Supporting prison leavers: a guide to Universal Credit

This guide has been developed for people supporting prison leavers.
This guide will help you to support prisoners and prison leavers to prepare for and make a claim to Universal Credit. It gives information on what is needed to prepare for their Universal Credit claim; how the claim can be made; and how the prison leaver can manage their claim. It also provides information on the support they can receive from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and other organisations.

About Universal Credit

Universal Credit replaces six existing benefits (Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, income-related Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Working Tax Credit).

It’s usually paid monthly (but can be paid more frequently if needed – see paragraph on Changing how people are paid). It is made up of a standard allowance and any extra amounts that apply to them, for example, if they:
- have children
- have a disability or health condition
- have housing costs

Universal Credit does not include help to pay for Council Tax. Where the prison leaver has their own tenancy they will need to claim this help separately. They should contact their local council or visit https://www.gov.uk/apply-council-tax-reduction.

Help with housing costs while in prison

Benefits usually end when someone is sent to prison however if the prisoner is detained in prison for 6 months or less, or is on remand and received help with housing costs before going into prison, Universal Credit housing costs can be paid for up to 6 months. In these circumstances the prisoner should contact the resettlement team for more information.

It is different for people claiming Tax Credits/JSA/ESA/Housing Benefit (Legacy benefits) before going into prison:

Prisoners serving 13 weeks or less are able to continue to claim Housing Benefit through the local authority. Those held in custody on remand are entitled to Housing Benefit for up to 52 weeks.

Before making the Universal Credit claim

A claim to Universal Credit cannot be made in advance of a prisoner’s release, however it is possible to start getting all the documentation and information needed to make a Universal Credit claim. At around the 12-week stage prior to release we would encourage you to start the conversation about claiming benefits and encourage the prisoner to see the prison work coach.

The Universal Credit claim does not start until the claim has been submitted. The prison leaver should make the online claim immediately or as soon as possible after their release as claims will not be back dated.
Role of the resettlement worker (England and Wales only)

The resettlement worker will meet with the prison leaver prior to their release to work on their pre-release plan. The key activities the resettlement worker will help the prison leaver with can include:

- Housing
- Finance, benefit and debt
- Domestic violence/abuse interventions
- Education, training and employment

There will be at least 1 appointment before release and further appointments can be made depending on the needs of the individual. The resettlement worker will liaise with other agencies, such as housing providers, to set up appointments for the prison leaver. The resettlement worker can also help with opening a bank account and provide help to gather evidence of identity.

Role of DWP work coaches

It’s likely that the prison leaver will engage with two different work coaches and it should be noted that these roles are slightly different.

Prison work coach (based in prisons)

They will support the prisoner whilst they are still in prison and as they are approaching release by:

- helping the prison leaver retain their job. With permission, the prison work coach can contact the employer and ask them to consider keeping the job open
- checking which benefits the prison leaver may qualify for
- checking that the prison leaver has the necessary ID and bank account and evidence, for example, tenancy agreement and proof of housing costs to support their claim. They will refer the prisoner leaver to partner prison organisations for help when they don’t have the information they need
- booking an initial appointment at the nearest jobcentre to where they’ll be living and explaining what to expect at the interview (that will take place on the day of release or the earliest available date)
- ensuring the prison leaver understands the importance of attending their interview at the jobcentre including the availability of advance payments to support them on their release

It’s really important that the prisoner takes up the offer of the appointment with both the prison work coach and resettlement worker, particularly if they will need to claim benefits on release.

Please ensure the prison leaver understands the importance of attending the jobcentre appointment that has been booked for them. This ensures that entitlement to Universal Credit starts from that day and they can access advance payments if needed. Evidence shows that if the prisoner engages with the work coach then they can, in most cases, receive their money faster.
Jobcentre work coach (based in the jobcentre)
Once released when the prison leaver attends the jobcentre they will see a work coach. The role of the work coach in the job centre is to verify the Universal Credit claim and help support the prison leaver back into work if they are fit for work or to provide appropriate support if they are not fit for work. They will:

- help the prison leaver make their Universal Credit claim if they cannot make it themselves
- work with the prison leaver to provide a tailored programme of activities that will help give them the confidence and capability to move back into work,
- identify training options and volunteering opportunities
- give them the support that they need, tailoring the claimant commitment to reflect the prison leavers situation if they are not able to work.
What is needed to make a claim

There are a number of things that are needed to make the Universal Credit claim:

- email address
- address
- phone number
- bank account details (not essential for making the claim but is needed before a payment can be made)
- evidence of identity
- where the claimant has a tenancy, we will also need to see a recent tenancy agreement and proof of housing costs

Email address

An email address cannot be set up whilst the prisoner is in prison. If the prison leaver doesn’t have an email address, the prison work coach can tell them how to set one up once they’ve been released.

