

Universal Support (US) overview

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Introduction

Universal Support (US) is a way that Universal Credit claimants can get advice, assistance and support from Universal Credit staff or locally agreed Universal Support partners.

US provides help with:

- Assisted Digital support – to help claimants make and maintain their Universal Credit claim, including accessing and using online services
- Personal Budgeting Support (PBS) to help claimants manage their monthly payment, support in opening a bank account and speak about paying priority bills
 - Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs) - for claimants who can't manage the monthly payment and there is a risk of financial harm to the claimant and/or their family

Funding is available to Local Authorities (LAs) to provide Assisted Digital and Personal Budgeting Support, tailored to the individual needs of Universal Credit claimants.

LAs may choose to deliver US themselves or commission agreed third party partners to provide the services that meet the needs of Universal Credit claimants in their locality.

Locally agreed US partners include:

- LAs
- Citizen's Advice
- Credit Unions
- registered Social landlords
- registered charities

For further information see Assisted Digital and Personal Budgeting Support guidance.

Identifying a need for Universal Support

There are a number of circumstances that might indicate US is appropriate.

The claimant may:

- not have a bank account – PBS partners can help claimants to access basic bank accounts or Credit Union accounts
- have difficulty in making or maintaining their claim online (e.g. unable to clear To-dos or use journal entries)
- lack digital skills
- have difficulty managing money/budgeting
- state they have run out of food or are using food banks
- not be able to pay their rent
- be in crisis/hardship
- have complex needs
- missed an appointment
- request information that is available on the service i.e. appointment time

This list is not exhaustive.

AD can be offered at any time in a Universal Credit claim, but PBS is only within the first 3 months. However, PBS should also be offered when an APA is set up which can be at any point during a claim.

Depending on what the claimant's individual needs are, consideration should also be given to if they may benefit from other support. See [Complex Needs](#)

Local authority staff or partners may also identify a claimant need, for example when a claimant is struggling to pay rent or bills or is struggling to understand the Universal Credit award or service. They can refer claimants directly to support.

Referring to Universal Support

Although US is voluntary, claimants with identified needs should be encouraged to take up the offer, with the benefits of the support fully explained to them.

Where a referral is appropriate, the District Provision Tool (DPT) should host quality information about the provision and support available within a district and nationally. The DPT is accessed via [FIND](#).

Referral processes are locally tailored on the DPT.

US providers can accept self-referrals from claimants.