

Household Support Fund doubled to help most vulnerable tackle cost of living

- Household Support Fund doubled to £1 billion with £500 million of new funding, as government goes further to support families with cost of living
- Six-month extension will help most vulnerable households deal with rising cost of essentials
- People can continue to access support through their Local Authority, ensuring those most in need get the help available

Today's bolstered fund will continue to target the most vulnerable households and individuals, having helped thousands of families since its launch in September.

A third of the funding will be ring-fenced to support families with children, while another third will be dedicated to pensioners. This ensures the people who need it most will continue to receive vital support to meet essential household costs.

Using their local knowledge, Local Authorities will determine how to best use the remainder of the fund within the scope set out by ministers. Previous funding has supported households with food, clothing, energy and water costs, and this extension will ensure that this support continues through to the autumn.

Thérèse Coffey, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, said:

We have always provided help to those who need it and extending this fund is another commitment to support people with the cost of living.

We know the pressures many are currently facing, especially pensioners and families with children, which is why this fund targets support to the most vulnerable households across the country.

Of the £500 million, the devolved administrations will receive £79 million through the Barnett formula. This brings the total Household Support Fund allocations for the devolved administrations to £82 million for the Scottish Government, £50 million for the Welsh Government and £28 million for the Northern Ireland Executive. It will be for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate this additional funding.

This fund is part of £22 billion of support provided in 2022-23 to help families with the cost of living and to ensure people keep more of their

money. This includes changes to the Universal Credit taper rate and work allowances worth £1,000 extra on average for working families, and an increase in National Insurance thresholds. It also includes help for energy costs through a cut to fuel duty and the £9.1 billion Energy Rebate. And from tomorrow (1 April 2022), the National Living Wage will be rising to £9.50 an hour, providing a timely boost to the lowest paid.

If you want to find out what help is available in your area through the Household Support Fund, contact your local council. You can locate your council using the [GOV.UK council finder](#).

Further information

The extension will run for six months to the end of September 2022, following on directly from the previous funding.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0115 965 8781

Follow DWP on:

[Rules set for new digital functional skills qualifications](#)

News story

Ofqual confirms how it will regulate new entry level and level 1 digital qualifications.



Ofqual has confirmed today how it will regulate new qualifications designed to assess the core digital skills needed for life and work.

It follows a consultation on Ofqual's proposals for the regulation of these Digital Functional Skills qualifications (FSQs), which are being introduced by the Department for Education (DfE). They will replace the existing

functional skills qualifications in Information Computer Technology (FSQs in ICT).

The qualifications will be available for teaching from August 2023, at entry level 3 and level 1. Ofqual will work with awarding organisations to ensure a smooth introduction.

Following the consultation, Ofqual has decided to implement all the proposals, which were well supported. They include:

- setting a minimum weighting of 70% of marks to be achieved through the assessment of practical digital skills
- assessments must be designed so they are authentic and relevant to today's workplace and everyday life
- assessments will be delivered on-screen and online, but paper-based assessment materials will be permitted in exceptional circumstances

Full details can be found in our consultation decisions document, [Regulating Digital Functional Skills qualifications, and our regulatory frameworks](#).

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[The Universal Credit \(Transitional Provisions\) Regulations 2022](#)

In 2019 the Department for Work and Pensions started to move claimants in receipt of one or more of the following benefits to Universal Credit:

- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit

The Covid-19 pandemic enforced a prolonged pause in this process, however we understand that it will resume during the course of this year. The Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2022 update the proposals for this process.

During its statutory scrutiny of these draft proposals, the Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) concluded that one aspect in particular required closer examination and has, accordingly, decided to take the regulations on formal reference (Sections 172(1) and 174(1) of the [Social Security Administration Act 1992](#) refer).

The issue requiring further scrutiny relates to draft regulation 9, which has the effect of removing the cap on the number of migration notices (10,000) that could be issued to existing claimants on legacy benefits, and the associated commitment by former Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Amber Rudd, to report back to Parliament before proceeding further. The Committee believes that there is a need to further consider the potential consequences of such a change, and that greater clarity is required on how the process (at key points of the migration process) will be scrutinised, and what success measures are considered to be.

Committee Chair, Dr Stephen Brien:

A process to move around 1.7 million households, many with complex lives, onto Universal Credit from legacy benefits creates a significant risk for both those who are reliant on these benefits and also for the Department for Work and Pensions in delivering it. For the public to have confidence in this process and to minimise risk further consideration needs to be given to establishing appropriate independent oversight and scrutiny of the programme as it moves forward.

This formal reference report will therefore look closely at how best to provide a framework of oversight, reporting and scrutiny for an agile migration process which will be evolving iteratively over time. We intend to seek evidence from experts with experience of 'agile' management to help inform our advice to the Secretary of State.