Address options

Usually an address is needed to make a claim however, if the prison leaver does not have a permanent address on release, there are options available to them. They can use a care of address, like the address of a family member or trusted friend, if they are staying at a hostel they can use the hostel address as their address or in exceptional circumstances they can use their local jobcentre address. They should be encouraged to speak to the resettlement team if they will be homeless on release.

Duty to refer (England only)

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) places a duty on local authorities to get involved earlier with the aim of preventing homelessness. If the prison leaver will be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless on release they must now be referred by the resettlement team to a local authority for housing support regardless of priority need, local connection or if they are suspected of being ‘intentionally homeless’.

Opening a bank account

Universal Credit should ideally be paid into a bank, building society, or credit union account that is in the prison leaver’s or their partner’s own name. The resettlement worker can help the prison leaver to open a bank account.

In exceptional circumstances Universal Credit can be paid into someone else’s bank account or building society account. If the prison leaver has previously tried but not managed to open or access a traditional bank account, we can make a payment using a different method:

- Post Office Card accounts (only in exceptional circumstances, these are being phased out from 2020)
- payments into third party accounts
- Her Majesty’s Government Payment Exception Service (used to be Simple Payments)

For additional guidance on choosing a bank account see: [https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/choosing-a-bank-account-for-your-universal-credit-payment](https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/choosing-a-bank-account-for-your-universal-credit-payment)
Identification
In order to claim Universal Credit, the prison leaver’s identity must be confirmed. This can be done on release online via GOV.UK Verify. For more information visit https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/introducing-govuk-verify/introducing-govuk-verify

If they cannot do this online, they can take one piece of primary (photographic) evidence and 2 pieces of secondary evidence to an Initial Evidence Interview at the jobcentre, this can be booked for the prison leaver by the prison work coach. Please see Appendix 1 for a list of acceptable ID.

If they don’t have any identification:
Verifying identity is a key part to claiming Universal Credit. If the prison leaver does not have any identification they should speak to their prison work coach who will advise the prison leaver what to do once they’ve been released.

Having a representative
We call someone who deals with information on a prison leaver’s behalf, a ‘representative’. A representative is different to someone being appointed to act – it is not a legally based appointment. A representative can be any person or organisation (for example a trusted friend or a support worker, probation officer) making enquiries on the prison leaver’s behalf if, for example, they feel unable to:
- find the information they need
- understand things about their claim

We must have the prison leaver’s permission to allow another person or organisation to act for them and have access to relevant information about them. This permission is called explicit consent. This can be done by the prison leaver in writing, using the journal, over the telephone or face to face. Explicit consent does not last forever and it can be withdrawn by the prison leaver at any time:
- by making an entry on their online journal (if they have one)
- in person, at an appointment in the jobcentre
- by calling the Universal Credit helpline (The telephone number to call is 0800 328 5644. For Welsh Language call 0800 328 1744 and if they need to use textphone call 0800 328 1344).

When someone is incapable of managing their own affairs, because of mental or other incapacity, the Secretary of State may, on receipt of a written application, appoint a person aged 18 or over to act on their behalf. We refer to this person as an appointee. For more information on appointees please see: https://www.gov.uk/become-appointee-for-someone-claiming-benefits

Translation services
If English is not the prison leaver’s first language they can bring someone with them to the jobcentre to translate for them. If they do not have anyone who can do this for them please advise them to let a work coach or Universal Credit helpline agent know as we can arrange for a translator to support them.
Making the Universal Credit claim

On release, the prison leaver should make their claim online as soon as possible as the Universal Credit claim starts from the date that the claim is submitted. If the prison leaver does not have access to a computer or smartphone, they can use the computers in the jobcentre or in libraries.

If the prison leaver claims both Universal Credit and New Style JSA or New Style ESA they must ensure that they attend the Initial Evidence Interview/ claimant commitment appointment. Both claims will be disallowed if they fail to attend these appointments.

