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**Coronavirus and welfare – Summary of benefit changes**

**(accurate from 23/03/2020 when written)**

**Changes to Statutory Sick Pay**

SSP will now be made payable from the first day of absence (previously the fourth day) if you are unable to work due to coronavirus. You will be eligible for payment if you are required to self-isolate due to government guidance and this measure will take affect from 13 March 2020. Please note that you do not need to be infected as this covers anyone that needs to self-isolate.

If employers request evidence ‘Isolation notes’ are now available at <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>.

Please noted that you will only be eligible for SSP if you are classed as an ‘employee’. If you are self-employed you may need to claim Universal Credit instead. To claim SSP you need to contact your employer.

**Changes to Universal Credit**

A number of new changes have been brought in for Universal Credit since the COVID 19 crisis. From the 6th of April the standard allowance will increase by approximately £20 a week to new and existing claims (also applicable to any existing working tax credit claims).

In addition the ‘minimum income floor’ has been lifted for anyone self-employed whilst claiming Universal Credit for the period that any claimant has been affected by the virus. This applies to new and existing claims and will be in place for the duration of the outbreak. Claimants will temporarily not need to demonstrate ‘gainful self-employment’.

**Changes to Health Care Assessments and Job Centre appointments**

All face to face assessments for Personal Independence Payment and Limited Capability for Work have been suspended for three months. Anyone who already has an assessment arranged is not required to attend and should be contacted by the Independent Assessment Service for next steps. This is applicable to new and existing claims.

Furthermore all in person appointments at local job centers have been cancelled for three months from 19th March 2020. All requirements to attend the Job Centre have been temporarily suspended and job centers are now only open to support homeless and vulnerable people to aid making fresh claims.

Advance payments under Universal Credit can now be made without attending the job centre and any required checks for new claims and documents will be completed remotely or via phone.