



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

To: *All Universal Credit Landlord Portal Landlords*

**Date** 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021

## **Social Rented Sector - April 2021 Annual Rent Changes Update**

Our note issued in November 2020 to all Universal Credit Portal landlords, provided information that we will be continuing to base our approach around the principle that housing costs and their declaration are the responsibility of the claimant. It is therefore our intention, as in previous years, to provide all claimants with housing costs with a To-do to enable them to notify us of any Annual Rent Changes. To encourage completion of the To-do even where there is no change, we are renaming the to-do “**Confirm your Housing Costs**” (subject to claimant test).

As part of our preparation for Annual Rent Changes in 2021 we have been reviewing our approach and looking for ways to improve the process. From testing last year, we identified that claimants find it hard to know what information to put in the boxes in the “**Confirm your Housing Costs**” To-do.

In order to help you to help your tenants complete this to-do accurately, we will shortly be creating a page on the Landlord Portal where you can find details about what information the claimant will be asked for in the “**Confirm your Housing Costs**” To-do. We hope that by sharing this information, it will assist you when you are notifying claimants about their rent change or in supporting any specific queries that they may have.

We are currently testing the revised “**Confirm Your Housing Costs**” To-do, and once this is completed we will be able to publish the information about the To-do on the new page, our target for publishing this page is the end of January.

Subsequently, we will update this page with news and further updates on the 2021 Annual Rent Changes, and then in the future we will use it to pass on other important information. Please do check the page regularly as we are working on some improvements to the landlord part of the journey for April 2021, but our priority is to share the claimant to-do with you as soon as possible, as you start to compose your letters to claimants.

Below, you will find an FAQ to answer any questions you may have. Further information will be available via the Portal.



**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). 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 communications.

**Q: Why is the Bulk Upload not available?**

**A:** We have been using a test and learn approach to allow Landlords to upload their amended rents over the last 2 annual rent changes, both in April 2020 in Great Britain, and in Northern Ireland in October 2020. We haven't yet found a secure, scalable way for this to happen, and the test and learn has shown us significant issues to work through with landlords. As such we are unable to offer a Bulk Upload in 2021.

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

**A:** We are aiming to learn from previous years' rent changes, and are improving the Claimant to-do to ensure we are able to reduce the impact on Portal Landlords as much as possible. However, you may need to provide your claimants with support, depending on their individual needs.

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

**A:** We are still exploring options for whether there is a secure, scalable way for this to happen. However, at present this is not available.

**Q: 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 if a tolerance will be applied to claimant notified changes?**

**A:** At present we are not able to advise in regard to this. Further information may be available on the new Landlord Portal Page in due course.

**Q: Will I need to re-apply for any APA and third party deductions or will they automatically continue once a claimant reports any changes in housing costs?**

**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: Our rents will not change on the 1<sup>st</sup> April, they will change at a point later in the year, what do we do?**

**A:** Reporting rent changes remains claimant responsibility. We are exploring options for non-April rent changes, however, at present we are only able to offer a service that supports when the majority of rents change (April).



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

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

**A:** It's important your tenants can distinguish between eligible and non-eligible service charges as they will be asked to provide details of the amount of rent they are charged and then the amount of eligible service charges.

**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:** No.

**Q: How will Untidy Tenancies work?**

**A:** Claimants will receive a To-do, however, as these cases are not managed via the Portal, any subsequent landlord actions that may be required will be managed via the non-Portal route.