

Additional amount for children: Guidance

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Introduction

The additional amount for a child is payable for a child or qualifying young person for whom the claimant has the main responsibility.

A child is someone under the age of 16.

A qualifying young person is someone aged over 16 in the following situations:

- from their 16th birthday until 31 August following that birthday whether or not they are in full time education or training
- up to 31 August following their 19th birthday if they are enrolled in or have been accepted for approved training or a course of non-advanced education which averages over 12 hours per week during the term.

The education or training must have started before they reach 19 or they must have been enrolled or accepted to undertake that education or training before then.

A person in receipt of (and who continues to be entitled to) Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) in their own right is not a qualifying young person.

However, a young person in full-time non-advanced education:

- who has been entitled to Universal Credit, ESA or JSA in their own right because they met one of the education exceptions, and
- a change in their circumstances now means that the education exception no longer applies

will cease to be entitled to benefit in their own right and, if of a qualifying young person age, will be treated as such.

Their parents can claim Child Benefit and (if eligible) the additional amount for a child payment of Universal Credit.

Apprenticeships

When a young person becomes an apprentice, they are in work and no longer regarded as a child or qualifying young person for benefit purposes, even though they may still live with their parents or guardians.

Education or training provided by means of a contract of employment (which includes apprenticeships) does not count as education or training for the purposes of satisfying the definition of a qualifying young person. The parent or guardian will no longer be entitled to the additional amount for a child for the young person in these circumstances.

April 2017 changes

Since 6 April 2017, the additional amount for a child is no longer paid for a third or subsequent child or qualifying young person born on or after 6 April 2017 unless an exception applies.

Universal Credit will include this additional amount for eligible children until either of the following occur:

- the end of August following each child's 16th birthday
- the end of August after each child's 19th birthday if they are still living at home and taking a non-advanced course at school or college or taking part in approved training

See 'Changes to the additional amount for a child from April 2017' below.

Premium for the first child

The additional amount for a child or qualifying young person is paid as part of the Universal Credit maximum amount. There are 2 different amounts:

- a higher amount for the first child or qualifying young person if the child was born before 6 April 2017
- a standard amount for any subsequent children or qualifying young persons or for all children born after 6 April 2017

See Rates for Universal Credit.

The higher amount will **only** be paid if the first child or qualifying young person is born before 6 April 2017. The standard rate will be paid for all children born after 6 April 2017 regardless of whether they are the first child.

Changes to the additional amount for a child from April 2017

Claimants are able to receive the additional amount for any children born before 6 April 2017 regardless of when the claim to Universal Credit was made. However, if a third or subsequent child is born on or after 6 April 2017, they will not receive the additional amount for that child unless an exception applies. See 'Exceptions to the additional amount for a maximum of two children' below.

Universal Credit will continue to pay the additional amount for any child born before 6 April 2017.

If a single parent claiming Child Tax Credit forms a couple with a single parent already receiving Universal Credit, the Child Tax Credit claimant and their children will be added to the Universal Credit claim.

The newly formed household will be able to receive the additional amount for any children born before 6 April 2017. However, they won't be entitled to the additional amount for any third or subsequent child born on or after 6 April 2017 unless an exception applies. Children may need to be re-ordered in the new household, see 'How to 'order' children or qualifying young persons where an exception may apply' below.

Exceptions to the additional amount for a child for a maximum of two children

A number of exceptions apply to the two-child maximum. This is because some parents are not in the same position as others to make the same choices about the number of children in their family.

Exceptions will apply to a third or subsequent child or qualifying young person who:

- is born as part of a multiple birth, such as twins (the claimant will not receive the additional amount for the first child born as part of a multiple birth if they already have 2 children recorded on the claim, however they will receive the additional amount for every other child born as part of the multiple birth)
- is likely to have been born as a result of non-consensual conception or at a time when the claimant was subject to ongoing control or coercion by the other parent of the child

To determine which child or qualifying young person is the third or subsequent in the household, they are ordered according to a set of rules. See 'How to 'order' children or qualifying young persons where an exception may apply' below.

From 28 November 2018 claimants will be able to get the additional amount for any child or qualifying young person who:

- is adopted from local authority care
- is living with the claimant as part of either:
 - a formal caring arrangement (such as a child arrangement order or special guardianship) or was in such an arrangement until their 16th birthday and has continued to live with the claimant, or
 - an informal caring arrangement (often known as kinship care in England), friends and family care or connected persons care where it is likely they would otherwise be looked after by the local authority
 - a kinship care arrangement for a child who is not looked after, either under a court order (such as a Kinship Care Order) or a private care arrangement (Scotland only)
- is born to a child aged under 16 for whom the claimant is also responsible

Children or qualifying young persons in caring arrangements, or who are adopted from local authority care, will be discounted when ordering the children in the household. These children will not affect any amounts the claimant may be able to get for any other children in the household.

