

# Benefit Matters

Our newsletter for advisers in Royal Greenwich

Finance Directorate

## Coronavirus - Benefits Update

### Changes to Royal Greenwich Benefits Support Services

We know that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is causing a lot of worry, uncertainty and stress for us all and we're all working hard to maintain services while keeping staff, our families and ourselves safe. This is the first in what we intend will be a series of regular e-bulletins providing information on benefits-related government initiatives that we hope will help you assist residents contacting your services during the crisis.

#### Welfare Rights Service & Universal Support Team

We have made some changes in the Welfare Rights Service (WRS) and Universal Support Team (UST) in response to the surge in Universal Credit (UC) applications and increased demand for benefits advice and support. UST has set up a triage system to support residents who are affected or experiencing hardship during the current situation. They are also continuing to assist residents who are struggling to manage their UC claims. Contact the team on 020 8921 3333 (Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm) or via an online [contact form](#).

Capacity in WRS has also been expanded during this period. Queries will be passed from the triage team to WRS and other departments as appropriate. Support is being provided remotely for residents who need help with online forms.

**Please encourage residents to contact WRS online where possible (see below for details).**

Residents who cannot use the online form should be directed to 020 8921 3333 instead of to our usual Public Advice Line (020 8921 6375). Although this number is still active, calling 020 8921 3333 will enable the call to be picked up by the triage team and this will help us to manage calls more effectively.

It may take longer than usual for us to respond as we're receiving a higher volume of queries. Most of the team is working remotely from home and the IT systems are still evolving – please bear with us during this period. Our Advisers Advice Line number for professionals (020 8921 6376) is still active and calls are being picked up by the triage team, however it may be quicker to [email us](#). Please include a contact number and we will respond by phone or email.

#### Emergency Support Scheme

The Emergency Support Scheme criteria has been relaxed to enable the council to support residents more easily given the current situation. Changes include:

*Continued on next page...*

Advisers Advice Line  
E: [wrs.ce@greenwich.gov.uk](mailto:wrs.ce@greenwich.gov.uk)  
020 8921 6376  
Weekdays: office hours

Welfare Rights Service  
& Universal Support  
Team  
[Via online contact form on website](#); or  
020 8921 3333  
Mon to Fri: 10am - 4pm

- suspending the limit on the number of awards which can be made in a year (was previously 3);
- relaxing some of the restrictions for students and for residents with nil recourse to public funds.

Cash payments are still being issued via Post Offices as normal and applications are still being accepted for community support payments (although the latter is subject to delay). Online applications can be made [here](#). The hope is that these measures will help to ease demand on Greenwich Foodbank network.

### COVID-19 Hardship Fund

Local Authorities have been allocated additional government funding with the intention that this is mainly used to support working age residents with their 2020-21 council tax bills. Greenwich's allocation is £3,188,238. Our Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS) is the main system of support towards council tax bills. Many residents

will have their full bill covered under the scheme, as recent changes have increased the maximum payable back up to 100%. Residents who don't qualify for full help will receive an additional £150 from the hardship fund towards their council tax bill. Residents don't need to apply for this payment directly, but should apply [online for LCTS](#).

### Royal Greenwich's new Community Hub

This is a new provision staffed by Charlton Athletic Community Trust, with the support of community volunteers to support residents who are self-isolating and:

- do not have a family or support network and
- need practical support, such as collecting food or medication.

Contact them on 0800 470 4831 - lines are open Monday to Sunday from 8.30am to 6pm. Note that the Emergency Support Scheme can support residents who are not self-isolating and are able to get to the shops.

### For further information

Visit the Benefits and hardship page on the website ([www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk](http://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk)) for more information about these Royal Greenwich services.

