**Summary of UC Benefits**

The following is intended to provide a brief and general summary of the benefits available to people who apply for Universal Credit support. A claimant can receive a combination of the following Universal Credit elements depending on their needs and family size. However, they cannot receive monthly benefit amounts that total more than the current annual **benefit cap of approximately 23K or £1,900/month** (London rate). A family of four could easily exceed this cap depending on their rental costs. If claimants earn a monthly benefit amount that exceeds the annual benefit cap, the exceeding balance is deducted from the monthly claim amount. Amounts listed below reflect the London rate and may vary depending on location and over time. **UC** currently includes a weekly Covid bonus across elements that might disappear. Elements of Universal Credit include:

**Standard Allowance:** Varies depending on whether the claimant applies as a single person under/over age 25 or as a couple under/over age 25. It also varies depending on where the claimant lives (London vs. elsewhere). As of this writing, monthly Standard Allowance in London is ([www.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit)):

* £342.72 Single under 25
* £409.89 Single over 25
* £488.59 Couple under 25
* £494.04 Couple over 25

**Housing**: Varies depending on where the claimant lives and their local authority’s “local housing allowance”. Housing benefit will not exceed the local allowance. A housing element is not provided for young adults living with their parents or living rent free. Provided below - Local Housing Allowances in London, Camden Borough ([lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/](https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx)):

* £154.19 per week Shared Accommodation Rate
* £295.49 per week One Bedroom Rate
* £365.92 per week Two Bedrooms Rate
* £441.86 per week Three Bedrooms Rate
* £593.75 per week Four Bedrooms Rate

**Child Element:** (not to be confused with *Child Benefit* which is from a different pot of funding). Child Element (and Child Benefit) ends on August 30 of the year the child turns 19 provided they remain in schooling up to this age ([www.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit)):

* £281.25 First child born before 6 April 2017
* £235.83 First child born on or after 6 April 2017
* £235.83 Second child+

Additional elements to Universal Credit are available for people who suffer extreme health conditions and disabilities that limit/prohibit them from working. These benefits are awarded beyond the benefit cap.

**Universal Credit and Employment**

Universal credit is designed to support people in transition to employment. It is a “contract” between Gov.UK and the claimant that includes the claimant’s commitment to work toward independence (barring health disabilities). To encourage the transition to employment, **UC** benefits remain active when a claimant begins to work. Benefits reduce gradually as the claimant’s earnings increase. The taper threshold begins when the claimant earns more than £292/month, which means a claimant can earn up to £292/month and still receive their full benefit package. The £292/month is called a **work allowance**. Work allowances are granted to claimants who have a child/children and/or health condition that limits their ability to work.

* £292 = **Monthly Working Allowance**
* Any amount that exceeds £292/month is deducted from the claimant’s monthly benefits @ 63p/£1, which means the claimant only keeps 37p/£1 on earnings above £292/month.
	+ Example 1: Claimant earns £500/month, which means £131.04 is deducted from their monthly **UC** benefit amount (500 - 292 = 208 x .63 = 131.04). Another way to think about this: A claimant earns £500/month but only takes home £369. (Though **UC** prefers not to use this deficit model, it’s an easier way to understand how overall monthly income is affected when working while on **UC**.)
	+ Example 2: Claimant earns £1200/month, which means £572 is deducted from their monthly **UC** benefit amount (1200 - 292 = 908 x .63 = 572) Again, another way to think about this: A claimant earns £1200/month but only takes home £628.

**Is working allowance available for young, single adults without children?**

It is my understanding there is no work allowance for single, childless, healthy adults of any age who have no disability that could limit work.

**Belfast Offices (UC Central): 0800-328-5644**

Calling the central line for help or clarification can be more efficient *sometimes* than asking Job Centre coaches whom I find have a range of knowledge regarding UC and related benefits - some coaches are well-versed on the particularities of benefits, others know very little. As well, some agents in Belfast are more helpful than others but I have had decent luck so far contacting Central/Belfast with questions. Tips:

* Anyone speaking to **UC** in Belfast on behalf of a claimant needs to be designated a caseworker on the account. You can be named a caseworker when the claimant registers for **UC**, or later via the job coach. You might even try writing a request on the claimant’s **UC** journal. Belfast will not speak with anyone who is not named on the account.
* When speaking with Belfast, have available the claimant’s DOB, phone number, post code, and email. Also have available the claimant’s other vitals (national insurance number, etc...) in case you are asked for this information. Keep an easily accessible file of these vitals.
* Also register with your local authority as the caseworker on the claimant’s account to advocate when issues arise with council tax, Child Benefit, or other local authority-based benefits, such as Discretionary Housing Payments.
* The Citizens Advice Board (CAB) is exceptionally helpful with questions regarding Universal Credit and they are easy to access via phone (0800 144 8 444) but the claimant must be present with anyone speaking on their behalf.

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