

DWP Update – Mar 2021

Argyll and Bute

Stats/MI (Recorded as of 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021)

Office	Total UC Claimants	Conditionality groups					
		Preparing for work	Planning for work	Working – No requirements	No work Requirements	Working – With requirements	Searching for Work
Campbeltown	971	22	13	177	217	170	375
Dunoon	1172	37	15	182	262	217	465
Helensburgh	1314	48	12	257	293	223	482
Oban	2139	63	38	466	330	342	894
Rothesay	665	36	15	75	168	107	262
	6261			1157		1059	2478

Customers searching for work by age (as at 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021)

	18 - 24	25 - 49	50 – 59	60+
Campbeltown	73	178	76	48
Dunoon	70	249	91	50
Helensburgh	105	236	99	41
Oban	176	467	172	82
Rothesay	35	137	52	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>1267</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>259</b>

## **Kickstart**

Jobcentre Plus colleagues are working closely with employers and Gateway Organisations (Inspiralba and Argyll & Bute Council) in preparation for Kickstart vacancies coming through and work coaches will match eligible customers to the live vacancies. **To date 5 young people have started work via Kickstart across Argyll & Bute.**

The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to create new job placements for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment. Employers of all sizes can apply for funding which covers:

- 100% of the [National Minimum Wage](#) (or the [National Living Wage](#) depending on the age of the participant) for 25 hours per week for a total of 6 months
- associated [employer National Insurance contributions](#)
- employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions

Employers no longer need a minimum of 30 job placements to apply directly for a grant and can apply for a Kickstart Scheme grant by either: :

- applying online themselves
- applying through a Kickstart gateway who is already working with the Kickstart Scheme

Further funding is available for training and support so that young people on the scheme can get a job in the future.

## **Virtual Youth Hub**

DWP have been hosting a Virtual Youth Hub for our customers since July 2019 which expanded to include partners (Skills Development Scotland, Community Learning & Argyll & Bute Employability Team) in October 2019. The aim of a Youth Hub is to provide opportunities to train and develop skills, delivering individual wraparound support to ensure young people see a value in the world of work. The longer-term aim is that this will be hosted by a partner organisation and be supported by DWP staff.

## Our Job Centres

All offices remain open to vulnerable customers and are compliant with social distancing Covid guidance, with staff working from home and in offices. Work coaches continue to engage with customers on a digital or telephone basis, or a blend of both, and our telephone lines remain open until 6.30pm.

From 12/4/2021 opening hours will revert from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm each weekday, with the exception of Wednesday's when offices will be open from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm.

Staff working in Oban Job Centre continue to pilot **Video Appointment Service** which offers video appointments to customers.

From late autumn through a discussion with customers, the work coach check they have 'unlimited' home internet or 'unlimited' mobile data to ensure there is no cost to the customer, they have a suitable device as well as access to the appropriate web browsers. This is voluntary and participants can withdraw at any time. This has been well received by customers and work coaches alike and is helping to build rapport and trust as well as provide more visible support to their customers.

### Jobcentre Plus arrangements over the Easter period

On Friday 2 April and Monday 5 April Jobcentre Plus offices and phone lines will be closed. To make sure people receive their payments on a day when Jobcentre Plus offices are open, arrangements have been made to make some payments early:

#### Expected payment date

Friday 2 April

Monday 5 April

#### Benefits will be paid early

Thursday 1 April

Thursday 1 April

If the expected [payment date](#) is not shown, customers will get their money on the usual payment date.

## **Benefits**

The temporary £20 per week uplift to the Universal Credit Standard Allowance, introduced in March 2020 for 12 months to support those affected by COVID, will be extended by another 6 months and will apply to all Universal Credit claims until September 2021.

A single one-off payment of £500 will be made to all eligible WTC claimants. This payment will be made under the Coronavirus Act and will not be considered a welfare payment. It will also be disregarded for all means tests, capital tests etc. for welfare purposes

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has been extended to 30 September 2021.

## **Universal Credit benefits checker**

We have launched a new benefits checking tool to help people who think they might be eligible for Universal Credit. It takes a few minutes, and doesn't require any detailed information, nor does it process or store personal data. It is an easy first step for anyone who is unsure whether they want to start a claim. [See the benefits checker](#)

## **Post Office Card Accounts**

DWP is writing to all customers who currently receive their State Pension or benefit payments into a Post Office card account (POca). The letter informs them the POca service is closing and asks them to provide alternative account details.

Our dedicated customer service centre is available to take calls from POca customers, to accept new account details or answer any questions. We will ensure all future payments are switched to the customer's new account from the next available payment date and there will be no interruptions with their payments.

For anyone who is unable to open a different type of account or provide new account details, a payment exception service will be available.

### Customer Service Centre

Telephone: 0800 085 7133

Textphone: 0800 085 71

## **Help to Save**

Help to Save is a type of savings account. It allows certain people entitled to Working Tax Credit or receiving Universal Credit to get a bonus of 50p for every £1 they save over 4 years. Help to Save is backed by the government so all savings in the scheme are secure.

How payments work

You can save between £1 and £50 each calendar month. You do not have to pay money in every month.

You can pay money into your Help to Save account by debit card, standing order or bank transfer.

You can pay in as many times as you like, but the most you can pay in each calendar month is £50. For example, if you have saved £50 by 8 January you will not be able to pay in again until 1 February.

You can only withdraw money from your Help to Save account to your bank account.

Full details can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/get-help-savings-low-income>

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