

# Financial support during Coronavirus



Winter 2021/22

If you or a member of your household has been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic, you may be eligible for financial help.

Additional financial support has been introduced for low income workers who are required to self-isolate. Some local residents may have returned to work but on reduced hours, while others may have lost their job. It can be difficult to know what's available and how to apply.

At East Lothian Council, we are continuing to work closely with our partners, local community groups and volunteers to make sure help gets to those who need it. This leaflet brings together some of the help available, with information about who to contact if you need more advice.

**If you have difficulty accessing this information online, please let us know and we will arrange for a hard copy of the leaflet to be sent to you.**

## Contents

Universal Credit	1
Support if you are sick	2
Support for self-employed	3
Support for unemployed	3
Scottish Welfare Fund	4
Social Security Scotland	6
Help with...	8
Access to food	10
Access to warm clothing	11
Fuel & energy costs	11
Sources of help and advice	12
Contact numbers	Back page

## Find out what you could be entitled to

If you're unsure what to claim or what you might be eligible for, check out our online benefits calculator at [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/entitledto](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/entitledto). Remember, this will only be an estimate as you will need to apply and any application will be subject to the relevant eligibility criteria.

## Universal Credit

You can claim Universal Credit (UC) if you're on a low income regardless of your employment status (employed, self-employed or if you are sick, self-isolating or a carer). UC can also top-up the other benefits included in this leaflet, depending on your situation. The amount you receive will depend on your individual circumstances, for example the number of people in your household, other income and savings you may have. UC claimants may also be eligible for an additional element to help with housing costs, i.e. your rent.

You can apply for UC online at [www.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit). Successful applicants will receive payment after 5 weeks. Advance payments are available if you need help with bills or other costs during this period.

The UC uplift of £20 per week was removed on 24 November 2021, however some extra help may be given to people in work claiming UC.

**PLEASE NOTE:** *It is important that you seek advice if you currently receive any other benefits (i.e. Income Support, ESA Income Related, JSA Income Based, Tax Credits, Housing Benefit) and are thinking about applying for UC. Your current benefit **will stop** when you apply for UC and you will be unable to reclaim your original benefit. Please bear in mind that any amount you receive under UC could be lower than your current benefit. Get advice before claiming.*



Find out more online at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) or  
DWP Freephone Helpline **0800 328 5644**

# Support if you are sick

## Statutory Sick Pay

You should be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from Day 1 if you have been directly affected by Coronavirus, caring for a child who is ill with the virus, self-isolating or vulnerable and shielding in accordance with Government guidelines.

People on SSP can self-certificate as sick for an extended period of 28 days rather than 7 days from 17 December 2021 to 26 January 2022 to support the rollout of the Coronavirus booster jabs.

If you are off sick for any other reason, standard rules apply and SSP will start from Day 4, not Day 1.

 **To find out more contact your employer**

## New Style Employment and Support Allowance (Contribution Based)

This is currently also available to employed and self-employed workers who have been directly affected by Coronavirus, caring for a child who is ill with the virus or self-isolating in accordance with Government guidelines.

It can be claimed from the first day of sickness. To claim you will need to have paid enough in National Insurance contributions.

Currently, you will not need a 'fit note' from your GP but should get an 'isolation note' from NHS111 or NHS online, however the requirement for a fit note is being reintroduced from 27 January 2022.

DWP health assessments are currently being carried out by telephone or video.

 **Claim NSESA(CB) online at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) or telephone 0800 328 5644 and select option 2**

## Support for self-employed

If you are self-employed and your business continues to be affected by Coronavirus, you may be able to claim UC. If you currently receive Tax Credits from HMRC, please be aware that if you apply for UC your Tax Credit award will end immediately, even if you are not eligible to receive UC.

 **Find out more about Tax Credits and claiming UC at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)**

Other funding and grants may be available to support local businesses and the Council's Economic Development team and Business Gateway Advisers continue to provide as much support as possible to anyone in need of help.

