

Universal Credit Social Rented Sector (SRS) Rent Change April 2019

Frequently Asked Questions for Landlords. Updated 27/03/19

Q1: Are UC Full Service using the same process as April 2018 for claimants who have a rent change in April 2019?

A: We will repeat what we did in 2018 to give claimants the opportunity to tell us of their changes in a timely manner. Claimants continue to be responsible for informing Universal Credit of any changes to their housing costs. They will be able to do this via their on-line Universal Credit accounts. Every claimant will receive a notification at the beginning of April, via their to-do list, reminding them to report any change to rent.

For 2019, in addition to the above, landlords on the Portal will be able to notify their tenants' changes direct to the service from mid-April.

Q2: When can claimants report a change to their rent?

A: All changes need to be made once they have happened (i.e. after the rent has changed in April). If social landlords have not already done so, it would be helpful if they could remind their tenants of the information they need to report to their UC account and the date of this change.

Q3: Will SRS Landlords see an increase in rent verification requests?

A: In an effort to mitigate the demand on landlords during this period, DWP will not request verification in every case by setting a tolerance level. Whilst we are doing all we can to mitigate the impact for SRS landlords, it is recognised that some will see an increased volume of requests for verification during this period.

Q4: Why are Portal landlords not able to report their changes from the beginning of April?

A: The claimant to-do was prioritised because it reaches 100% of SRS claimants immediately, including those who cannot be targeted via the landlord portal.

Q5: What is the impact on SRS landlords who are on the Landlord Portal?

A: The Portal will automatically generate a verification request whenever a claimant reports a change if it is outside of the tolerance level.

When landlords upload their rent changes, this will supersede any claimant-reported change for the same effective date.

Q6: Will SRS landlords not on the Portal be able to send in their tenants' rent changes?

A: No, the service can only accept changes from those landlords who already have direct input access. The only way to do this is via the Portal.

If a tenant associated with a Portal landlord is a Universal Credit claimant but was not matched to that landlord via the Portal when they declared their housing costs, the landlord will not be able to update the rent details for that tenant using the bulk upload functionality.

Q7: Portal cases only - How will claimants know if their landlord has already reported their change of rent?

A: Claimants will receive a notification via their journal detailing what changes the landlord has reported. However, if they disagree with the information provided they should discuss with their landlord in the first instance, and report change of circumstances in the usual way if an update is required.

Q8: Portal cases only - What will happen if the claimant reports a change before the landlord has input their tenants' changes?

A: If the change is outside the tolerance level, they will receive a verification request and need to action it.

Q9: Portal cases only – If the landlord intends to report all their tenants' rent changes direct to the Portal, can they ignore any verification requests they receive?

A: No, they must action verification requests as they occur. It will have a negative impact on the claimant's payment if they do not verify in a timely manner, and they may miss new claims as they cannot currently be differentiated.

Q10: Portal cases only – Will SRS landlords be able to upload their own lists of tenants' rent changes?

A: No. The information will need to be transferred in a set format which will be provided in the Portal. Landlords can only upload the tenants that the Universal Credit service has already matched to a landlord – we will share this data in a downloadable spreadsheet when the functionality is live.

Q11: Portal cases only – What information will the landlords need to provide to enable DWP to action the rent change?

A: The Landlord will need to input the following to the Portal:

- Number of Rent Free weeks
- New Rent amount
- Eligible service charges
- Total new amount
- The date the rent changed
- Rent and service charge payment frequency

The landlord portal will provide a downloadable list of tenants with the following data:

- Claimant/tenant name

- Property address
- Landlord tenancy reference
- Universal Credit unique reference

Q12: Can you tell me what tolerance will be applied to claimant notified changes?

A: For security and fraud prevention reasons, we are not disclosing the tolerance level

Q13: Does the rent change take into account 53 week years?

A: Although this is not relevant to this exercise, the latest information on this can be found on gov.uk in the February 19 Landlord Engagement Letter:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-landlord-engagement-newsletters>

Q14: Portal cases only – Will you be making an example file available in advance of the Mid-April date?

A: We are currently working on this and hope to have an example available by early April for landlords to view

Q15: Will I need to re-apply for any APA and third party deductions or will they automatically continue?

A: As long as the address is the same (i.e this is a change of housing costs only and not a change of circumstances), APAs and Third Party Deductions will continue

Q16: Portal cases only - Will I be able to see a list of all my UC tenants, including those who are not on the portal because their housing costs were originally verified through the SRS email process? **A:** We will only be able to provide details of claimants who have had their housing costs verified via the portal previously; and we will not be able to provide a wider list of all claimants. Landlords can remind those not verified through the portal to report their changes via their on-line account.

Q17: Portal cases only – Our rents will not change on the 1st April, they will change at a point later in the year, what do we do?

A: Claimant Actions: The claimant will be asked via a to-do if their housing costs have changed; if they have not changed then the claimant can respond to that effect via the to-do, and no further action is required until the rent change occurs; at which point the claimant will need to notify the change in the normal way

Landlord Actions: It will be possible for UC to delay the creation & availability of the downloadable file if we are made aware when your rent changes are effective from. If your changes are not effective as of 1st April, please notify us by 5th April, or as soon as possible after that, and we will work with you at a future date to make the downloadable file available at the appropriate point

Q18: Will claimants whose last UC award was nil also receive a to-do?

A: If a claim is active and the claimant has housing costs, they will receive a to-do

Q19: Portal cases only – How will we know when the list is available?

A: A notification will be visible at the top of the landlord To-do list

Q20: When will the tolerances take effect?

A: For individual claimants, the tolerance will not be made effective until the claimant receives the to-do notification. We therefore recommend that the claimant does not notify any change until they receive the to-do. If a claimant notifies a change of housing costs prior to the to-do being issued; it will be treated as a standard change of housing costs, and the tolerance will not be applied

Q21: Will a UC claimant be required to give a breakdown of rent and service charges, or just the total rent chargeable?

A: The claimant will be required to provide a full breakdown of the housing costs, including any service charges

Q22: Will the claimant have to provide details about the number of bedrooms, rent free weeks, or who is on the tenancy etc when they complete the to-do?

A: The to-do will only require a claimant to provide information around the revised housing costs