Evidence required to verify an exception

If a claimant adds any children or qualifying young persons to an existing Universal Credit claim and that child meets one of the exception criteria, they must provide

relevant evidence. Further details of what evidence is required can be found in the following sections.

If evidence of an exception is not provided within 14 days of the date requested (for a change of circumstances) or 1 month of the date requested (for a new claim including any declarations made within the first assessment period) the exception cannot be applied.

In cases where the claimant has already provided evidence related to children likely to have been born as a result of non-consensual conception, or coercive and controlling behaviour to HMRC (for example, when claiming Child Tax Credit), DWP will receive confirmation direct from HMRC. Once confirmed, this exception will be applied without asking for evidence again.

Multiple births

The multiple birth exception applies to all third or subsequent children or qualifying young persons in a household who are born to a claimant as part of a multiple birth, apart from one child in that birth (the first in the order).

Example:

A claimant has 2 children on their claim and then gives birth to twins. The additional amount for a child will only be paid for 1 child in that multiple birth (meaning that in total the claimant will be entitled to an amount for 3 out of their 4 children).

A claimant currently has 2 children on their claim and then gives birth to triplets. The additional amount for a child will only be paid for 2 of the children in that multiple birth (meaning that in total the claimant will be entitled to an amount for 4 out of their 5 children).

If the first child of the multiple birth is either the first or second child in the household, the additional amount for a child will also be awarded for that child (the first born of the multiple birth).

The claimant must provide the birth certificates of all of the children in the multiple birth as evidence for the exception.

Children living long-term in non-parental caring arrangements

This exception will apply to all children or qualifying young persons who are either:

- being cared for by friend or family carers (this cannot be the parent of the child) as an alternative to being taken into local authority care (this may be a formal or informal arrangement), or
- born to a child aged under 16 for whom the claimant is also responsible

This exception will not apply to non-parental care arrangements where the child is looked after by the local authority.

Children cared for by friends and family carers

Friends and family care is an arrangement whereby a child or qualifying young person who cannot be cared for by their parent(s) goes to live with a relative or a friend for an extended period of time, not just at weekends or for two weeks in the holidays.

This can be grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles or other relatives, godparents, step-grandparents or other adults who have a relationship with or connection to the child (often known as Kinship Care in England).

These can be:

- formal arrangements such as when a Guardianship Order is in place
- informal arrangements made by parents with a close relative (for example, because a parent has died)
- Kinship Care arrangements (Scotland only) either under a court order (such as a Kinship Care Order) or an informal and private care arrangement

If an informal caring arrangement is to be considered for an exception, there must be a likelihood that the child would otherwise have to be looked after by a local authority. In these circumstances, the friend or family carer must provide evidence from a social worker to support this.

If a child is a 'looked after' child (referred to as Kinship Care in Scotland), the carer will not have parental responsibility and would not be considered for an exception. In Scotland, if the child is subject to a Kinship Care Order, the exception would apply, and the carer will have parental responsibility.

The exception does not apply when a claimant is the parent or step-parent of the child.

The exception will apply if the claimant has any of the arrangements listed in the paragraph below. See 'Evidence required for children living long-term in non-parental caring arrangements'.

Child of a child

If a child or qualifying young person under 16 (for whom the claimant is responsible) becomes the parent of a child, the new child will be exempt if they are also living in the claimant's household.

This exception will remain in place until the young parent leaves the household or turns 16 and is able to claim in their own right.

Evidence required for children living long-term in non-parental caring arrangements

For evidence of formal arrangements, the claimant must provide 1 of the following:

- entitlement to Guardian's Allowance
- Special Guardianship Order
- Child Arrangement Order
- appointment as a guardian

In Scotland only, the evidence required is a court order such as a Kinship Care Order (or a Permanence Order) which gives legal parental responsibilities or rights.

For evidence of informal arrangements (including kinship caring arrangements in Scotland), the claimant must provide the form 'Support for a child who is informally living with you' This can be downloaded from GOV.UK and must be signed by a local authority social worker.

If claiming for the child of a child, the claimant must also provide the child's birth certificate.

Adoption

This exception applies to any child or qualifying young person who is adopted by a claimant from local authority care. The exception will not apply if:

- either the claimant or the claimant's partner is the biological parent of the child or qualifying young person
- either the claimant or the claimant's partner was the child's step-parent immediately prior to adoption
- the child is adopted from abroad

This is to ensure that the exception only applies when the child or qualifying young person would otherwise be in local authority care.