Where the prison leaver needs help to make and submit their claim online, prison work coaches will advice them to attend the jobcentre about an hour prior to their Initial Evidence Interview, where jobcentre staff will support them to make and submit their claim online.

If they are unable to use the online service, a Universal Credit helpline agent can complete the online form over the phone for them. The information entered and its accuracy is the prison leaver’s responsibility. For Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) claimants, they should be directed to the MAPPA single point of contact in the jobcentre.

When making the claim they will need to have the following information with them:
- address (including postcode)
- rent agreement (if they have one)
- details of any savings or other capital
- details of any income that’s not from work, for example from an insurance plan
- details of any other benefits they are receiving
- Child Benefit reference numbers where relevant

A bank account is not essential for making the claim but will be needed before a payment can be made.

Where a prison leaver is identified as requiring additional support, the work coach can consider referring them on to local providers.

Please note, if the prison leaver will be joining a partner with an existing claim to Universal Credit, ESA or JSA the process is different. The prison leaver’s partner will need to declare a change of circumstance and have the prison leaver added to the existing claim. This may result in the couple having to make a claim to Universal Credit. If they are joining an existing Universal Credit claim they will need to agree a separate claimant commitment from their partner.

Help to Claim
The prison leaver can access additional support with their claim once the Universal Credit new claim has been submitted. The Citizens Advice Help to Claim service offers tailored, practical support to help make a Universal Credit claim - up to receiving their first full correct payment. This service can be accessed through a webchat, via a freephone number and face to face through local Citizens Advice services. UC claimants can also be referred to Help to Claim by UC staff at any point when they identify that the claimant may struggle to take the steps to set up their benefit independently.

For more information please visit: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/helptoclaim
For prison leavers in Scotland please visit: www.cas.org.uk/helptoclaim
Advances
The prison leaver can ask for an advance payment of their Universal Credit while they wait for their first payment, if they cannot afford general living expenses. Please note that advances are repayable.

If they want to apply for an advance they will need to:
- explain why they need an advance
- provide account details where the advance should be paid
- have had their identity confirmed at a jobcentre interview

Then to apply for a Universal Credit advance they can:
- apply through their online account
- speak to their Jobcentre Plus work coach
- call the Universal Credit helpline

(The telephone number to call is 0800 328 5644. For Welsh Language call 0800 328 1744 and if they need to use textphone call 0800 328 1344).

DWP also offer Next Generation Text for deaf, hard of hearing or speak impaired to access the service call 18001 0800 328 5644).

If the prison leaver is part of a couple they will also be asked if their partner agrees to taking the advance.

They can apply for up to 100% of the amount of Universal Credit we expect them to qualify for. Prison leavers should be encouraged to consider whether they should/need to apply for the full amount by considering the repayments and whether they are affordable.

Deductions are then made from their Universal Credit payments to pay back the advance. The prison leaver can take up to 12 months to pay the advance back. Once they've started repaying it, if something happens to them that means that they'll be in financial hardship if they continue with their repayments, they can ask for repayments to be put on hold for up to 3 months. This will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. Please advise the prison leaver of this and ask them to speak to their work coach if this is the case.

Disclosing issues to the work coach
We understand that it is sometimes difficult for people to open up about issues or challenges that they are experiencing but the work coach is there to help them. When the prison leaver goes to the jobcentre the work coach will draw up a Claimant Commitment which the prison leaver needs to agree in order to receive Universal Credit. It is really important that the prison leaver tells the work coach about any issues they may have, like being homeless, at risk of homelessness, drug/alcohol addiction or poor mental health. The sooner the work coach understands the prison leaver’s circumstances, the sooner they can start giving the prison leaver the support they need. This engagement should start with the prison work coach. Please encourage the prison leaver to be as open as possible.

The Claimant Commitment sets out what the prison leaver has agreed to do to prepare or look for work in return for receiving Universal Credit. It will be tailored to take account of their circumstances. The Claimant Commitment should be reviewed regularly. Please encourage the prison leaver to speak to their work coach if at any point they are struggling with the tasks in their Claimant Commitment.

