

Passported benefits: Guidance

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Introduction

Passported benefits are benefits or schemes which some people are entitled to because of their entitlement to certain other benefits.

Extra support that claimants in receipt of Universal Credit may be entitled to includes:

- help with health costs including prescriptions and dental treatment
- free school meals and other educational benefits
- Healthy Start vouchers
- legal aid
- help with the costs of using courts or tribunals
- help with prison visiting costs
- help from energy and water suppliers
- Warm Home Discount
- Cold Weather Payments
- Sure Start Maternity Grant (Best Start in Scotland)
- funeral payments
- low-cost phone packages
- travel discount schemes

These are the main benefits but the list is not exhaustive. Claimants who are receiving Legacy benefits are also eligible for this extra support.

There are many other schemes which are delivered locally.

Development work is currently underway on a number of the passported benefits listed in this guidance. As this work is completed, information about these schemes will be added to the guidance. For more information on eligibility and how to apply see [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

For claimants in Scotland or Wales, the support they could receive may be slightly different. Please visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Passported benefits sit outside core Universal Credit policy with eligibility criteria for each passported benefit remaining the responsibility of the government department, devolved administration or utility company that owns it.

Passported benefits information (including examples of earnings thresholds) is included on Universal Credit award notifications. This information should help to signpost claimants for more information and help practitioners to establish eligibility for these benefits.

Passported benefits checker

For more information on checking entitlement to passported benefits and other available financial support, see [Check benefits and financial support you can get - GOV.UK](#).

Help with health costs

A claimant may be entitled to help with health costs if:

- they receive Universal Credit and have had no earnings (or net earnings) of £435 or less during their most recent assessment period
- they receive Universal Credit and have:
 - limited capability for work or limited capability for work and work-related activity, or
 - are responsible for a child, and
 - have had no earnings or net earnings of £935 or less during the most recent assessment period

If a claimant is entitled to help with health costs they will get:

- free NHS prescriptions (the new prescription form includes a 'Universal Credit' tick box, if the old form is used – claimants should continue to select the 'Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance' box while stocks last)
- NHS dental treatment
- free wigs and fabric supports
- free sight tests
- access to optical vouchers to help with the cost of glasses or contact lenses
- travel to an NHS appointment on referral by a primary care practitioner (for example, doctor, dentist or optician)

How to claim help with health costs

A claimant who requests help with health costs will be asked by the healthcare professional to show their Universal Credit statement page at the point the prescription is dispensed.

If the claimant is unsure about their entitlement to support with health costs (for example, because they are waiting for a decision on their claim or to receive their award letter), they should pay the relevant charge and ask for a refund form at the same time.

For prescription charges, the refund form must be obtained at the same time that the costs are paid as it will not be issued later. Once the claimant receives their award letter they can claim a refund. The refund must be claimed within 3 months of the date the charge was paid.

If the claimant receives Universal Credit and meets all the criteria for help with health costs but didn't get the refund form, they must contact the NHS Business Services Authority who will consider applications for refunds on a case by case basis. It must be emphasised that a refund is not guaranteed.

Penalty charges

A claimant must make sure that they are claiming health costs correctly as checks are made on forms they have signed.

If a claim for help with health costs is made incorrectly, or the claimant is unable to prove that they are entitled, they may have to pay a penalty charge if they are subsequently found to be not entitled.

The penalty charge will be 5 times the charge that the claimant should have paid up to a maximum of £100. If the claimant fails to pay the penalty charge, the NHS can take action to recover the debt in court. The penalty charge will be increased by 50% if you the claimant does not pay within 28 days of the date the penalty notice was issued.

Healthy Start scheme

Healthy Start is a UK-wide government public health scheme that provides a nutritional safety net for pregnant women, new mothers and young children in low income families.

The Healthy Start scheme helps claimants to buy milk, fresh fruit and vegetables, plain frozen fruit and vegetables and infant formula milk.

A Universal Credit claimant may qualify for Healthy Start vouchers if:

- they are more than 10 weeks pregnant, or
- have at least one **verified** child included in their claim under the age of 4, and
- they (and their partner if they have one) have net earnings of £408 or less per month

For the verification of children, see Additional amount for children.

Anyone under the age of 18 and pregnant is also eligible, even if they don't receive any benefits.

The claimant receives 1 voucher per week if:

- she is pregnant
- has a child aged between 1 and 4

Two vouchers per week are issued if the child is under 1.

The vouchers can be used in any shop that is registered to take part.

Retailers cannot charge a handling fee for accepting the vouchers. They must give Healthy Start foods to the full value of each voucher and must not give change.

A claimant can also receive coupons to swap for free Healthy Start branded vitamins suitable for:

- pregnant women
- breastfeeding women
- children aged 6 months to 5 years old

The Healthy Start voucher application must be signed by the claimant's:

- midwife
- health visitor
- registered doctor or nurse

For more information, see [Healthy Start](#).

Free school meals

England and Wales

Children whose parents or guardians have been awarded Universal Credit and whose annual net earned income does not exceed the threshold of £7400 (£616.67 per calendar month), are entitled to free school meals. By receiving free school meals, they may also be entitled to other [educational benefits](#).

A claimant already on Universal Credit and receiving free school meals at the point the thresholds were introduced (April 2018), will be protected until the end of Universal Credit roll out (September 2024), or their current phase of education if this is later (for example, primary or secondary school).

Regardless of whether a parent is receiving Universal Credit, any child in a reception year (year 1 and year 2) is entitled to free school meals.

Scotland and Northern Ireland

For information on the threshold amounts for free school meals in Scotland and Northern Ireland:

- for Scotland see [School meals](#)
- for Northern Ireland see [Free School Meals](#)

There is no transitional protection in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Help to Save

This is a new government savings scheme to help working people on low incomes build their savings. For more information, see [Help to Save](#).