

# Death and bereavement

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## Introduction

When a claimant suffers bereavement, for example the death of a partner or child, there are certain switching-off requirements (easements) available depending on their particular circumstances.

Work-related activities that the claimant has agreed to do in order to meet Universal Credit requirements can also be switched-off, for example:

- the need to immediately look for work, or
- attending appointments at the jobcentre

## Tell us once

Tell Us Once is a service that allows the public to report a death to most government organisations once only. A local registrar will give each person:

- a unique reference number to access the Tell Us Once service online or by phone
- 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, for example:

- a Customer Information System (CIS) Searchlight broadcast
- form 334/SI certificate (Scotland)
- a death certificate (including those from abroad)
- a note from the national inbox team that a notification from DWP Bereavement Services or Tell Us Once has been received

## **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

The bereavement run-on can still apply if someone included in the benefit unit dies within the first assessment period of a claim. All outstanding evidence must be provided and verified for the bereavement run-on to be paid from the first assessment period.

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, any appropriate adjustments must not include those relating to the deceased person such as the Minimum Income Floor or any earnings.

If the deceased person was part of a couple, the surviving member will receive a 3-month run-on for:

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

Where a bereaved person forms a couple with a new partner during the run-on period, the bereavement run-on will end.

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

If a joint claim is made, the bereavement run-on can still apply if one of the partners has passed away in the first assessment period before identity is verified.

The identity of the deceased partner must be verified using documentary evidence so that entitlement to the run-on from the first assessment period can be paid to the bereaved partner.

If the surviving member of the couple is over Pension Credit qualifying age they can receive Universal Credit for the 3-month run-on period. Once the run-on period has ended, Universal Credit will end and if applicable the claimant must make a new claim for Pension Credit and pension age Housing Benefit.

At any time before the end of the 3-month run-on period, a surviving claimant over State Pension age can choose to stop receiving Universal Credit and claim Pension Credit and pension age Housing Benefit:

- the Universal Credit claim will end with effect from the start of the assessment period in which they decide to stop claiming
- a claim for Pension Credit and/or pension age Housing Benefit can be backdated to when their Universal Credit award ended provided that this is within 3 months of the Pension Credit and/or pension age Housing Benefit claim and normal conditions of entitlement are met

Certain other payments will also continue for the 3-month run-on period, for example if a child dies and additional payments are being made through Universal Credit such as:

- the additional amount for a child
- 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 being due to their estate and must not be taken into account during the run-on period. Any earnings for the deceased received after the date of death are disregarded.

## **Non-dependants**

If a non-dependant who lives in the same property dies, the claimant (or 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 additional amount for a carer 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**

A child is likely to be in considerable distress when 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 and care, it may impact on their ability to:

- search for work, or
- be available for work

In these circumstances, the claimant's work-related requirements will be suspended for 1 month.

Main carers can access the switching-off requirements (easement) once every 6 months for a period of 2 years from the time of death. See [Child in considerable distress and Switching-off work availability and work-related activities](#).

## **Claimant Commitment**

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

For further guidance on this and the impact that bereavement has on Labour Market regimes, see [Claimant Commitment](#).

## **Debt and deductions after death**

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

If an overpayment is caused because one member of a couple dies, an overpayment decision must be made according to business 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 but is only recoverable from the landlord if they have failed to disclose the death of their tenant (for example, if they were aware of the death and then failed to report it). Otherwise, the overpayment will 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 and for the purposes 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 overpayments
- Administrative Penalties
- Social Fund loans

In addition, a search is made for an estate in respect of all claimants who die whilst 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 regarding the claimant's savings and capital was complete (many claimants are unsure of, or forget, what savings they have).