## Government support for people affected by COVID-19

The Coronavirus crisis has forced many businesses to shut down and seen many employees laid off temporarily or permanently or put on reduced hours. The government has announced a series of benefit changes that mostly support employers and employees affected – we outline these below. The government had also been looking at ways to support self-employed people affected by the outbreak, and a new Self-Employed Income Support Scheme was announced on 26 March ([click here for details](#)). Note that this information was correct on 6 April, but the situation is constantly evolving, so please visit [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) to check the latest position.

### Universal Credit (UC)

This will be the main source of support for people who have been made redundant, been temporarily laid off work (with or without pay) or who are on a reduced income due to the Coronavirus crisis.

#### Existing UC claimants

Claimants who are already receiving UC should use their online journal to notify of their change of circumstances, their UC payments will normally be adjusted automatically.

#### New claimants

People who are not already receiving legacy benefits<sup>1</sup> may need to claim UC for the first time (this will include amounts for rent, dependent children, plus support for themselves and their partner if they have one). The government has increased the UC standard allowance by a further £20 a week from 6 April 2020 (the Working Tax Credit basic element has also increased accordingly). Claims must be made online via the [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK) website. The UC helpline to claim is 0800 328 5644.

<sup>1</sup> Income Support, income-based JSA, income-related ESA, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit

Claimants have a 5-week wait to receive their first payment, but can apply for an interest-free loan for 12 months (known as an advance payment). They (and their partner if they have one) also need to agree their claimant commitment for the claim to proceed. This sets out their work search requirements and is currently being agreed over the phone (instead of at a new claims interview at the jobcentre). Indeed, the DWP have confirmed the [suspension of all face-to-face appointments](#) for the foreseeable future – these will be conducted online or by phone. Local jobcentres remain open, but only for emergency cases.

JCP have indicated that clients will not be sanctioned for anything COVID-19 related. Work search has also been suspended for claimants in self-isolation.

### Problems with online UC verification system

The DWP have seen a huge surge in UC applications with nearly a million new claims being made in the two-week period up to 1 April. As a result and due to DWP 'capacity challenges', claimants are experiencing significant delays trying to get through to the helpline to make an appointment with the jobcentre and with verifying their identity online, with some claimants reporting online queues of up to 100,000 in number and being kept on hold for 2 or more hours or being unable to get through at all. The DWP are moving up to 10,000 additional civil servants onto UC to cope with the surge.

Colleagues on the Rightsnet Discussion Forum have had success employing the following strategy:

- advising claimants to log into their UC account whilst remaining in the 'verify' queue – they'll need to do so via a new browser tab;
- then go to the Journal section and use the 'Appointments' option to request a callback from the DWP and explicitly ask for the biographical test and ID verification to be done over the phone.

The Journal enables claimants to send direct messages to the DWP and receive an automated response back. This will enable the call to the UC claim line to continue as well as waiting for the verify process to complete.

### Tip for workers who need to claim UC because their employment has come to the end

It's worth considering when to make the UC claim and possibly delaying it if someone has stopped working and are due a large payment imminently (for example, within the next week). This is because UC takes into account the date income is received rather than the period for which it is paid, so for claimants who are due a final payment, they may be better off financially to delay claiming UC until that is received and then claim the following day. If not, any earnings will be taken into account as income and will reduce the amount of UC they get.

If someone is due to receive a lower or partial payment in a few weeks, potentially it may not be worth delaying the claim. This will depend on individual circumstances and will be difficult to determine without complex better off calculations. UC can be backdated for up to one month in very limited circumstances.

Claimants who have been in recent work and whose income is too high to receive UC or legacy benefits (for example because they are a couple and one of them is still working), may qualify for [New Style Jobseeker's Allowance](#) or [New Style Employment and Support Allowance](#) based on their national insurance contribution record.

