income Support Scheme will be available. It's worth 80% of average monthly profits up to a maximum of £2,500 a month, will be administered by HMRC and will be paid in June, backdated to March 2020. Currently, the decision is that any lump sum received will be classed in the assessed income period in which it is paid (June 2020). It will be classed in full as income so will potentially close a claim down. Claimants may have to reclaim the following month. Please see further advice on this from Welfare Rights Officers
  - For those with pre-pay utility meters, please contact your supplier if you need assistance or advice in topping up your meter safely during a self-isolation period.
  - All utility companies have agreed that nobody will be disconnected for non-payment during the Covid 19 crisis.

- **Carer's Allowance-** Easements of rules- Unpaid carers will be able to continue to claim Carer's Allowance if they have a temporary break in caring, because they or then person they care for gets Coronavirus or if they have to isolate because of it. Or Providing emotional support rather than just more traditional forms of care to a disabled person will also now count towards the Carer's Allowance threshold of 35 hours of care a week.
- **More UC staff-** As a result of over 1million UC claims in 2 weeks, the DWP has 'moved 10,000 existing staff to help on the front line and we're recruiting more.'
- **DWP Visiting Service has suspended-** DWP Visiting Service has suspended routine face-to face home visits with the exception of the following three criteria:
  - Visits to vulnerable customers
  - Where a visit is needed to ensure benefit payments can be made
  - Visits to undertake safeguarding checks
- **Increase in the Maximum for Social Fund Funeral Grant-From 8/4/2020,** the current £700 cap for the discretionary element will be increased to £1,000 for all cases e.g. for flowers, funeral directors' costs and religious costs.
- **Register of birth-** Child Benefit should still be claimed even if parents can not register the birth as offices are closed.

**£500 million Hardship Fund available for discretionary support and council tax relief**

The Government has announced that a £500 million [Hardship Fund](#) will provide council tax relief for vulnerable households for 2020 to 2021 for those entitled to Council Tax Support. Each local council will have their own scheme of how to distribute the funds and you can contact your local council to find out how their scheme will operate. Further information is given in Government [guidance](#).