The claimant must provide 1 of the following to verify this exception:

- an adoption certificate
- if the adoption has not yet been formally completed, written evidence from a social worker which includes the date the child was placed with them and the name of the child and adoptive parent(s)

Children likely to have been born as a result of non-consensual conception or coercive and controlling behaviour

An exception applies to the third or subsequent children likely to have been conceived:

- as a result of non-consensual conception

- at a time when the claimant was in a coercive or controlling relationship with the other parent of the child

In order for this exception to apply, the claimant must no longer be living with the other biological parent.

A claimant who was subject to coercion or control by the other biological parent at the time the child was conceived is to be treated as not having consented to the sexual intercourse that led to the conception.

It is very important to have this exception in place to ensure that a claimant in these circumstances gets the support they need in a not overly intrusive manner.

If the claimant has not already provided evidence with HMRC then they must provide one of the following pieces of evidence:

- evidence of a conviction or Criminal Injury Compensation Scheme decision relating to the child
- form 'Support for a child conceived without your consent' which can be downloaded from GOV.UK

The claimant must take the above form to their chosen third-party professional body to be completed. Detailed instructions on how to complete the forms and guidance for third-party professional bodies can be found on GOV.UK.

Third-party professional bodies include:

- health care professionals including GPs, other doctors and nurses, midwives and health visitors
- registered social workers
- approved specified organisations such as specialist rape charities recognised by the Secretary of State (Universal Credit) or by the Treasury (Child Tax Credit)

DWP staff will not question the claimant about the incident other than to take the claim and receive the supporting evidence and information. Any data or information received will be handled in accordance with the rules that DWP already use for holding and using extremely sensitive data.

How to 'order' children or qualifying young persons where an exception may apply

To decide if a child or qualifying young person is the third or subsequent child, all the children in the household are automatically ordered according to the following rules:

- if any children are in non-parental caring arrangements (including a child of a child) or adopted when they would otherwise be in local authority care, these children will be disregarded when ordering and the additional amount for a

child will be payable for them regardless of the order in which they joined the household

- each remaining child is ordered according to their date of birth from the earliest to the latest date

Who is responsible for a child or children?

A person will be able to claim the additional amount for a child if they have main responsibility for the care of that child or qualifying young person. This will normally be the person they live with most of the time - but not in all circumstances.

For Universal Credit purposes, the person with the main caring responsibility is known as the lead carer.

If the child normally lives with two people in separate households, they will be asked to jointly nominate the person who will be the lead carer.

If they cannot agree, a decision maker will decide who the responsible person is. This will be based on who has main caring responsibilities for the child.

Only one benefit unit can receive the additional amount for a child for each child or qualifying young person.

A claimant cannot be responsible for a qualifying young person who they are living with as a couple.

See the Work-related requirements table showing the regime into which the lead carer should be placed and Work Focused Interview regime: Characteristics, for claimants who are expected to work in the future but are currently the nominated lead carer for a child or children.

Child included in more than one claim

A child or qualifying young person can only be included in one Universal Credit claim. If they:

- normally live with 2 or more people who are not a couple, or
- more than one claimant is claiming the additional amount for a child for the same child or qualifying young person

the deciding factor is the person who has main responsibility.

The persons with whom the child or qualifying young person normally lives must decide who has the main responsibility. If agreement on this cannot be reached, DWP will make a decision based on the evidence gathered.

When DWP makes the decision to remove the additional amount for a child from either claimant, the decision will be a:

- revision - if the additional amount for a child is removed from the start of the claim
- supersession - if it is removed from a later point in the claim

When a child is removed from the claim, clear grounds for revising or superseding an award must be identified and the claimant notified of this.

Claimants can raise their own Mandatory Reconsideration against the revision or supersession on their claim.

Removing the additional amount for a child

When a claimant is found not to have the main responsibility for a child, the child must be removed from the claim from one of the following dates:

- start date of the claim
- date the child was added to the claim
- day after the last date the claimant had the main responsibility for the child

Ineligible partners with children

A person is responsible for a child or qualifying young person who normally lives with them regardless of whether they are the child of an ineligible partner. See Ineligible partner: Guidance.

If the eligible and ineligible partners are living together as a couple, the child is still 'normally living with' the eligible partner and is therefore part of their Universal Credit claim.

The child or qualifying young person will be taken into account for the additional amount for a child (subject to the 2-child maximum) and housing in the eligible partner's claim.