### People who are already receiving legacy benefits<sup>2</sup>

Existing legacy claimants will need to carefully consider whether or not to claim Universal Credit to check that they will be better off and may need specialist advice before they claim. Most will have no option but to claim UC, if, for example, they need to claim help with their housing costs for the first time, or for living costs for themselves or their partner. However, it's important that residents who are

<sup>2</sup> Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based JSA, income-related ESA or Income Support

in doubt get advice before claiming UC as claiming will bring any existing legacy benefits they are receiving to an end straight away and they will not be able to reclaim them in the future. Advice will be more complicated for households receiving disability benefits, living in temporary accommodation of some types of supported accommodation.

Existing legacy claimants may now qualify for increased help and will be able to remain on their existing benefits as long as the change in their circumstances does not necessitate a new claim for another legacy benefit. The Low Incomes Tax Reform Group (LITRG) has a helpful webpage which considers the impact of work changes on tax credits – you can find it here: [www.litrq.org.uk/latest-news/news/200331-how-do-work-changes-affect-tax-credits](http://www.litrq.org.uk/latest-news/news/200331-how-do-work-changes-affect-tax-credits)

## Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

The government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is a temporary employment retention scheme that may help prevent some employers from making their staff redundant. It is open to all UK employers for at least 3 months starting from 1 March 2020. It is designed to support employers whose operations have been severely affected by coronavirus (COVID-19).

Employers placing employees on a leave of absence (known as a furlough) can claim for 80% of the employee's usual monthly wage costs, up to a maximum of £2,500. The scheme is open to all UK employers that had created and started a PAYE payroll scheme on 28 February 2020.

Employers wishing to use the scheme will need to register with HMRC to access this support. Claims will be online, but the online service is not yet available. HMRC expect it to be available by the end of April. The Scheme Guidance is available on [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK).

## Statutory Sick Pay and Employment and Support Allowance

Employees who are off work because they have to self-isolate may be entitled to the following:

**Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)** – SSP is worth £94.25 a week for people who are in work and whose employer is liable to pay national insurance for them. It is payable from the first day of absence (instead from the fourth day) for people who are self-isolating in accordance with [government guidance](#) on coronavirus. To qualify, they must be self-isolating for at least 4 days and be earning at least £120 on average a week. Agency workers and people on zero hour contracts may also qualify for SSP, however self-employed people cannot. The eligibility conditions are included on [GOV.UK](#). Note that some employers may also pay more than the standard amount of SSP. A Universal Credit top-up may also be payable– [see below](#).

**New Style Employment and Support Allowance (NS(ESA))** – this is the contributory element of 'ESA' in the Universal Credit system and may be an option for people who are ineligible for SSP and have paid enough national insurance contributions. Alternatively, they may prefer to just claim Universal Credit.

New regulations<sup>3</sup> have been introduced removing the 7-day waiting period for claims made on or after 13.3.20 by people affected by the coronavirus (ie in isolation or caring for a child or young person who is a member of their household and is in isolation). The regulations also enable new and existing ESA claimants (on or after 13.3.20) who are affected by the virus to be treated as having limited capability for work. They will not be required to provide a fit note (or sick note), or complete a work capability assessment (WCA) questionnaire or attend a medical examination (go to [page 6](#) for more on the suspension of health and disability assessments). Claims can be made by calling 0800 328 5644 and selecting option 2.

**Universal Credit** - may be payable to top up SSP or New Style ESA to cover rent and financial support for children. It can also be claimed without SSP or ESA.

<sup>3</sup> [The Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit \(Coronavirus Disease\) Regulations 2020](#)

## Sick notes

If evidence is required by employers of the need to stay at home due to coronavirus symptoms, sick notes can be obtained from [NHS111 online](#). [Isolation notes](#) are also available online for people living with someone that has symptoms – there's no need to contact the GP.

## Support for self-employed workers

### Government's new Self-Employed Income Support Scheme

On 26 March, Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced a new Self-Employed Income Support Scheme. This government grant provides self-employed people who have been adversely affected by coronavirus with a taxable sum worth 80% of their average monthly profits over the last 3 years up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. The grant will be payable for at least 3 months or possibly for a longer period if necessary. This offers self-employed workers the same level of support as provided for employees under [Job Retention Scheme](#).

