

A Government spokesperson said:

“We are committed to supporting families to improve their lives.

“Since 2010, one million people have been lifted out of absolute poverty and household incomes have never been higher. We know that work remains the best route out of poverty, so it’s encouraging to see that there are 637,000 fewer children growing up in workless households since 2010 – a record low. We understand it can be a juggle to balance family life with work and that’s why we support parents to find a job that fits in with their caring commitments, and under Universal Credit 85% of child care costs are covered to support parents in work, compared to just 70% that was covered under the old system.

“For families that need extra support, we are spending £90 billion a year on working-age benefits, and by 2022 we will be spending £28 billion more on welfare than we do now.”

Sure Start Maternity Grants:

- Sure Start Maternity Grants are a one-off payment of £500 to help towards the costs of having a child.
- The grants are available to people on certain income-related benefits who are expecting their first child or for those expecting a multiple birth and have children already.
- The grant does not impact other benefits or tax credits and doesn’t have to be paid back.

Health Start Scheme:

- The Healthy Start scheme provides vital assistance to help children from lower income families access free fruit, vegetables, milk and vitamins
- We are supporting 300,000 pregnant women, families and children under four with Healthy Start vouchers.
- The vouchers are available to people on certain income-related benefits who are at least 10 weeks pregnant, have at least 1 child under 4 years old or are pregnant and under 18, even if they don’t receive any benefits.

Improvements to Universal Credit:

- We have introduced a £1.5 billion package of improvements for people when they first move onto Universal Credit.
- If people cannot wait for their first Universal Credit payment they can request an advance which is paid within five working days. If someone is in urgent need a payment can be made on the same day. We have extended the repayment of advances from 6 to 12 months.
- We continue to pay people’s Housing Benefits for two weeks when they make a claim to Universal Credit. This is non-recoverable and their first Universal Credit payment will include full housing costs.
- We have abolished the 7 waiting day period so no one has to wait six weeks for their first UC payment.

Support for families through Universal Credit:

- Under Universal Credit people can claim back up to 85% of eligible childcare costs to ensure their children have the very best chances in life.
- We understand lone parents often need extra support which is why Universal Credit work coaches will tailor requirements so that they are realistic, taking account of their personal circumstances and child care responsibilities.

- Families on Universal Credit can, with a firm job offer, claim childcare support up to a month before they start a job, and up to a month after their employment finishes.
- Lone parents and lead carers receiving Universal Credit will be asked to prepare for work when their youngest child reaches age two, and when their youngest child reaches age 3 they will be required to look for and be available for work, unless they have other personal circumstances for example other caring responsibilities.
- Work coaches can tailor the frequency and type of support they offer to the needs of each lone parent or lead carer. The work-related expectations placed upon the lone parent or lead carer will be limited to 16 hours per week because they are caring for a pre-school age child.

Support with the cost of living:

- We are further helping families with the everyday cost of living by:
 - Increasing the National Living Wage, worth £600 this year for a full-time worker.
 - Increasing the Personal Allowance, meaning a typical taxpayer pays over £1,000 less income tax than in 2010/11.
 - With over 200,000 children benefiting from 30 hours free childcare, we are already starting to see how it is making a real difference to the lives of families across the country.

Kinship carers:

- We announced earlier this year that support under Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit for children who would otherwise likely be in local authority care is to be extended.
- We recognise that in some situations, parents cannot make the same choices about the number of children in their household.
- We've introduced a number of exceptions for third or subsequent children in those cases – for example multiple births, adoption, and children who would otherwise be taken into care but instead are looked after by a non-parental carer.

Benefit cap:

- Even with the cap, lone parents can still receive benefits up to the equivalent salary of £25,000, or £29,000 in London and we have made Discretionary Housing Payments available to people who need extra help.