Easements
We recognise that prison leavers often face multiple different barriers in securing employment. This highlights the importance of providing immediate employment support from day one. However, we recognise that prison leavers may need additional support if their ability to undertake work-related requirements (like looking for work) is disrupted for a temporary period of time due to their personal circumstances. There are a range of circumstances where work-related requirements should be switched off temporarily because people claiming Universal Credit (UC) are experiencing difficult personal circumstances. Two examples are provided below but the prison leaver should be encouraged to discuss their circumstances openly with their work coach.
*Easements continued*

**Drug and Alcohol**
We will support prison leavers with drug and/or alcohol dependency to engage with structured treatment and support services as part of a route into employment. To provide prison leavers the opportunity they need to focus their efforts on recovery, work coaches can switch off work search requirements for up to 6 months if they are engaged in a structured treatment programme. Work related requirements will remain switched off during the 6 month period on the condition the treatment provider confirms the claimant is still attending and receiving support from them.

**Homelessness**
If the prison leaver reports that they are homeless or at risk of homelessness, the work coach will take into account the individual circumstances and capabilities of the prison leaver. In some instances, it may be appropriate to temporarily switch off work search and availability requirements while the prison leaver secures a place to stay, or moves to new or temporary accommodation. During this period the work coach will regularly review with the prison leaver that they are taking appropriate steps to resolve their housing issue and are actively looking for stable accommodation.

**Flexible Support Fund**
The prison leaver may be eligible for financial help from the Flexible Support Fund (FSF). This is a locally managed budget that work coaches can access. It can be used to provide training and education that moves them further towards getting a job. It can also be considered to remove barriers that are stopping them:
- searching for work
- from accepting a firm job offer or moving into self-employment

Examples are:
- suitable clothing for interviews or to start work
- essential work wear (but not safety wear as the employer has a duty to provide this)
- essential tools and equipment
- travel costs

Please advise them to speak to their work coach for more information about the Flexible Support Fund.

**Additional financial support**
Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Co-Financing Organisation (CFO) www.co-financing.org supports prisoners in custody and on release, to move into employment, training and education opportunities. It’s funded by the European Social Fund until 2023. CFO funding is not available in Scotland.

HMPPS CFO can help individuals to navigate and access existing services, or provide additional services where they aren’t currently available. Referrals for CFO provision can be made via prison, probation or other resettlement staff. Individuals can also self-refer. The process for self-referral may differ according to location, so individuals should be advised to speak to their Offender Supervisor, Offender Manager or similar in the first instance for more information. Once referred, the CFO provider will assess eligibility and suitability of the individual for CFO services.

Funding may be available which can be used to pay for specific items to assist individuals to find work, training or education e.g. travel costs to attend an interview; course or work placement; replacement identification documents needed to attend a course or work; equipment required to start a business or attend training etc.
Other CFO support may include:
- Engagement and motivation work
- Appropriate disclosure of convictions, to support any other general advice available
- Specialist support e.g. family links, health/mental health, addiction, reintegration after serving a long sentence etc.
- Accommodation advice or support to access
- Mentoring
- Access to provision of education and training
- Work experience / placements.
- Securing employment or assistance with applications/interviews

Money advice
Money advice can be offered online, by phone or face to face usually by organisations with expertise in this area like Citizens Advice or Money Advice Service or local authorities. If the prison leaver is digitally capable they can use the online tool: https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/tools/money-manager
If they are not digitally capable, or cannot use the internet as part of their conditions of release, their work coach will refer them for money advice.

Changing how people are paid
If the prison leaver cannot manage the single monthly payment, or will struggle to budget, DWP can consider:
- Paying housing costs direct to a landlord
- changing how often the prison leaver is paid if they are finding it difficult to budget monthly, they can ask to have their Universal Credit payment divided over the month so it is paid more frequently, for example, twice monthly or, exceptionally, four times a month
- splitting the payment of an award between partners

These are called Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA). An APA can be requested at any point during claim including as soon as they have made their claim. The APA cannot be made until after the first monthly Universal Credit payment has been made. Advise the prison leaver to speak to a work coach or Universal Credit helpline agent for more information.

Claiming in Scotland (Scottish Choices)
If the prison leaver lives in Scotland, the process is different as there are no community rehabilitation centres in Scottish prisons. The prison leaver should make their claim to Universal Credit as soon as possible after their release. The prison leaver should be advised that the Universal Credit claim will only start when the online claim has been submitted. They'll be asked if they want to get paid once or twice a month. They'll also be asked if they want the housing amount to be paid straight to their landlord. The landlord will be notified if they choose this.