To ensure that the scheme provides 'targeted support', it is limited to self-employed people in the following circumstances:

- with trading profits of up to £50,000 a year;
- who make the majority of their income from self-employment;
- who are already in self-employment and have a tax return for 2019. The deadline has been extended for 4 weeks to enable people who missed the January deadline to submit their 2018/19 tax returns.

The government estimates that 95% of self-employed people will be able to apply, however it will not cover people who have recently become self-employed (with less than one year's tax returns). HMRC is urgently working on setting it up and the scheme is expected to be open by beginning of June.

HMRC will contact eligible households directly and they'll be asked to complete a simple online

form. Once entitlement is established, a single backdated payment will be issued covering the 3-month period from March to May. The government has confirmed that it may look to review the tax system for self-employed people once the crisis is over.

People who are ineligible for the new scheme may qualify for one or more of the alternative forms of support which were announced earlier:

- [Business Interruption Loan Scheme](#) – an interest free loan scheme for up to 12-months;
- 12-month deferment of V.A.T bills;
- 12-month business rates holiday;
- Deferment of self-assessment income tax payments - were due in July 2020, but are now deferred until 31 January 2021;
- Statutory Sick Pay Relief for small and medium sized businesses.

Information about these schemes is available on [GOV.UK](#):

Others sources of help include:

- [Universal Credit](#) (including an advance payment) – the minimum income floor which previously limited how much UC self-employed people could get has been suspended for everyone from 6 April.
- [Hardship Provision](#) from the Local Authority.

Plus see our [Quick Guide to Benefits... table](#) to find out more.

## Help for renters

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are used to work out how much Housing Benefit or Universal Credit private tenants can get towards their rent. LHA rates have been frozen at 2016 levels until it was announced in January that the freeze would be lifted on 1 April. In March, the Chancellor also announced that LHA rates will be set at levels that mean housing support from the benefits system is sufficient to cover 30% of all private rental properties in the local area. These changes will help tenants on low incomes by increasing the amount of rent that can be covered in HB and UC. However, note that the Benefit Cap has not been lifted, so claimants qualifying for increased help may find that they are affected for the first time (unless an exemption applies). Claimants can apply for a [Discretionary Housing Payment](#) from the council if there is a shortfall – this can be considered once their UC award is known. The new LHA rates are available on [GOV.UK](#)

The government has also confirmed that:

- new evictions from social and private rented accommodation will be temporarily suspended while this national emergency is taking place;
- no new possession proceedings through applications to the court will be able to start during the crisis;
- Landlords with Buy to Let mortgages will qualify for a 3-month mortgage payment holiday.

## Help for homeowners

Currently, most homeowners can only receive mortgage support after nine months, and help is in the form of a loan. If homeowners are in hardship, it may be worth speaking to their mortgage provider for a 3-month mortgage moratorium (or payment holiday).

Useful link: [The Money Saving Expert website](#).

## Health and disability assessments suspended

The DWP has confirmed the suspension of face-to-face assessments for all sickness and disability benefits for 3-months (from 17 March 2020). This is a temporary measure to protect vulnerable people from unnecessary exposure to the virus. Anyone with a face-to-face appointment scheduled from 17 March onwards does not need to attend, they will be contacted to discuss alternative arrangements (eg over the phone or paper-based assessments). All reviews of disability benefits have also been suspended for three months. Visit [GOV.UK](#) for more information.

## Jobcentre Plus suspends face-to-face appointments

Jobcentre Plus have cancelled all routine appointments. Jobcentres are now open only for new claims and urgent enquiries. If claimants have been asked for evidence to support a claim, they are being asked to use their journal to make an appointment or to send a photo, or scanned copy, to [woolwich.contact@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:woolwich.contact@dwp.gov.uk) remembering to include their name and their work coach's name in the subject field.