Verifying a child or qualifying young person's details

The Child Benefit Service (CBS) is used to verify existence, residency and responsibility for all children. DWP has an agreement with HMRC which allows certain staff to have access to CBS.

The Life Events Verification Portal can also be used to verify child details before a claim to Child Benefit is made.

Not being in receipt of Child Benefit does not necessarily mean that a claimant is not entitled to the additional amount for a child.

If the child or qualifying young person does not appear on CBS or the Life Events Verification Portal (for example, in the case of a new-born child), the claimant must provide acceptable evidence:

- of the existence of the child (for example, an adoption certificate, full birth certificate or passport)
- that they have responsibility for the child (for example, a Child Benefit award letter)
- of the relationship of the child to the claimant (for example, adoption certificate or full birth certificate)

The claimant does not need to provide all of the above, but the agent must be satisfied that they have responsibility for the child or qualifying young person.

If the child is disabled, the Customer Information System (Searchlight) must be accessed to confirm that they receive:

- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- Adult Disability Payment (in Scotland), or
- Child Disability Payment (in Scotland)

If this cannot be verified through the Customer Information System (Searchlight), the claimant must provide evidence including:

- Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Adult Disability Payment (in Scotland) or Child Disability Payment (in Scotland) award letters
- a letter from a doctor or ophthalmologist if the child is blind

These are examples and not a complete list.

If the information on CBS and the Customer Information System (Searchlight) differs to that which the claimant has entered on their Universal Credit account, the information already held on both these systems will be used.

When the additional amount for a child won't be paid

The additional amount for a child will not be paid if the child or qualifying young person is:

- in prison
- the third or subsequent child in a household born on or after 6 April 2017 unless an exception applies (see 'Exceptions to the additional amount for a maximum of two children')
- looked after by a local authority (see below for exceptions)
- looked after by a foster carer (see Foster carers)
- looked after and placed with a kinship carer by a local authority under the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009
- temporarily absent from the household for 6 months or more
- absent from Great Britain for 1 month or more (this can be extended for a further month if the absence is due to the death of a close relative of the child)

- living outside the UK
- no longer part of the benefit unit
- aged 16 and not in full-time non-advanced education after 31 August following their 16th birthday
- currently part of someone else's benefit claims for:
 - Child Tax Credit
 - Employment and Support Allowance
 - Jobseeker's Allowance

When a child or qualifying young person is cared for by a local authority

For Universal Credit purposes, being 'looked after by a local authority' refers to a child or qualifying young person who is being cared for or housed by a local authority for a reason other than respite care.

The child may be placed with a foster parent or another family member or individual with a pre-existing relationship with the child (referred to as a Kinship Carer in Scotland).

The child may be placed with a foster parent or another family member.

The local authority will provide financial support for the child and the responsible person will no longer be eligible for the additional amount for a child.

There are two exceptions to when the additional amount for a child is awarded for a child or qualifying young person who is looked after by a local authority when the carer is not a foster parent. These are:

- during a short break of respite care (if this exceeds 6 months, temporary absence rules will apply)
- when the local authority places the child to live with, or is to continue to live with, their parent or a person who has parental responsibility for them

In Scotland, where a child is placed under a permanence order that gives the carer parental responsibility, the carer is not treated as a foster parent. The second exception above applies and they can receive the additional amount for the child.

Disabled Child Addition

Families with 1 or more disabled children or qualifying young persons may be eligible for extra support with the Disabled Child Addition.

In most cases the Disabled Child Addition can only be considered where the additional amount for a child has already been awarded for the same child or qualifying young person with the disability.

However, non-payment of the additional amount for children for any third or subsequent children will not prevent payment of the Disabled Child Addition.

Example:

A claimant has 3 disabled children and is only eligible for the additional amount for a child for 2 of them. The Disabled Child Addition will be paid for all 3 children.

The Disabled Child Addition is payable at 2 rates:

- Higher Rate when the child or qualifying young person:
 - receives the higher rate Disability Living Allowance or Child Disability Payment (in Scotland) care component
 - receives Personal Independence Payment enhanced daily living component
 - receives Adult Disability Payment (in Scotland) enhanced daily living component
 - is blind (a child who is blind might not be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment and the claimant must be asked to provide a Certificate of Visual Impairment)
- Lower Rate when the child or qualifying young person receives:
 - Disability Living Allowance or Child Disability Payment (in Scotland) at the middle rate or lower rate care component
 - Disability Living Allowance mobility component at either of the 2 rates
 - Personal Independence Payment standard daily living rate component
 - Personal Independence Payment standard or enhanced mobility rate
 - Adult Disability Payment standard daily living rate component
 - Adult Disability Payment standard or enhanced mobility rate

A claimant who is a foster carer cannot receive the additional amount for a child or the Disabled Child Addition for any child they are fostering.