 **To find out more, email [economicdevelopment@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:economicdevelopment@eastlothian.gov.uk)**

## Support for unemployed

### **New Style Job Seekers Allowance (Contribution Based)**

If you're unemployed or work less than 16 hours a week you may be able to claim New Style Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). This is a fortnightly payment that can be claimed on its own or at the same time as UC.

New Style JSA is a contribution based benefit. Normally, this means you may be able to get it if you've paid and/or been credited with enough National Insurance (NI) contributions in the 2 full tax years before the year you're claiming in.

From 1 July 2021 the requirement to look for work, with associated sanctions, has been reintroduced. Speak to your Work Coach if you have any questions or concerns about this.

 **Claim NSJSA(CB) online at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) or telephone **0800 328 5644** and select option 2**

## Community Care Grant and Crisis Grant

This provides a one-off grant if you are on a low income, or are facing a crisis. There is no need to pay the money back. There are two types of grant available:

**Community Care Grant** – usually provides goods to help you settle into a new home (after hospital, care or homelessness) or if you're in exceptional circumstances such as relationship breakdown or domestic violence.

**Crisis Grant** – awarded to meet living expenses that have arisen as a result of an emergency or disaster to avoid serious damage or risk to the applicant. Examples include food, essential heating costs, nappies, toiletries, etc.

To apply you must be over 16, have a low income, have no means of support, have savings less than £700 (£1200 if you are pension age) or be entitled to a qualifying benefit.



**Apply online at [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/swf](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/swf) or phone 01620 828790. Please leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as we can.**

## Coronavirus Fuel Poverty Fund

East Lothian Council has created an emergency Fuel Poverty Fund to help households who are facing financial hardship during these uncertain times and are struggling to afford to heat their homes and keep the lights turned on.

Claimants making an application for a Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grant, who are householders and facing a disaster or emergency situation, will be given a £100 one-off payment in addition to any Scottish Welfare Fund payment, to help with their gas or electricity costs.

This one-off payment will help alleviate poverty and financial hardship, helping to keep homes warm through the winter and helping people who are struggling to cover basic living costs.

## Self-Isolation Support Grant (SISG)

SISG provides low paid workers with financial support during the 10 day period in which they are unable to work. This will help ensure that people who have tested positive for Coronavirus, and their close contacts, self-isolate to stop the onward spread of the virus.

You may be eligible for a £500 payment if you:

- have been required to self-isolate by Test and Protect Scotland or have been notified by the Protect Scotland app (or equivalent); or
- are the identified appropriate parent or primary carer of a child under 16 who has been required to self-isolate; or
- are the identified appropriate carer of a person over 16 who has been required to self-isolate.

In addition, you must meet the following criteria:

- make an application within 28 days of the day you are required to self-isolate
- are employed or self-employed and unable to work from home
- will face reduced earnings as a result of self-isolating
- in receipt of a qualifying benefit; or
- are an individual who earns less than the £1608.75 gross per month; or
- your household income is such that it falls within the agreed definition of 'low income' for your household type

 **To find out more or to apply, visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/isolate](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/isolate)**

# Social Security Scotland

Social Security Scotland is an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government and are responsible for administering a number of devolved benefits, including financial help during pregnancy and with children up to school age.

## **What family benefits does Social Security Scotland deliver?**

### **Scottish Child Payment**

A payment of £40 every four weeks for each eligible child under the age of six. This will be doubled to £80 every four weeks, per child, from April 2022.

### **Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment**

A £606 payment for a first child and £303 for other children. Plus an extra £303 if you have a multiple birth. You can apply from 24 weeks of pregnancy until your baby is 6 months old.

### **Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment**

A £252.50 payment when a child is between the ages of 2 and 3.5 years. You can still apply if your child is not taking up a place at nursery.

### **Best Start Grant School Age Payment**

A £252.50 payment to help eligible families with the costs of starting school. Visit [mygov.scot/beststart](http://mygov.scot/beststart) for application dates and guidance on when to apply even if you are deferring.