The Committee's earlier report on [The Universal Credit \(Managed Migration\) Regulations 2018](#) is available alongside the government's response. The Committee will be drawing on the findings of this report for the wider context of this work and is grateful to those who gave evidence for it. The Committee is of the view that the report recommendations continue to be relevant and so will not be revisiting issues raised within that report during the current formal reference process.

The Committee carried out a detailed scrutiny of the Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2022 at their [meeting of 8 December 2022](#).

More information

SSAC is an independent advisory body of the Department for Work and Pensions. The committee's role is to give advice on social security issues; scrutinise and report on social security regulations (including tax credits) and to

consider and advise on any matters referred to it by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions or the Northern Ireland Department for Communities.

The committee's Chair is Dr Stephen Brien. Its membership comprises: Bruce Calderwood, Matthew Doyle, Carl Emmerson, Chris Goulden, Kayley Hignell, Philip Jones, Gráinne McKeever, Seyi Obakin, Charlotte Pickles and Liz Sayce.

Most social security regulations come before SSAC for scrutiny, the only significant exceptions being regulations which go to other advisory bodies or set benefit rates. When SSAC has considered regulations which it has asked to be formally referred, its response is made in the form of a report to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. That report must be presented to Parliament when the regulations are laid with a statement from the Secretary of State showing what has been done (or is intended to be done) about the SSAC's recommendations (section 174(1) and (2) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992).

Further enquiries should be directed to Denise Whitehead, Committee Secretary, on 020 7829 3354 or at ssac@ssac.gov.uk

Documents

[Letter from Universal Credit Policy Division to SSAC](#)

PDF, 149 KB, 4 pages

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[Draft: The Universal Credit \(Transitional Provisions\) Regulations 2022](#)

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[Letter from SSAC chair to Secretary of State for Work and](#)

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[Letter from Minister for Welfare Delivery to SSAC chair](#)

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[Letter from SSAC chair to Minister for Welfare Delivery](#)

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[Robot goes underground at Dounreay](#)

News story

A robot has successfully surveyed an underground radioactive ventilation duct in Dounreay's redundant laboratories.



Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd (DSRL) and the Robotics and Artificial Intelligence in Nuclear (RAIN) Hub are working together to develop a robot capable of accessing areas that are inaccessible or unsafe for humans to work in. The RAIN Hub is a consortium of universities led by the University of Manchester.

In 2020 a group of engineers from RAIN brought a small surveying remotely operated vehicle equipped with sensors, cameras and a manipulator 'arm' to Dounreay. Initial trials in an inactive building provided useful information, and a limited survey in the laboratories took place last year.

As a result of this field research, a second generation robot called Lyra was developed, with an improved package of surveying measures including LIDAR (a detection system similar to radar, but which uses lasers), multiple angle cameras, radiation probes and the ability to take swabs using the manipulator arm.

In February, the robot returned to carry out a survey of the 140m long underfloor duct which runs under the central corridor between the laboratories, providing useful information that will help to solve the challenge of decommissioning it.

DSRL Project Manager Jason Simpson said:

Now the characterisation survey is complete we have built up a very comprehensive picture of the duct, which will help us make informed decisions on how the duct should be decommissioned.

RAIN Hub Director Barry Lennox added:

We wanted to demonstrate that the robot could be used successfully in active areas. We added fail safe devices, including a remote "reboot" switch, and a winch to enable us to physically retrieve the robot if it got stuck on the debris in the duct. The survey has demonstrated Lyra's reliability in active areas.

Part-time and postgraduate students invited to sign up to SFE mailing lists

Press release

SLC is asking part-time and postgraduate students in England to start planning their student finance for next academic year.



The student finance application service for part-time and postgraduate students will open in the summer, but students can sign up now to the Student Finance England (SFE) [part-time](#) and [postgraduate](#) mailing lists to receive an email when the services are live.

SLC advises students to apply as early as possible for their student finance, even if they don't have a confirmed place on their course. This helps to ensure that their funding is in place at the start of term.

Part-time students in England can apply for funding to pay their tuition fees and some students may also be able to apply for a Maintenance Loan to help with their living costs. Postgraduate students can apply for either Postgraduate Master's Loan or a Postgraduate Doctoral Loan to help them with their course fees and living costs. Chris Larmer, SLC Executive Director, Operations said:

"SLC is committed to enabling opportunity through access to higher and further education, and we want to support as many students as possible to apply for student finance early, to ensure they have their funding in place at term start.

"By signing up to the mailing lists [part-time](#) and [postgraduate](#) students can be assured that they won't miss the application window opening."

To help students stay up to date with the latest student finance news and

information, SLC top tips include:

- Sign up to the part-time and postgraduate mailing lists to be one of the first to know when the application services open.
- Visit the [SFE campaign page](#) to find out more about what funding is available
- Follow SFE on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and [You Tube](#)

Full-time undergraduate students can apply now for student finance at <https://studentfinance.campaign.gov.uk/>

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