Child or qualifying young person is aged 16 and over

A claimant must notify Universal Credit if a child is going to continue in full-time non-advanced education or approved training after the age of 16. This is so they can continue to receive the additional amount for a child and the Disabled Child Addition if appropriate.

Non-advanced education is study up to the standard of the following:

- GCSEs
- A levels or equivalent
- NVQ/SVQ level 1, 2 or 3
- BTEC National Diploma, Ordinary National Certificate and First Diploma
- Scottish Standard Grades

- Scottish Highers

This is not a complete list.

Child or qualifying young person in home education

Universal Credit will include the additional amount for a child for any eligible children in home education until either of the following occur:

- the end of August following each child's 16th birthday
- the end of August after each child's 19th birthday if they are still living at home and in home education taking a non-advanced course or taking part in approved training.

For the claimant to qualify for the additional amount for a child, the following must be taken into account:

- the education must have started before the child's 16th birthday
- the education must exceed an average of more than 12 hours per week during term time and must include receiving tuition, engaging in practical work or supervised study or taking examinations.
- the home education must not be a form of further education or contract of employment and must be approved by the local authority or Secretary of State.

Life skills courses are classed as non-advanced education and are considered for eligibility for the additional amount for a child.

Qualifying young person ends full-time non-advanced education

If a young person aged 17 to 19 has ended a course of non-advanced education (is no longer enrolled on a course and doesn't have a further follow-on year to complete), they are no longer treated as a qualifying young person.

If a young person aged 16 is not enrolled on a further course of non-advanced education, they are no longer treated as a qualifying young person after 1 September following their 16th birthday.

In both cases, the parent or guardian claiming Universal Credit is no longer entitled to the additional amount for a child for that young person.

In the case of a young person aged 16, if their course ends:

- before 1 September following their 16th birthday, payment of the additional amount for a child will stop on the first day of the assessment period in which the 1 September falls

- after 1 September following their 16th birthday, payment of the additional amount for a child will stop on the first day of the assessment period in which the course end-date falls

The parent or guardian may continue to receive Child Benefit payments for the young person for a short period unless they claim Universal Credit in their own right. If the young person does claim Universal Credit, Child Benefit payments must be stopped immediately.

Young persons aged 18 or 19 can claim Universal Credit in their own right the day after they complete their non-advanced education course. Even if they intend to take up advanced education, they will not be treated as receiving education until their new course begins.

Young persons aged 16 or 17 will only be able to claim Universal Credit in their own right if they meet one of the lower-age exceptions. See Under 18s.

When a child dies

Where the additional amount for a child is payable and that child dies, it will remain in payment for a 3-month run-on period, which includes the assessment period in which the child died and the following 2 assessment periods. This also applies to the Disabled Child Addition if in payment.

If there are any ongoing paid childcare costs, the claimant will continue to receive help with these costs until the end of the second assessment period following the assessment period in which the death occurred.

The run-on also applies when a new-born child is added to the benefit unit and dies in that same assessment period, and where the claimant did not add the child to the claim before death, for example if the child died shortly after birth.

The run-on will apply where either the:

- claimant is the child's parent, either with responsibility for the child or a non-resident parent
- child is part of the benefit unit regardless of whether biologically related to the claimant.

If the first or second child in a 3-child family dies, the third child will then become eligible for the additional amount for a child once the run-on ends.

When an agent is notified of the death of a dependent child, they must create and follow the 'Record the death of a child' to-do in the claimant's account on the Universal Credit service. This instructs the agent that we do not need to verify the child's death if it has been reported by the claimant.

By completing the to-do, the child will automatically be removed from the claim after the 3-month run-on period and the claimant will receive an automatic journal message to inform them of this.

The claimant commitment and all conditionality must be switched off for a mandatory period of 6 months (which may be 6 months or the next 6 assessment periods) from the day that the death occurred. See Switching off work availability and work-related activities.

Agents must offer optional support to the claimant after 3 months with a Commitments Review to take place after 6 months.

Note: this guidance does not apply to stillborn babies.

Stillbirths or miscarriages

If a claimant suffers a stillbirth or a miscarriage, they do not become responsible for a child. Therefore, the claimant is not entitled to any amount of Universal Credit for the child for any period.

Bereavement run-on does not apply to miscarriages or stillborn children.

Overpayments

Once a decision has been made in relation to the award, the case must be referred to Debt Management.