### **Best Start Foods**

Money every four weeks on a pre-paid chip and pin Mastercard. The amount is £17.00 every four weeks during pregnancy and for any children between one and three years old. This payment increases to £34.00 for any child under one. The card can be used to buy healthy food including eggs, milk, fruit, vegetables and pulses.

## **Who can get these payments?**

People can apply for these payments whether in work or not. People may be eligible if they, or their partner, are the parent or full-time carer of a child and if they get tax credits or certain benefits.

## Child Disability Payment

Child Disability Payment is a new benefit from the Scottish Government to provide money to help with the extra care and mobility costs children and young people with a disability may have, up to the age of 18. This new benefit is replacing Disability Living Allowance for children living in Scotland.

You can apply for Child Disability Payment for a disabled child under 16. The disability can be mental or physical. Social Security Scotland will pay Child Disability Payment until the child is 18. You can also apply for Child Disability Payment if the disabled child does not have a diagnosis. In such cases, you can tell Social Security Scotland about how they're affected and any symptoms they may have.

Those already receiving Disability Living Allowance for children do not need to make a new application as SSS will contact them ahead of their award being automatically transferred. This is happening in a phased approach and should be complete by spring 2023.

## Job Start Payment

This is a new Social Security Scotland benefit to help with the costs of starting a new job.

16 to 24 year olds who have been out of work and receiving a qualifying benefit for at least six months can apply. Also eligible are 16 to 25 year old care leavers who have been out of work and receiving a qualifying benefit on the day they receive their job offer.

You can get a one-off payment of £252, or the higher rate of £404 if you're the main carer of any children.

## Other benefits

Social Security Scotland also administer the following benefits:

- Child Winter Heating Assistance
- Carer's Allowance Supplement
- Young Carer Grant
- Funeral Support Payment



**To find out more about SSS benefits, or to apply, visit [mygov.scot](https://mygov.scot) or Freephone 0800 182 2222**

### Rent

It is important that you continue to pay your rent during the pandemic to prevent arrears accruing.

If you have rent arrears, or are worried about paying, we would urge you to contact your landlord immediately to discuss your situation. There is no longer a ban on evictions in Scotland, however due to Coronavirus, there are some changes to the eviction process still in place until 31 March 2022:

- Notices have longer notice periods. This can be up to six months depending on the ground
- Most eviction grounds are discretionary. This means landlords must show it is reasonable to evict you based on the ground they use

Normal notice periods apply for grounds relating to criminal or antisocial behaviour. If you're a council tenant and you need help or advice, contact the Rent Income team and we'll do what we can to help you.



**Phone our dedicated helpline on 01620 827528**

**Email [rentincome@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:rentincome@eastlothian.gov.uk)**

**or visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rent](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rent)**

It's also worth checking you're claiming all financial support you may be entitled to:

- Pensioners on a low income may qualify for Housing Benefit (HB) to help towards rent and some service charge costs. Apply online at [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/applyforhb](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/applyforhb)
- Working age people out-of-work or on a low income may be entitled to UC, including some help towards your housing costs. Apply online at [www.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit)
- Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) may also be available. You must be entitled to HB or the housing costs part of UC to get a DHP. Apply online at [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/dhp](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/dhp)
- Local Housing Allowance has increased in line with market rent in your area. This will help anyone who already claims UC or HB.

### Tenant Grant Fund to help with Coronavirus related rent arrears

East Lothian residents living in rented accommodation can now apply to East Lothian Council for financial help if they've fallen behind in their rent payments because of Coronavirus.

The Scottish Government has set up the Tenant Grant Fund to provide support to tenants in social housing and in the private sector, who are at risk of becoming homeless because they have fallen behind with rent payments during the pandemic.

