

BenefitsBulletin

Aberdeen City & Shire Advice Forum is a local network for people working in advice services to share information and experiences. The Forum meets quarterly throughout the year.



MONEY ADVICE SCOTLAND

Earlier this year we published our research [Adviser Perspectives on a Workforce Strategy](#).

The findings made clear that there is a need for greater focus on adviser well-being, and in response to this, we have launched a new project to address the issue of poor adviser well-being.

The first stage in this project involves getting a better idea as to what helps and harms workplace wellbeing in the sector and we have put together a short survey on this, which we would be very grateful if advisers could complete. The survey can be found [HERE](#) and should take around 10 minutes.

Our research found that a majority of advisers felt that training for advisers and managers would improve their wellbeing. Following the survey, we are holding a short online consultation event on **Thursday 9 July, 14:00-15:30** to find out more about how to make wellbeing training as helpful as possible for money advisers and managers. Advisers can find out more and [register via our website](#).

money
advice
scotland

The Eat Well Cookbook

A collection of recipes from staff and students at the University of Aberdeen

Download the [COOKBOOK](#)



Total value of rent arrears in Scottish social housing sector increases by almost six per cent in May 2020

New monthly figures from the Scottish Housing Regulator also show that number of households in temporary accommodation has increased by more than seven per cent

Rent arrears in Scotland's social rented sector have increased by almost six per cent in May 2020, according to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

In the Regulator's second [Monthly 'COVID-19 dashboard report](#) on the main impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on social landlords in Scotland, it highlights that, at the end of May, rent arrears stood at more than £156 million, up by more than £8.5 million (5.8 per cent) on the April total.

In addition, the May report shows that there were 13,175 households in temporary accommodation at the end of the month, up by 7.5 per cent compared to the previous month.

Commenting on the increases, chief executive of the Regulator Michael Cameron said -

'These latest figures show the increasing pressures facing the social housing sector, people who are homeless and tenants and service users in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic. More people are now in temporary accommodation and are waiting on a permanent home. And more tenants are struggling to pay their rent. Over the coming months, we will continue to monitor and report on the ongoing impact of the pandemic on social landlords to help support the work of the Scottish Government, the Social Housing Resilience Group, and the social housing sector.'

For more information, see [Regulator report shows more people in temporary accommodation and higher rent arrears, as landlords respond to the Coronavirus pandemic](#) from housingregulator.gov.scot

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) – the Government grant to self-employed individuals whose businesses have been adversely affected by coronavirus, it is made up of two grants, more on the second grant below.

The first grant opened for applications on Wednesday 13 May. It is worth up to 80% of profits, capped at £2,500 per month, or £7,500 in total. You can still apply for this first grant, but the Government's now said that you'll need to do so by **Monday 13 July**.

Government to pay out second (and final) SEISS grant in August

Applications for the second grant will open in August. While it works exactly the same as the first grant, it'll be worth 70% of average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment - though this time it'll be capped at £2,190 per month, or £6,570 in total.

The first grant is for those whose 'business was impacted by Covid-19 *before* 13 July and the second, which comes in August, for those 'impacted by Covid-19 *on or after* 14 July'. If impacted before and after the dates, you are due both.

You don't need to have claimed the first grant to receive the second grant. The eligibility criteria are the same for the second grant, see above, as for the first.

But you will need to [confirm your business has been adversely affected](#) by coronavirus on or after 14 July to claim the second grant.

[Check if you can claim a grant through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme](#)

Help us to reach vulnerable EU citizens

As you may be aware, all EU/EEA/Swiss citizens (and their families) -unless they are also British nationals, ILR holders or Irish nationals- living in the UK must apply to the EU Settlement Scheme in order to continue living and working here. Even if you do not work primarily with EEA nationals, they may be among your service users and in need of this information.

[A call for action – We need your help to reach vulnerable EU citizens](#)

CITIZENS RIGHTS PROJECT

DO YOU NEED HELP WITH THE EU SETTLEMENT SCHEME?

FREE ONLINE SUPPORT FOR EU/EEA/SWISS CITIZENS

Our advisers can answer your questions and help you with your application. Get in touch at info@citizensrightsproject.org or (+44) 07518926137 (Mon - Fri 9:00 - 17:00) Call or text!

Support available in multiple European languages!

Citizens Rights Project is regulated by CASC. Ref No. N201900977

1-2-1 on line advice now available – in many languages!

We have established an online system that allows us to continue offering free support with EU Settlement Scheme applications during the lockdown.

Our advisers have accreditation from the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner to provide immigration advice up to Level 1 (EUSS). We can refer more complex cases for free legal advice from Citizens Advice Scotland. Learn more about this service [here](#).

Upcoming webinars

After the successful reception of our webinar series "EU citizens rights after Brexit: the law and the practice", we have now joined forces with Northern Ireland's Committee on the Administration of Justice to bring you more [information on the implications of the new family reunion rights for family members of "people of Northern Ireland"](#).

This will take place Thursday 25 June at 4PM. You can still get a place [here](#). For information on other upcoming sessions visit our [events' page](#).

