



Department
for Work &
Pensions

To: *All UC Full Service Landlords*

Date 14th February 2020

Social Rented Sector - Reporting April 2020 rent changes: advice for landlords

We are writing to inform you of our plans to manage this year's rent changes in the Social Rented Sector (SRS), which have been developed to ensure that we are best able to support Social Rented Sector landlords during the April 2020 rent change period, and also influenced by feedback received from landlords following the 2019 rent changes.

This year we will be building on the successes and lessons learned during the 2019 exercise, as well as continuing to test long-term options for the future. What this means is:

- Claimants will be sent an action called a "To-Do" via their UC account. The To-do will be titled "Update your Housing Costs". This will ask for responses to a number of questions to establish whether the rent or service charge liability has changed
- Depending on the claimant's response to this, they will then be prompted to declare and confirm their new housing costs if required.
- To mitigate the demand on landlords during this period, DWP will again be taking a risk based approach and have decided not to request verification in every case. We expect this to significantly reduce the number of verification requests landlords receive as a result of the annual rent changes.
- We will be conducting a one-off exercise to increase the number of claimants matched to landlords on the portal. This means that if a rent change requires verification more will be able to be completed via the portal and not the manual route.

Last year we started testing a process to allow landlords to update their tenants rent via the portal. Early testing was positive but this remains a complex feature. This year we will continue a test and learn approach to help inform the strategic solution. This year we intend to work with a small number of large SRS landlords in order to test with higher volumes of claimants housing costs. We will contact you if you can be part of the test.



We would like to emphasise that notification of changes of housing costs remain the responsibility of the claimant; and we would ask all landlords to work with their claimants to ensure they complete the To-do in a timely manner. At a recent workshop with landlords the following para was identified as a particularly helpful example to support claimants to enter the correct information in the to-do:

If you claim **Universal Credit**

From the **6th April 2020** your new rent charge will be (**£95.05**) and your new eligible service charge will be (**£14.95**), charged (**weekly**). Please report this change to DWP on, or as soon after, the 6th April 2020, as possible.

We will provide further guidance to landlords to help you support claimants in due course, this is likely to be mid to late March, in advance of the April changes, and will be issued to all landlords using the portal and made available via Gov.uk

We will continue to work closely with landlords to help develop the Landlord Portal and help you to support your tenants, and would like to thank you for the comments received which have helped us develop the processes to support the 2020 rent changes. We are working hard to build our capacity and now have a dedicated team working on housing related features. We hope to continue our close working relationship, gathering insight to inform the development of features.

Alongside this note, please find attached an FAQ which will provide more information on the planned approach