

The **Potteries Gold** Post

DON'T PANIC!

UNIVERSAL CREDIT FULL SERVICE DELAYED AGAIN.

In the previous edition of Potteries Gold Post, we said the **full digital service** of Universal Credit was due to roll out in **Stoke-on-Trent** in **March 2018**.

The Budget last week changed that!

The Full Service is now scheduled to start in **Stoke-on-Trent** in **June 2018**. Roll-out in **Staffordshire Moorlands** is now due in **September 2018** and **Newcastle-under-Lyme** isn't affected until **December 2018**.

This gives us an extra **three months** to prepare and to do take-up campaigning ahead of roll-out.

OTHER CHANGES IN THE BUDGET

There were some welcome reforms to Universal Credit in the Budget.

- From **January 2018**, **short-term benefit advances**, loans to help people cope while they wait for their first UC payment, will be for up to **a month's entitlement**, rather than just two weeks as at present, and **repayable over a 12 month period**.
- From **February 2018**, there will no longer be seven waiting days at the start of claims for which you are not paid. This should reduce the amount of time people wait before getting their first payment.
- From **April 2018**, stays in **temporary accommodation** are to be paid through Housing Benefit.
- From **April 2018**, anyone transferring to Universal Credit from Housing Benefit will continue to get HB for two weeks.

Note that these changes are not happening immediately.



LOTTERY FUNDED

If you have to claim UC **before Christmas**, there will still be seven unpaid waiting days at the beginning of your claim and it will still be six weeks at least before you are paid.

There are other some changes happening after Christmas.

GOODBYE TO THE 'LIVE' SERVICE!

New claims for Universal Credit in **live service areas** (like Stoke-on-Trent) will cease at the **end of December 2017**, according to the Director General of universal credit, Neil Couling.

Mr Couling says -

'... the universal credit live service, which is being steadily replaced by the roll out of the full service, has a very limited shelf-life ending in December 2018. It would not represent value for money for taxpayers to invest in the system changes, required by these policy announcements, for such a short duration. Accordingly I have agreed with Ministers that in live service areas we will curtail the flow of new universal credit cases from the end of December. Whilst this will not affect any existing claimants already on universal credit it will mean that any new claims will, until universal credit full service is commenced locally, be made to legacy benefits and tax credits.'

What this means is there will be **no new claims for UC** after Christmas, **in this area**, until the full service rolls out. People making new claims after Christmas will claim income-based JSA and Housing Benefit instead. If you already get Universal Credit, you will stay on it.

If you find all this rather confusing, don't feel bad about it. So do we. Follow our Facebook page for all the benefits news as it happens!

Potteries Gold is a **Citizens Advice Staffordshire North & Stoke-on-Trent** project to help people in Stoke-on-Trent cope with changes to the benefit system

★ **Benefit Talks for your community group** ★ **Pop-Up Benefit Advice** ★
★ **PIP/ESA Workshops** ★ **Benefit Leaflets** ★ **The Potteries Gold Post** ★ **Volunteering** ★

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