Claiming in Northern Ireland
Universal Credit operates differently in Northern Ireland, for more information please visit https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/universal-credit. Universal Credit is normally paid twice a month to a household and claimants will need to budget for this. However, a monthly payment may be requested.
Prison leavers may also get money to help pay their housing costs. Eligibility and how much they get depends on their age and circumstances.
The payment can cover:
- rent
- Support for Mortgage Interest (repayable loan)
- some service charges
These payments will be paid directly to their landlord or mortgage lender. The prison leaver can request for it to be paid directly to them, allowing them to pay their own rent.
Other benefits
Below are a number of other benefits which the claimant may be able to claim depending on their individual circumstances.

New Style Jobseeker’s Allowance
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-style-jobseekers-allowance

You may be able to get New Style Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) if any of the following apply:
- you are already claiming Universal Credit
- you had a claim to Universal Credit within the last 6 months that ended due to high earnings
- you are not receiving the severe disability premium, and have not received it in the last month

You will need to have worked as an employee and paid enough National Insurance contributions, usually in the last 2 full tax years before the calendar year in which you make your claim. If you do not have enough they can be topped up with class 1 National Insurance credits that you have received.

New Style Employment and Support Allowance

If you are ill or have a health condition or disability that limits your ability to work you may be able to get New Style Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).
New Style ESA is a fortnightly payment that can be claimed on its own or at the same time as Universal Credit (UC).
New Style ESA is a contributory benefit. Normally, this means you may be able to get it if you’ve paid and/or been credited with enough National Insurance contributions in the 2 full tax years before the year you’re claiming in.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) can provide extra money when your council decides that you need extra help to meet your housing costs.
Your council will look at your circumstances to see whether you are eligible for a DHP. They will decide whether to give you a DHP, how much you will be paid and for how long you will receive the payment.

Local Council Tax Reduction
https://www.gov.uk/apply-council-tax-reduction
Attendance Allowance
https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance
Basic State Pension
https://www.gov.uk/state-pension
New State Pension
https://www.gov.uk/new-state-pension
Bereavement Benefits
https://www.gov.uk/bereavement-allowance
Carer’s Allowance
https://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance
Child Benefit
https://www.gov.uk/child-benefit
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit
https://www.gov.uk/industrial-injuries-disablement-benefit
Maternity Allowance
https://www.gov.uk/maternity-allowance
Personal Independence Payment
https://www.gov.uk/pip
Local Welfare Provision
Contact the relevant local council for information.
Passported Benefits
Passported benefits are benefits or schemes which some people are entitled to because of their entitlement to certain other benefits or tax credits.

Extra support that claimants in receipt of Universal Credit may be entitled to includes:
- free school meals and other educational benefits ([https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals](https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals))
- Healthy Start vouchers ([https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/](https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/))
- help from energy and water suppliers ([https://www.choose.co.uk/guide/grants-for-energy-bill-debts.html](https://www.choose.co.uk/guide/grants-for-energy-bill-debts.html))
- warm home discount scheme ([https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme))
- cold weather payments ([https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment](https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment))
- sure start maternity grants (not Scotland) ([https://www.gov.uk/sure-start-maternity-grant](https://www.gov.uk/sure-start-maternity-grant))
- Best Start Grant (Scotland) ([https://www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant/](https://www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant/))

This list is not exhaustive, but these are the main benefits. For more information visit [https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/other-financial-support](https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/other-financial-support)
Ways of managing the claim
Because Universal Credit is an online system the prison leaver will usually need to check their account to see if their work coach has set them actions to complete, these are called ‘to dos’. If the prison leaver doesn’t have regular access to a computer or a smartphone they can go into their local jobcentre to check their Universal Credit account or use computers in libraries. Work coaches can help them do this. It is important that the prison leaver completes any ‘to dos’ as their payment could be delayed if they don’t complete them.

Reporting a change
The prison leaver should report any changes to their circumstances as soon as possible to ensure they keep getting the right amount of Universal Credit each month. Their claim might be stopped or reduced if they don’t report a change of circumstances straight away.
Changes can include:
- finding or finishing a job
- having a child
- moving in with a partner
- starting to care for a child
- moving to a new address
- changing their bank details
- rent going up or down
- changes to a health condition
- becoming too ill to work or meet their work coach
- changes to earnings (only if they are self-employed)

This list is not exhaustive, they must tell DWP about any change to their circumstances.

Prison leavers can report changes in circumstances by either:
- signing in to their Universal Credit account if they have one, or
- calling the Universal Credit helpline if they can’t access their online account or if they manage their claim by telephone.