Claimants should use their journal if they need to contact a member of JCP staff. It is important to make sure their contact details are up to date in case JCP needs to call them. But they are operating on low staff numbers, so messages may not be answered immediately.

## DWP suspends debt recovery

DWP have announced that they are suspending debt recovery action until further notice. This includes all benefit-related overpayments, Social Fund loans and Tax Credit debts. Most will stop immediately, but others may take longer to implement due to IT issues. Note that the suspension excludes Universal Credit advances – these will continue.

Local Authorities have also suspended referral of Housing Benefit overpayments. Royal Greenwich has also directed private sector debt collection agencies to stop their activity for Debt Management customers and are suspending voluntary debt repayments and recovery by attachment of earnings.

# Quick guide to which benefits residents may be able to claim

Scenario	May be able to claim...
Was employed, but has lost job/been made redundant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>means-tested benefits (eg <a href="#">UC</a>; if already receiving Working Tax Credit - payments will stop after 4 weeks) or contribution-based benefits (eg <a href="#">New Style JSA</a> or <a href="#">New Style ESA</a> depending on circumstances)</li> <li>Council Tax Support (CTS) – can cover up to 100% of council tax liability, depending on income. If not entitled to full support, may get additional support through <a href="#">COVID-19 Hardship Fund</a></li> <li>Tenants – may get help towards their housing costs via UC (or HB if they're an existing claimant). May qualify for a <a href="#">Discretionary Housing Payment</a> if there's a shortfall between their rent and UC housing element or HB</li> <li><a href="#">Homeowners</a> may qualify for a 3 month payment holiday – check with lender</li> </ul>
Employed, but temporarily laid off (with or without pay) – includes workers who are 'furloughed'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Job Retention Scheme</a> if employer confirms to HMRC that they are furloughed – government will then cover 80% of earnings up to a limit of £2500pm. Scheme also applies to people on zero hour contracts and agency workers</li> <li>contribution-based benefits (<a href="#">New Style JSA</a>) and/or means-tested benefits such Universal Credit (<a href="#">get advice before claiming UC if already receiving legacy benefits</a>) or increased Housing Benefit or Tax Credits (existing claimants only) depending on circumstances</li> <li>Council Tax Support – unlikely to get full support unless earnings/income very low – see <a href="#">CTS section</a> above for more information</li> <li><a href="#">Discretionary Housing Payment</a> (DHP) if there's a rent shortfall</li> <li><a href="#">Homeowners</a> may qualify for a 3 month payment holiday – check with lender</li> </ul>
Employed, but on reduced income because hours have been cut	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>means-tested benefits depending on their circumstances (such as <a href="#">UC</a>) or increased entitlement if they are already receiving benefits. UC should be adjusted automatically if already in payment. <a href="#">Get advice before claiming UC if already receiving legacy benefits</a> (eg HB or tax credits – claiming UC will bring these to an end immediately and it will not be possible to reclaim</li> <li>Working Tax Credit – claimants will be treated as continuing to work their normal hours for at least 8 weeks if the reduction in hours is temporary. WTC is payable for 4 weeks if the reduction is permanent. There's no need to report if hours are reduced due to COVID19 – HMRC are treating this as a temporary change.</li> <li><a href="#">New Style JSA</a> if reduction is permanent</li> <li><a href="#">Council Tax Support</a> and/or <a href="#">Discretionary Housing Payment</a> – click on the links for details</li> </ul>
Employed, but off work because self-isolating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Statutory Sick Pay</a>, <a href="#">NS(ESA)</a> and possibly a means-tested benefits top-up depending on their circumstances</li> <li>Working Tax Credit (existing claimants only) – may continue for up to 28 weeks (eg if also receive ESA or SSP)</li> <li><a href="#">Homeowners</a> may qualify for a 3-month payment holiday – check with lender</li> <li>Council Tax Support – CTS can cover up to 100% of council tax liability, depending on income and circumstances eg likely maximum support if sole income is SSP or NS(ESA). May get partial support if have additional income (eg from a partner). May get additional help through the <a href="#">COVID-19 Hardship Fund</a> If not entitled to full support</li> <li><a href="#">Discretionary Housing Payment</a> (DHP) - if there's a rent shortfall</li> </ul>
Employed but unable to work because children cannot go to school or due to having to care for someone who is self-isolating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unclear – may fall into same circumstances as self-isolating for <a href="#">SSP</a> and <a href="#">NS(ESA)</a>, plus a possible means-tested benefits top-up depending on their circumstances</li> <li><a href="#">Homeowners</a> may qualify for a 3-month payment holiday – check with lender</li> <li>Council Tax Support – <a href="#">see section above</a></li> <li><a href="#">Discretionary Housing Payment</a> (DHP) - if there's a rent shortfall</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Self-employed</a> and self-isolating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">New Style ESA</a> and/or <a href="#">UC</a>. The <a href="#">minimum income floor</a> used to assess earnings from self-employment for UC is suspended. <a href="#">Get advice</a> if a partner already receives contribution-based ESA, it may be possible for an income-related ESA top-up to be paid instead of claiming UC.</li> <li>Working Tax Credit – existing claimants continue to be treated as in work for up to 28 weeks as long as they would have qualified for a sickness-related benefit (such as SSP or ESA) had they been employed</li> <li>Council Tax Support- 100% if there's no other income. <a href="#">Click link</a> for more information</li> <li><a href="#">Discretionary Housing Payment</a> (DHP) if there's a rent shortfall</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Self-employed</a> and hours temporarily reduced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tax Credits – will be treated as continuing to work their normal hours for at least 8 weeks as long as they are still trading. It's unclear what happens after 8 weeks</li> <li><a href="#">UC</a> – see section above</li> <li><a href="#">Council Tax Support</a></li> <li><a href="#">Self-Employed Income Support Scheme</a> – must have submitted tax returns for 2018/19 (deadline extended for further 4 weeks from 26/3/20). The government will cover up to 80% of average monthly profit over last 3 years.</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Support for children</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Free School Meals Voucher Scheme</a></li> <li>Help with childcare costs included in Working Tax Credit and UC - continues if claimant is receiving <a href="#">SSP</a>. WTC childcare element also continues as long as they're still treated as being in work for WTC purposes (eg for up to 28 weeks while receiving ESA and during the 4-week run-on period)</li> <li><a href="#">Healthy Start Vouchers</a></li> </ul>

