

***Granton Information Centre is currently closed to the public. We hope you will find some of the information on this page helpful until we reopen.***

***Please be aware that the situation is changing at a rapid rate, and government recommendations and additional support is also changing frequently.***

***We will update this page as new information is available.***



 **CRISIS SUPPORT**

If you require a foodbank voucher, please **phone**GIC on 551 2459 or 552 0458. We will require some basic information from you and provide details of where and when to attend the foodbank. Please do not come into GIC*.*

If you are in financial hardship due to a crisis, contact the [Scottish Welfare Fund](https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/scottishwelfarefund) on 0131 529 5299 to apply for a Crisis Grant.



 **IF YOU ARE EMPLOYED AND…**

* **Can’t work due to illness/ self-isolating**
* Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) has been extended to be available from the first day you are unable to work up to a maximum of 28 weeks. To claim statutory sick pay you must be earning at least £118 per week.
* It is available for all those advised to self-isolate, even if you have not yet presented with symptoms.
* NHS 111 can provide you with a sick line over the phone
* If you are not eligible for SSP, make a claim for Universal Credit: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit> or by phone on 0800 328 5644.
* If you have made enough National Insurance Contributions over the past 2 out of 3 years, you may be entitled to contribution-based (“New-style”) Employment and Support Allowance. To make an application call 0800 328 5644.

People who need to claim ESA or Universal Credit because of coronavirus will not be required to produce a sick line.
* **Job loss, reduced hours or/and income.**
* If you lose your job or experience a loss in income, claim Universal Credit (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit>, or by phone on 0800 328 5644. The DWP will provide additional telephone support with new claims. All follow-up activities will be managed online or by phone. No-one will have to visit the Jobcentre at any stage of making their new claim (although Jobcentre’s will still be staffed if you require help in person). Advance payments for the first month of a Universal Credit claim can be awarded without physically attending the Jobcentre.
* If you have made enough National Insurance Contributions over the past 2 out of 3 years, you may be entitled to contribution-based (“New-style”) Jobseeker’s Allowance: <https://www.gov.uk/how-to-claim-new-style-jsa>

If you already get Universal Credit, keep informing them of changes in income.



 **EXISTING BENEFIT CLAIMS**

* **DWP appointments**
* No requirement to attend Job Centre appointments for three months– (updated 19/3/20).
* Universal Credit claimants who are staying at home as a result of coronavirus will have their mandatory work search and availability requirements removed to account for a period of sickness.
* **Suspension of benefits assessments**
* All face-to-face assessments for benefits have been suspended for a period of three months. Assessments will be paper-based or carried out by phone where possible.
* If you have an assessment appointment, it will be cancelled. If you do attend, you should be offered the choice of either going ahead with the assessment, or leaving and having your assessment completed over the phone or by Paper Based Review.
* If you cannot attend a reassessment for Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC), you will continue to receive your payments while your assessment is rearranged.

More information is available [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/face-to-face-health-assessments-for-benefits-suspended-amid-coronavirus-outbreak).

* Benefit appeal hearings / tribunals will be managed on a case-by-case basis.


**GAS AND ELECTRICITY BILLS**

Suppliers have agreed emergency measures to ensure vulnerable people do not get cut off, if they cannot get out to top up their meter. This could involve credit being sent in the post or funds being automatically added to the meter. No credit meter disconnections should take place at this time. Debt repayments and bill payments may also be reassessed, paused or reduced where needed.

For information on measures put in place by specific energy suppliers, and how to get in contact: <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2020/03/energy-firms-move-to-help-customers-unable-to-top-up-due-to-coro/>



 **HOUSING**

* **Mortgage holiday**
* The chancellor has announced at least a three month mortgage holiday for those affected by coronavirus.
* This will **not** be applied automatically. Contact your lender – ideally by phone. Explain your financial situation - such as if you are self-employed and have had to apply for emergency benefits such as employment support allowance.
* This should not affect your credit score. Your monthly payment will change to zero, but interest will still accrue. Where repayments are deferred for a time, the borrower will need to make up these repayments in the future, which could be over the remaining term.
* **Housing costs**
* If you rent and cannot afford to meet your rent liability, contact your landlord and explain your financial situation. You may be entitled to help with your housing costs through Universal Credit.

**GRANTON INFORMATION CENTRE**

**March 2020**