Universal Credit helpline
Telephone: 0800 328 5644 Textphone: 0800 328 1344
Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.
Welsh language 0800 328 1744
Textphone: 0800 328 1344
DWP also offer Next Generation Text for deaf, hard of hearing or speak impaired. To access the service call 18001 0800 328 5644
Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm
Useful Links

- Further information about Universal Credit;  
  https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/

- Where they have access to the internet this link provides access to a series of YouTube videos that will give them more information on Universal Credit:  
  http://www.youtube.com/UniversalCreditinAction

- Further information on opening a bank account:  
  https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/blog/how-to-beat-id-issues-when-opening-a-bank-account

- Additional information on bank accounts:  

- Quick Guide to Universal Credit for prison leavers  

Useful contacts

Below are a number of organisations you may want to refer the prison leaver to for additional help and support:

Addaction (https://www.addaction.org.uk/): supports people to make positive behavioural changes, most notably with alcohol and drug misuse, and mental health.

Apex Charitable Trust (http://www.apextrust.com/): Apex Charitable Trust works across North West England and seeks to help people with criminal records obtain appropriate jobs or self-employment by providing them with the skills they need in the labour market and by working with employers to break down the barriers to their employment. 01744 612 898

Centrepoint (https://centrepoint.org.uk/): supports young people who are affected by or at risk of homelessness. If they’re under 26 and are worried about their housing situation, they can call Centrepoint’s free and confidential Helpline on 0808 800 0661 for information, advice and support.

Crisis (https://www.crisis.org.uk/): is the national charity for homeless people. Check their website for information on how they can help. If the claimant has a housing issue you can contact the housing team on 020 7426 5685 or by Email: housing@crisis.org.uk

Homeless Action Scotland (https://www.homelessactionscotland.org.uk/): Homeless Action Scotland is the National Membership organisation for homelessness in Scotland

Homeless Link (https://www.homeless.org.uk/): is the national membership charity for organisations working directly with people who become homeless in England. Check their website for information on services in your area.

Mind (https://www.mind.org.uk/): Mind is a mental health charity who offer support and advice to anyone experiencing a mental health problem. Check their website for information on services in your area.

Money Advice Service (https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en): Set up by Government, the Money Advice Service gives free impartial advice to help people manage their finances. Call 0800 138 7777

Nacro (https://www.nacro.org.uk/) Nacro has a dedicated Resettlement Plus Helpline which offers information and advice to ex-offenders, serving prisoners, their families and friends and to organisations working with them. 0300 123 1999
Samaritans (https://www.samaritans.org/): If the claimant needs to talk about something that’s getting them down call 116 123.

Shelter (https://www.shelter.org.uk/): Shelter is a housing and homelessness charity. For non urgent issues they can be contacted on 0808 800 4444. If the issue is urgent call 0808 164 4660

Step Together (https://www.step-together.org.uk/): Step Together provide tailored one-to-one support to help individuals into volunteering placements that match their needs and interests, and help them develop the personal and practical skills required to build a more positive future. 0117 955 9042

St Giles Trust (https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/): St Giles Trust runs a range of services designed to help ex-offenders; employment, support, community based training, and housing/emergency accommodation. 020 7708 8000

SOVA Supporting Others through Voluntary Action (https://www.sova.org.uk/): SOVA is a voluntary mentoring organisation in England and Wales working in the Criminal Justice Sector and young people on youth offending orders as well as care leavers, long-term unemployed and refugee and asylum seekers.

Trailblazers (https://www.trailblazersmentoring.org.uk/): Trailblazers is a national charity that reduces re-offending among young people through providing volunteer mentors. They reduce re-offending in young people by helping them change their attitude, thinking and behaviour through intensive mentoring, advice, advocacy and targeted specialist support. 07807 267280

Unlock (http://www.unlock.org.uk/): Unlock is an independent charity for people with convictions who are dealing with the effects of having a criminal record. They give advice and support across areas such as: how to disclose to employers, criminal record checks, getting insurance and travelling abroad through their confidential peer-run helpline. 01634 247350

Women in Prison (https://www.womeninprison.org.uk/): Women in Prison is a women-centred, women-run organisation that provides specialist services to women affected by the criminal justice system both in prison and in the community throughout England. 0800 953 0125 or 0207 359 6674

Working Chance (https://workingchance.org/): Working Chance is a charity which helps women offenders make the transition into employment, helping them find paid work and offering voluntary placements.