## Carer's Allowance rules relaxed

The government has confirmed that the Carer's Allowance regulations<sup>4</sup> have been amended to allow for a temporary 'break in caring' to be permitted where the break is due to either the carer or the cared for person suffering from coronavirus or needing to self-isolate due to the virus. Carer's Allowance will not stop where the break exceeds the usual period for this reason. Other rules do continue to apply, for example, the earnings rule still applies if the carer is unable to provide care, but goes to work instead. However, in general this is a welcome change, which we expect to benefit many carers who through no fault of their own cannot provide their usual level of care.

In recognition of the fact that many carers and disabled people will fall into the 'self-isolating' group and will not be in a position to provide the usual face to face care, the DWP have also relaxed the rules around other types of care that can count towards the 35-hours of care needed to qualify for Carer's Allowance – the provision of emotional support can now be included. Visit [Carers UK](#) for more information.

## Sources of support for children

### Healthy Start Vouchers

Healthy Start vouchers are an important source of help which provides free food (fresh/frozen fruit/vegetables and infant formula) and vitamins for pregnant women and children under 4 years old in low income families. This is an important source of financial help that many low-income families miss out on.

As part the digitalisation of the scheme, from 6 April 2020, applications no longer need to be signed by a health professional. Please share with residents and encourage eligible families to register. The change will be communicated on the Healthy Start website, but at the time of writing it had not yet been updated.