Grants do not have to be repaid and are available to tenants in council, housing association, mid-market or private rented accommodation. East Lothian Council has received an allocation of funding which is available until 31 March 2022. Eligibility criteria is set by the Scottish Government as follows:

- Grants are limited to helping with rent arrears built up between 23 March 2020 and 09 August 2021
- Grants can be used to make a full or partial payment of arrears depending on individual circumstances
- Grants will be targeted towards current tenants who are at risk of becoming homeless and do not have any other way of clearing the arrears
- Payments will be made to landlords rather than tenants on condition that the payment will be used to credit the tenant's rent account, and any ongoing proceedings to end the tenancy will be ceased.



**Please email [TenantGrantFund@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:TenantGrantFund@eastlothian.gov.uk) for information. Applications must be received by 5pm on Friday 11 February 2022.**

### Council Tax

It's important that you continue to pay your Council Tax if you are able to. This helps to pay for the essential services we provide to all local residents.

If you're struggling, speak to our Council Tax team straight away and let them know your situation. We will work with you to make sure you get any help you need.



**Phone our dedicated helpline on [01875 824 314](tel:01875824314) or visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/counciltax)**

### Council Tax Reduction

You may be entitled to a Council Tax Reduction (CTR) if you have lost your job, had your hours reduced or are on a low income. You can apply if you own your home or rent. The amount you receive will vary based on your circumstances. CTR is not automatically awarded even if you are claiming UC so you need to apply separately for this.

 **Apply online at [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/claimctr](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/claimctr)**

### Access to food

There is a network of organisations providing support to people who are struggling to access food. This varies from fresh or tinned ingredients to pre-prepared meals which can be reheated. Some will require a referral from Social Work or another professional, whereas others you can refer yourself to.

 **Find out more about the support that is available to you at [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/accesstofood](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/accesstofood)**

### Free school meals

Your child may be eligible for free school meals to ensure that they receive a free, balanced and healthy meal during the school day. This is delivered discreetly so that it is not obvious to others which children are receiving this benefit.

If you meet the conditions for free school meals you may be entitled to other payments to help with meals during school holidays, closures or if your child has to self-isolate. Eligibility also passports parents into the new £100 per child hardship payments.

 **Qualifying criteria applies, so to find out more or to apply visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals)**

## Access to warm clothing

### Keeping children warm

You may be able to get financial help with your child's school clothing and shoes in the form of a school clothing grant. If you meet the qualifying criteria, you may be awarded a grant of £100.

As well as school clothing grants, many of our local area partnership and community bodies have arrangements in place to help families access warm clothing.

 **To find out about more support in your area email our Connected Communities team at [connectedcommunities@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:connectedcommunities@eastlothian.gov.uk)**

In addition to this, there's a lot of helpful information for parents and carers on the Council website. This includes information about how schools are managing their clothing banks and what arrangements are in place for families who may struggle to afford warm clothing.

 **Visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/education](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/education) to find out more**

## Fuel & energy costs

### Home Energy Scotland

Energy suppliers are offering help to anyone struggling to pay their bills as a result of Coronavirus. Suppliers will deal with any concerns you have, so the best thing to do if you are self-isolating or struggling to pay your bill is to contact your energy provider straight away.

 **To find out more, or to get advice visit [www.homeenergyscotland.org.uk](http://www.homeenergyscotland.org.uk)**

## Sources of help and advice

### East Lothian Council's Financial Inclusion team

Our team will help you work out what benefits you're entitled to. There's a lot of information around and it can be difficult to work out what it means for you. In some circumstances we can help you over the phone with your application. There is a lot of information online at [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/financialinclusion](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/financialinclusion) or you can call us on 01620 827827. Please bear in mind demand for our services is high just now but we will reply to all messages. Our services are free and confidential.

### Citizens Advice Bureau

Citizens Advice provides free, independent and confidential advice to local residents on a range of matters including benefits, debt and housing advice. If you wish to get in touch, contact details for your local CAB are listed on the back page.

### The Scottish Citizens Advice Network

The Scottish Citizens Advice Network, in partnership with the Scottish Government, has launched a new Scottish Citizens Advice Helpline to support people affected by Coronavirus. Visit [www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk) or phone on 0800 028 1456 Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm.