YMCA (https://www.ymca.org.uk/): YMCA work in partnership with prisons and probation services to support young offenders with citizenship and training opportunities pre-release. 0207 186 9500

SACRO (https://www.sacro.org.uk/): SACO offers help and advice to ex-offenders, offenders and their families.

**Acceptable ID**  

**Primary evidence** is where the issuing source of the evidence confirmed the applicant’s identity through an identity checking process

- A passport showing that the holder, or a person named in the passport as the child of the holder
- A full or provisional UK photo driving licence.
- A residence permit, registration certificate or document certifying or indicating permanent residence issued by the Home Office or the United Kingdom Border Agency to a national of a European Economic Area country or Switzerland.
- A permanent residence card issued by the Home Office or the Border and Immigration Agency to the family member of a national of a European Economic Area country or Switzerland.
- A Biometric Residence Permit issued by the United Kingdom Border Agency to the holder which indicates that the person named in it is allowed to stay indefinitely in the United Kingdom, or has no time limit on their stay in the United Kingdom. *(Please note that in the case of a refugee who has no other forms of ID, the Biometric Residence Permit can be accepted as sole evidence of identity)*
- A passport or other travel document endorsed to show that the holder is exempt from immigration control, is allowed to stay indefinitely in the United Kingdom, has the right of abode in the United Kingdom, or has no time limit on their stay in the United Kingdom.
- Young Scot card showing a PASS hologram
- Citizen card
- An Immigration Status Document issued by the Home Office or the United Kingdom Border Agency to the holder with an endorsement indicating that the person named in it is allowed to stay indefinitely in the United Kingdom or has no time limit on their stay in the United Kingdom.
- A certificate of registration or naturalisation as a British citizen, which indicates the holder is entitled to take up employment in the United Kingdom.
- Northern Ireland claimants in Northern Ireland only can use their Electoral ID card

**Additionally,** in the absence of the above information, a claimant can use their bank card as a Primary evidence of identification. This bank card must show the claimant’s name, sort code and account number or be supported by a recent bank statement. This should correspond with the details the claimant has declared on their claim.
Secondary Evidence— Documents can be Government or non-Government issued and contain some security features (though not significantly developed) to assist the authentication of the document.

- Any form of Primary evidence (not already used as a Primary evidence)
- Certificate of registration or naturalisation as a British citizen;
- Original Birth certificate issued in the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or Ireland (or certified copy from Registrar)
- Foreign birth certificate;
- Original (or certified copy from Registrar) birth/adoption certificates;
- Young Scots card;
- Citizen card;
- Building Society passbook;
- Local Authority rent card;
- Council tax documents;
- Life assurance/insurance policies;
- Mortgage repayment policies;
- Recently paid fuel/telephone bills in the customer’s name;
- Original marriage certificate;
- Original civil partnership certificate;
- Divorce/annulment papers;
- Dissolution of civil partnership papers;
- Certificate/contract of employment in Her Majesty’s forces;
- Certificate/contract of employment under the Crown;
- Certificate/contract of employment in the Merchant Navy;
- Current Police registration certificate;
- Current firearms certificate;
- Current/recent wage/pension slip that includes payee name and NINo;
- Letter from employer/contract of employment;
- Deed Poll certificate;
- Current bank/ building society/Post Office card account statements (6 months old or less If the claimant has used their bank card as a Primary ID then any bank statements must be for a different account)
- Current/open saving account book;
- Personal cheque book;
- Current debit/switch card (unless claimant has used this as a Primary ID)
- Current charge card;
- Trade Union membership card;
- Travel pass with photograph affixed;
- Apprenticeship indentures;
• Vehicle registration/motor insurance documents;
• Expired passport;
• Form B79, a form used to notify Department for Work and Pensions staff that a person has been discharged from prison and has been advised to claim benefit;
• Bail Sheet;
• Correspondence from HMRC;
• Tenancy agreement for current property;
• Invoices (self employed);
• Letter from accountant containing information which helps to establish identity;
• Letter from solicitor containing information which helps to establish identity;
• Current/recent instrument of court Appointment e.g. Probate or court registered Power of Attorney;
• Stock transfer certificate (Director);
• Certificate of incorporation (Director);
• Memorandum of association (Director);
• NHS medical card;
• Student ID card (student);
• Letter from educational institution (student);
• Student loan documentation

This list is not exhaustive.