For more information about Healthy Start:

- visit the [Healthy Start website](#)
- see our Spotlight in the [January issue of Benefit Matters](#).

### New free school meals voucher scheme

The government has launched a voucher scheme for children who are eligible for free school meals but are unable to access them because they are not attending school due to the Coronavirus outbreak. The scheme applies to children of parents who are receiving a qualifying benefit/s or satisfy the eligibility criteria for benefit-related free school meals – visit the [Royal Greenwich website](#) for details.

Schools have the option of providing meals or food parcels for collection or delivery themselves, but where this isn't possible the school will provide families with a voucher worth £15 a week for each eligible child who is not attending school. Schools will not have to bear the cost of the voucher scheme; the Department for Education (DfE) will cover the payments centrally. This help will be provided both during term-time and the Easter holidays.

Children who become newly eligible for free school meals will also be supported. Parents applying for Council Tax Support will not need to apply separately for free school meals for their child, entitlement will be assessed automatically. In other circumstances, parents will need to download and complete a [registration form](#) available on the Royal Greenwich website to apply.

The voucher will be issued directly to the parent with caring responsibility for the child. It will be issued electronically as an e-gift card or as a printed gift card for parents without Internet access. Parents will be able to use the gift card at a range of supermarkets. The list of participating supermarkets currently includes Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Morrisons, but excludes budget supermarkets such as Lidl and Aldi. The DfE is working to see if the list can be extended.

For further information - the new [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) free school meals guidance for schools](#) is available on the GOV.UK website.

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<sup>4</sup> Social Security (Coronavirus) (Further Measures) Regulations 2020 (SI.No.371/2020)



# Useful links and resources

## [Royal Greenwich website](#)

For information about council services including the Welfare Rights Service, Universal Support Team and Emergency Support Scheme

## Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)

CPAG has a new [topic area on coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) that they are updating as the situation develops. There is also a new [AskCPAG](#) facility that enables subscribers (most of whom who are now working remotely) to access their Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook as well as a range of decision-making tools. There is currently a [free trial offer](#) for new subscribers.

## [Rightsnet Open Access](#)

Rightsnet is a specialist resource delivered by LASA (the social welfare law and technology charity) providing information on areas of social welfare law including benefits. Benefits-related information includes daily news updates, case law and an online discussion forum. The information is usually for subscribers, but some of the news stories are now open to non-subscribers (Open Access). Visit the website for details.

## [GOV.UK Website](#)

[Coronavirus Support for employees, benefit claimants and businesses](#)

<https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus>

## [LITRG \(Low Incomes Tax Reform Group\)](#)

Website includes useful and clear information on tax-related and benefit issues. There is a dedicated webpage which brings together all of their tax and related benefits guidance relating to coronavirus – it's available [here](#).

# Training news

Our training programme has been suspended for now – but we are looking into how we can deliver training remotely – we will keep you informed!

# Publicity and information

We are currently working on updating our Benefit Rates card and factsheets for 2020/21, but these are now subject to delay. We will notify you by email when the Rates cards are available. Our updated factsheets will be available on [Royal Greenwich's website](#) and on the [intranet for council staff](#).

Remember – if you need advice about a resident or family you are working with, call our dedicated [advice line for advisers and staff](#) on 020 8921 6376.

If you would like this information in another format (for example in large print), please email [WRSTraining@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:WRSTraining@royalgreenwich.gov.uk). Royal Greenwich Welfare Rights Service produces 'Benefit Matters'. If you would like to contribute in any way, please email Sandra Pierre ([sandra.pierre@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:sandra.pierre@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)).



**ROYAL** borough of  
**GREENWICH**

### **Welfare Rights Service**

The Woolwich Centre

35 Wellington Street

Woolwich SE18 6HQ

Telephone 020 8921 3333

Textphone 18001 020 8921 6375

[www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefits)