The schedule has slipped, with the final delivery date now expected to be 2021, although the system is gradually being introduced. In 2013, only one of four planned pilot sites went live on the originally scheduled date, and the pilot was restricted to extremely simple cases.

All information is here

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_Credit>

1. Rent arrears

Many private landlords say they will [**no longer rent**](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/dec/24/landlords-unwilling-to-rent-to-universal-credit-recipients) to Universal Credit claimants because the risk of arrears is too high and the bureaucracy involved in tackling arrears too difficult to manage. Housing associations have warned that the accumulated bad debts run up by tenants as a result of UC could affect their house building plans. [**Already UC claimants are twice as likely has people on housing benefit to be in arrears**](http://thirdforcenews.org.uk/tfn-news/all-uk-housing-groups-condemn-flawed-universal-credit). In Scotland claimants will be given the option whether to receive rent cash directly into their accounts or for it to go straight to their landlord – a move welcomed by housing associations and campaigners.



2. Delays

Because UC is based on how much money you have each month, it is paid in arrears: you claim for the previous month, not for the month ahead. That means everyone has to wait at least four weeks, and the rest of the time delays occur sporadically because of the way the scheme is administered. Foodbanks report that [**demand for charity food goes up**](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/apr/25/food-banks-report-record-demand-amid-universal-credit-chaos) significantly when UC is introduced into the local area. A[**ccording to analysis by the Trussell Trust foodbanks that have been in full UC rollout areas for a year or more have experienced an average increase in demand of 52%**](https://www.trusselltrust.org/what-we-do/research-advocacy/universal-credit-and-foodbank-use/). Some campaigners have said delays in receiving UC have led to destitution and a sharp rise in mental health problems among claimants.



3. Single payment

Domestic violence refuges and charities say UC allows perpetrators of abuse to [**“distribute family income in the way they see fit.”**](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/apr/18/split-universal-credit-payments-between-partners-to-curb-abuse-ministers-urged) This is because UC was designed to be paid to a single person per household. Campaigners say the payment should be split between partners in a households to minimise the risk of domestic abusers exerting financial control over their victim. Scotland’s new social security agency will make amendments to address this but the rest of the UK is lumped with this problem.



4. Online only

All UC claimants must have access to the internet in order to manage their accounts. While this might be easy for your average person, a significant number of those claiming benefits have no access to the internet – or a mobile phone. [**In 2017, 10% of UK households still had not access to the internet**](https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/bulletins/internetusers/2017). An amazing 5.9 million adults in the UK have never used the internet, and 4.1 million people in social housing are offline. Charities have remonstrated to the government that people living chaotic lives will be denied benefits as a result of the policy, leading to them being further isolated and excluded.



5. The cost

While the DWP had estimated administration costs for the roll-out of Universal Credit to be £2.2 billion, by August 2014 this estimate had risen to £12.8 billion over its lifetime and was later increased again to £15.8 billion. New estimates range from a final cost of £16-20bn. The system so far has made savings of just 2% of the UK welfare budget.



6. Denial

The UK government says UC is working. Whether ministers actually believe this is the case is open to interpretation, however, publicly the architects of the scheme steadfastly refuse to accept its myriad failings. [**A recent National Audit Office report**](https://www.nao.org.uk/report/rolling-out-universal-credit/) demolished ministerial claims about UC, concluding that the much-delayed flagship welfare programme may end up costing more than the benefit system it replaces, cannot prove it helps more claimants into work and is unlikely to ever deliver value for money.The DWP responded in time-honoured fashion by saying: “Universal credit is good value for money.”

<https://tfn.scot/lists/whats-wrong-with-universal-credit>

**Universal Credit is "failing millions of people", especially the vulnerable, according to a new report from peers.**

The Lords' Economic Affairs Committee said it agreed with the government's aim for the scheme - to bring together multiple benefits into one payment.

But it criticised its design, blaming Universal Credit for "soaring rent arrears and the use of food banks".

Welfare delivery minister Will Quince said the government was "committed to supporting the most vulnerable".

But he said the scheme had "defied its critics in unprecedented and unforeseeable circumstances" during the coronavirus pandemic, adding: "The case for Universal Credit has never been stronger."

One poverty charity, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, said the report "reinforced the scale and urgency of reforms needed".

And Labour said the system was "simply not working", instead "pushing people further into poverty and debt".

* [**What is universal credit - and what's the problem?**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41487126)
* [**Coronavirus: Nearly two million claim universal credit**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-52536210)
* [**Tell us your stories of benefit claims, say MPs**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-52223847)

The Lords' report said cuts to social security budgets over the last 10 years had caused "widespread poverty and hardship".

As a result, the committee said Universal Credit needed "urgent investment just to catch up and provide claimants with adequate income".

The peers called on the government to make the rise in payments due to the coronavirus crisis permanent.

They also called for a non-repayable two-week grant to be introduced to cut the current five-week wait for a claimant's first payment.

The government said urgent payments were already available, but peers said the standard five weeks "entrenches debt, increases extreme poverty and harms vulnerable groups disproportionately".

Presentational grey line

## 'You can't do anything but worry about survival'

IMAGE SOURCE,GETTY IMAGES

Beth - who has asked for her real name to remain confidential - signed up to Universal Credit in March after the coronavirus outbreak.

"I had started a role a few weeks before lockdown, but I was told on the first day that the project was going to shut down," said the 31-year-old freelancer from London.

"I was then told I would be unlikely to find work in my field before August and I wasn't eligible for furlough because of my start date, so, for only the second time... I signed up for benefits."

Beth found the online process quite fast and managed to get ahead of the backlog, but it took almost six weeks for her first payment, and the amount changed from month to month, leaving her struggling to make ends meet.

"The people running it don't know how PAYE freelancers or zero hour contracts work," she said. "They send constant demands to apply for work and at the start of lockdown I was being told to apply for places that weren't even hiring.

"No-one picks up on the phone line and then when they finally do, they tell you they can't help. And the payment itself is for rent, and then under £100 a week for all bills, transport and food."

Beth said her "whole life was overturned" and the stress caused her to suffer with very severe depression, which she is still struggling with now she is back in employment.

"They expect us to focus on job applications and interviews, but you can't do anything but worry about survival," she said.

"I'm just glad I have no dependents as I have single mother colleagues who are going through the same thing, after never signing on before."

Presentational grey line

The committee also criticised the way payments were calculated, claiming the system could result in "large fluctuations in income month-to-month, making it extremely difficult for claimants to budget".

It wants payments to be fixed for three months and for historic tax credit debt to be written off.

Tory peer Lord Forsyth, who chairs the committee, said the system "fails to provide a dependable safety net" for those in need.

"The mechanics of Universal Credit do not reflect the reality of people's lives," he added. "It is designed around an idealised claimant and rigid, inflexible features of the system are harming a range of claimant groups, including women, disabled people and the vulnerable.

"It needs rebalancing, with more carrot and less stick, particularly as large numbers of claimants will have ended up on it because of events completely out of their control. "

[**Universal Credit was introduced by the coalition government in 2010**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41487126) to replace six benefits with one payment.

But it has led to a number of controversies, including cuts to the amount people receive, delays in payments and questions over assessments.

## 'Extra help given'

Mr Quince said the government currently spends over £95bn a year on the benefits system and has put in an extra £9.3bn to help "those most in need" during the current crisis.

He said the system had processed more than 3.2m new claims "at pace" since mid-March and was "paying more than a million advances worth hundreds of millions of pounds to those in urgent need within days".

The minister added: "We welcome the acknowledgement by the Committee that Universal Credit is here to stay and we will consider their recommendations in detail."

https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-53599763