

Universal Credit Social Rented Sector (SRS) Rent Change April 2020

Frequently Asked Questions for Landlords.

Q: Are UC Full Service using the same process as April 2019 for claimants who have a rent change in April 2020?

A: Claimants continue to be responsible for informing Universal Credit of any changes to their housing costs, and to support this, we have improved the Claimant To-do process to support notifications of housing cost changes. They will be able to do this via their on-line Universal Credit account. Every claimant will receive a notification at the beginning of April, via their to-do list, reminding them to report any change to rent. In addition, we will be working to ensure that the maximum number of notifications can be managed via the portal via a matching exercise, and continuing to test options to support bulk notification of housing costs

Q: When can claimants report a change to their rent?

A: All changes need to be made once they have happened (i.e. after the rent has changed in April). While many of you will have already communicated to your tenants what steps to take, , we would be grateful if you can remind your tenants of the information they need to report to their UC account and the date of this change in any subsequent communications.

Q: Will SRS Landlords see an increase in rent verification requests?

A: In an effort to mitigate the demand on landlords during this period, DWP will not request verification in every case by setting a tolerance level. Whilst we are doing all we can to mitigate the impact for SRS landlords, it is recognised that some will see an increased volume of requests for verification during this period (see below for examples of when this could occur based on lessons from the 2019 exercise)

Q: Why are Portal landlords not able to report their changes directly

A: The claimant to-do has been reused because it reaches 100% of SRS claimants immediately, including those who cannot be targeted via the landlord portal. This also supports the principle of claimants having responsibility for declaring their own changes of circumstances (which includes changes to housing costs

Q: What is the impact on SRS landlords who are on the Landlord Portal?

A: The Portal will automatically generate a verification request whenever a claimant reports a change if it is outside of the tolerance level.

Q: Portal cases only – Will SRS landlords be able to upload their own lists of tenants' rent changes?

A: No. The Portal does not support this

Q: Can you tell me what tolerance will be applied to claimant notified changes?

A: For security and fraud prevention reasons, we are not disclosing the tolerance level

Q: Will I need to re-apply for any APA and third party deductions or will they automatically continue once a claimant responds to their To-do?

A: As long as the address is the same (i.e this is a change of housing costs only and not a change of circumstances), APAs and Third Party Deductions will continue

Q: Portal cases only – Our rents will not change on the 1st April, they will change at a point later in the year, what do we do?

A: The claimant will be asked via a to-do if their housing costs have changed; if they have not changed then the claimant can respond to that effect via the to-do, and no further action is required until the rent change occurs; at which point the claimant will need to notify the change in the normal way

Q: Will claimants whose last UC award was nil also receive a to-do?

A: Yes - If a claim is active and the claimant has housing costs, they will receive a to-do

Q: When, and how will the tolerance be applied?

A: The tolerance will only be applied to a claimant declaration made in response to the “Update your Housing Costs” To-do, which we will make available to claimants to support the rent change exercise.

If a claimant notifies a change of housing costs prior to the to-do being made available, or ignores the To-do and declares any changes via normal change of circumstances declaration; it will be treated as a standard change of housing costs, the tolerance will not be applied, and a verification will be issued to the landlord.

Q: Will a UC claimant be required to give a breakdown of rent and service charges, or just the total rent chargeable?

A: The claimant will be required to provide a full breakdown of the housing costs, including any service charges. We will provide more information in advance of the To-do’s being issued.

Q: Will the claimant have to provide details about the number of bedrooms, rent free weeks, or who is on the tenancy etc when they complete the to-do?

A: The to-do will only require a claimant to provide information around the revised housing costs

Q: In what circumstances could I receive verifications for rent changes related to the annual rent change exercise?

A: There are 2 reasons why a verification request may be received by a landlord

1. **Claimant has not responded to the 2020 “Update your Housing Costs” to-do**
Claimants will receive a to-do prompting them to notify any changes of housing costs. However, if a claimant does not report any change via this to-do, the UC service will treat

this as a standard change to housing costs: i.e. not apply any tolerance, and issue a verification via the portal to the landlord.

2. **Change notified is outside of tolerance:** This occurs when a claimants declaration in response to the To-do, specifies a change to housing costs that is outside of the pre-set tolerance level.

In all cases, landlords should respond to any portal verifications in the usual manner and these should not be ignored, or payment of claimant housing costs may be affected

Q: Why is the Bulk Upload not available?

A: Developing functionality to best support landlord rent changes is presenting a number of unique challenges. We have evaluated the results of the 2019 bulk upload test, and we are continuing to test options to best support landlords; however we are unable to simply expand the 2019 test functionality to all landlords.