### The Department for Work & Pensions

There's lots of helpful information on the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) including more information about recent Government changes which have been introduced to help during this challenging time.

### Support for people who are self-isolating and/or unwell due to Coronavirus

Anyone requiring assistance because they are not able to leave their home, for example if they are self-isolating and/or unwell due to Coronavirus can email [customerservices@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@eastlothian.gov.uk) or phone our public information line on **01875 824300** between the hours of 10am and 3pm, Monday to Friday. We can then ensure that you know how to access help locally.

## Sources of help and advice

### Help to apply for a Blue Badge

A Blue Badge allows people with severe mobility issues, who have difficulty using public transport, additional parking rights. This helps people live independent lives by knowing that when they reach their destination, either as a passenger or driver, they will be able to park close to where they need to go.

If you wish to apply for a Blue Badge, but need help to do so, our library staff can help you to complete your application form. You will need to make an appointment. To do so, phone 01620 827827 and ask for Blue Badge.



**Muscle or joint pain?**

If you have an MSK problem and you are over 16, use our new MSK support line on **01620 642 968** on **Monday, Tuesday or Friday between 09.00-11.30**

East Lothian  
Health & Social Care Partnership



### Mental Health care when it counts (CWIC)

Struggling with your mental health? There is now a quicker way to access a wide range of Mental Health Specialists.

#### Our team

The CWIC Team are administrators, Mental Health Occupational Therapists and Mental Health Nurses.

#### What we do

We will listen and work with you to help you find better ways to manage your mental health. We work closely with GP's, NHS Services and other community organisations to support you better.

**!** Call **01620 642963** (Monday to Friday 09.00 to 16.00)



There's now a quicker way to access mental health specialists

Feeling low, anxious, depressed, stressed?

Phone the CWIC Mental Health Line  
**01620 642 963**

#InYourHands  
#CareWhenItCounts

Monday to Friday 09.00 to 16.00  
For anyone aged 18+

East Lothian  
Health & Social Care Partnership



### **CAB Haddington**

01620 824471

[www.haddingtoncab.org.uk](http://www.haddingtoncab.org.uk)

### **CAB Musselburgh**

0131 653 2748

[www.musselburghcab.org.uk](http://www.musselburghcab.org.uk)

### **ELC Benefits**

01620 827730 for Council tenants

01620 827729 for private tenants/owner occupier

[benefits@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@eastlothian.gov.uk)

[www.eastlothian.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/benefits)

### **ELC Council Tax**

01875 824314

[www.eastlothian.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/counciltax)

### **ELC Financial Inclusion**

01620 827827 and ask for Financial Inclusion

[financialinclusion@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:financialinclusion@eastlothian.gov.uk)

[www.eastlothian.gov.uk/financialinclusion](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/financialinclusion)

### **ELC Payment Line**

You can pay your Council bills online at

[www.eastlothian.gov.uk/payforit](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/payforit)

Alternatively call us on 01875 824301

### **ELC Rent Income**

01620 827528

[rentincome@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:rentincome@eastlothian.gov.uk)

[www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rent](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rent)

### **ELC Scottish Welfare Fund**

01620 828790

[www.eastlothian.gov.uk/swf](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/swf)

### **Local Community Resilience Groups**

01875 824300

[customerservices@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@eastlothian.gov.uk)

### **Social Security Scotland**

Freephone 0800 182 2222

[www.socialsecurity.gov.scot](http://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot)

### **The Department for Work & Pensions**

UC Helpline: 0800 328 5644

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

## **PLEASE NOTE**

This is a fast-changing situation which has increased the demand for our services. We understand the anxiety it is causing for our residents and want to help you with advice and support. Along with other agencies, you may find that your call is in a queue or you need to leave a message. We will reply to all messages and emails we receive.

**We regularly update our website with information. Visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/coronavirus) for the latest details for East Lothian.**



**East Lothian**  
Council



All information correct at time of printing December 2021