

Death and bereavement

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Introduction

When a claimant suffers bereavement there are certain switching-off requirements (Easements) available depending on their particular circumstances. These circumstances can include the death of a partner or child. What the claimant needs to do in order to meet Universal Credit requirements can also be switched-off. Examples of this include the need to immediately look for work or attend appointments at the jobcentre.

Tell us once

Tell Us Once is a service that lets the public report a death to most government organisations once only. A local registrar will have given the person a unique reference number to access the Tell Us Once service online or by phone.

The registrar will also give the person the phone number for Tell Us Once. Tell Us Once will notify DWP to cancel benefits including Universal Credit. See Tell Us Once.

Level of evidence required

Primary evidence can be accepted without further supporting evidence.

Examples of primary evidence are:

- a Customer Information System (CIS) Searchlight broadcast
- form BD8 Certificate
- form 334/SI certificate (Scotland)
- a death certificate
- an email from DWP Bereavement Services

Bereavement run-on

In some circumstances, payment of Universal Credit that would otherwise reduce or stop following bereavement can continue for a short time. This is called a Bereavement run-on, for example following the death of a:

- partner
- child
- person for whom the claimant was carer, see [Claimant with regular caring responsibilities](#)
- [non-dependants](#)

Payment of Universal Credit continues as if the person had not died for the assessment period in which the death occurs and the following two assessment periods.

After calculation of the maximum award, the adjustments made must not include adjustments such as the Minimum Income Floor for the deceased person, or any earnings for the deceased person.

The surviving member of a couple will receive a 3-month run-on for:

- the assessment period in which their partner dies
- two subsequent assessment periods

When the 3 month run on period has ended, the surviving member of the couple must re-declare their circumstances. This is so a single award of Universal Credit can be made (without the need for a new claim).

If the surviving member of the couple is over State Pension Credit qualifying age they can receive Universal Credit for the 3-month run-on period. Once this period had ended they must make a new claim for State Pension Credit.

Certain payments will continue for the 3-month run-on period, for example if a child dies and additional payments are being made for them through Universal Credit. These payments could include the child calculation and/or the Disabled Child Addition.

This also applies when a new born child is added to the Universal Credit claim and dies within the same assessment period. Once the run-on period ends:

- any additional payments being made for the child will stop
- the change is applied to the Universal Credit award (without the need for a claim)

Earnings received after death

Earnings received in the assessment period in which the person died or subsequent assessment periods are treated as due to their estate and must not be taken into account during the run-on period. Any earnings for the deceased received after date of death are disregarded.

Non-dependants

If a non-dependant that lives in the property dies, the claimant/claimants will qualify for a bereavement run-on if the non-dependant was part of the housing calculation. If their Universal Credit entitlement reduces as a result of the death, this will not take immediate effect.

Bereavement Allowance

Bereavement Allowance can be subject to the Benefit Cap whereas a bereavement payment is not. The bereavement payment is taken into account as capital in the Universal Credit assessment. For further information around financial management, see Money guidance and Alternative Payment Arrangements.

Claimant with regular caring responsibilities

If a claimant has regular caring responsibilities and they are receiving the carer's payment for a person who then dies, this continues for the run-on period. Once the run-on period ends, payment will stop and the change applied to the Universal Credit award (without the need for a claim).

Child in considerable distress

In the case of a child in considerable distress, this may be caused by the death of a:

- parent
- sibling
- previous main carer of the child
- person living in the same household (who does not pay commercial rent)

If this happens and the main carer of that child needs to provide extra support / care it might impact their ability to either:

- work search
- be available for work

In this case the claimant's requirements will be suspended for one month.

Main carers may access this switching-off requirements(Easement) once every 6 months for a period of 2 years from the time of death. See Child in considerable distress

Claimant Commitment

When a claimant suffers a bereavement it may be appropriate to temporarily switch-off the work search and availability requirements detailed on the Claimant Commitment.

For further guidance on this and the impact bereavement has to Labour Market regimes, see Claimant Commitment hub.

Debt and deductions after death

If a payment is made to a single person after they have died, the payment is automatically classed as an overpayment. No overpayment decision is required and the overpayment should be referred to Debt Management.

If an overpayment is caused because one member of a couple dies, an overpayment decision should be made as usual. The overpayment will be recoverable from the surviving partner.

An overpayment of housing costs paid direct to a landlord can occur due to the death of the claimant.

The overpayment is only recoverable from the landlord if they had failed to disclose the death of their tenant, for example if they were aware of the death and failed to report it. Otherwise, the overpayment would be recoverable either from the estate of the deceased or any surviving partner of the Universal Credit claimant.

The death of a claimant is a relevant change of circumstances affecting entitlement to Universal Credit. When a single claimant dies there are no further payments due. For the purpose of the award calculation, the death is treated as if it occurred at the beginning of the assessment period.

Recovery from estate awareness

If a claimant dies with outstanding debt and they leave an estate, the Department becomes a creditor of their estate. As a creditor, a claim is normally made from the estate for debts such as:

- recoverable overpayment
- Administrative Penalty
- Social Fund loan

In addition, a search is made for an estate in respect of all customers who die while in receipt of Universal Credit. A comparison is then made between the information provided for the Universal Credit claim and the assets declared in their estate.

This check is made to ensure that claim information in respect of savings was complete (many customers are unsure of, or forget, what savings they have).