ONLINE SERIES

EU CITIZENS' RIGHTS AFTER BREXIT THE LAW AND THE PRACTICE

Implications of the new family reunion rights for family members of "people of Northern Ireland"

UNA BOYD, IMMIGRATION PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR, COMMITTEE ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

MARK LAZAROWICZ, CITIZENS' RIGHTS PROJECT CHAIR

JUNE 25, 2020 | 4-5:30PM

REGISTER VIA ZOOM - FIND LINK ↓

[HTTPS://CITIZENSRIGHTSPROJECT.ORG/EVENTS/](https://citizensrightsproject.org/events/)

PDF Factsheets

- [EU Citizens and Your Right to Work](#)
- [EU Citizens and Your Right to NHS Healthcare](#)
- [EU Citizens and Your Right to Vote](#)
- [EU Citizens and Your Right to Study](#)
- [EU Citizens and Your Right to Access Benefits and Social Work Support](#)
- [EU Citizens and Your Housing Rights](#)

Funded by the Scottish Government



Just Citizens Factsheets

Just Rights Scotland has just launched this project to help EU citizens better understand their rights to live, work, study and access healthcare, benefits and housing in Scotland.

These factsheets are free for you to [download](#), print and share with others and are available in English, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian and Spanish.

Sign up for [Citizens' Rights Project updates](#)

Government yet to provide clarity on next steps for health and disability benefit assessments and reviews, and jobseeking requirements

As deadlines for temporary suspensions come to an end, written answers say that new arrangements will be communicated 'as soon as possible' or 'in due course'

Responding to written answers about health and disability benefits, the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work Justin Tomlinson has advised that -

- while face-to-face assessments were [suspended from 17 March 2020](#) for an initial period of three months, the government is (as at 9 June 2020) - *'... currently in the process of reviewing this measure in light of the latest public health advice and will confirm next steps as soon as possible';*
- while reviews and reassessments were [suspended from 24 March 2020](#), also for three months, the government is (as at 16 June 2020) - *'... in the process of reviewing this measure, and will confirm next steps as soon as possible';* and
- as at 22 June 2020 - *'Reviews and reassessments remain suspended while we review what activity we can gradually start reintroducing in line with the latest public health advice'.*

In addition, in relation to face-to-face appointments at the jobcentre - which were temporarily [suspended for three months from 19 March 2020](#) - DWP Parliamentary Under-Secretary Mims Davies advised that (as at 23 June 2020) - *'Arrangements after the 30th June will be communicated in due course.'*

The written answers dated [9 June](#), [16 June](#), [22 June](#) and [23 June](#) are available from parliament.uk



Department for Work & Pensions

Court of appeal backs four single mothers after long legal fight by government

The Court of Appeal has ruled that the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions acted irrationally and unlawfully by failing to adapt earned income assessment rules to account for the impact on certain universal credit claimants.



In [Secretary of State for Work And Pensions v Johnson & Ors \[2020\] EWCA Civ 778](#), Ms Johnson, along with three other claimants (the respondents), were all in receipt of universal credit and were employed and paid monthly. They received their salary on or around the last working day or last banking day of the month and there were times when salaries payable in respect of two months were paid during one universal credit assessment period so that they would receive much less in universal credit and lose out on the work allowance at other times in each year.

The case revolved around the Department for Work and Pensions' refusal to change [universal credit assessment period regulations](#), which have the effect of penalising claimants whose salary is paid towards the end of a month, resulting in fluctuating levels of income.

Danielle Johnson, a school catering assistant who brought the original case, had argued that the DWP's refusal to allow her to adjust the date of her universal credit assessment period meant she was left about £500 worse off each year, and was therefore subject to cashflow problems and put at risk of eviction.



Department
for Work &
Pensions

A [court ruling last year](#) found in favour of Johnson and three other single mothers, concluding that it was "odd in the extreme" that the DWP was unwilling to modify universal credit arrangements even when claimants were perversely affected. Currently around 85,000 claimants are estimated to be affected by the rules.

Between them, the four had been forced into rent arrears, and borrowed money and used food banks to make ends meet. One of the mothers was so exasperated by the system that she gave up work to look for another job that had no clash between her pay date and universal credit assessment period.

The government department argued at the appeal that to have to change the way the benefit's online computer calculation system worked in line with the original court ruling would undermine the principle of universal credit, cost at least £7.5m and require thousands of calculations to be administered manually.

However, Lady Justice Rose said she agreed with the original ruling. The DWP had presented no reason why Johnson and the others should lose money simply because of the date in the month in which they had started their claim. The situation faced by Johnson and others was "perverse", she said.

She said: "This case is, in my judgment, one of the rare instances where the secretary of state for work and pensions' refusal to put in place a solution to this very specific problem is so irrational that I have concluded that the threshold is met because no reasonable [minister] would have struck the balance in that way."

Johnson, who was supported in the case by the [Child Poverty Action Group](#), is paid on the last day of each month, and her universal credit assessment period runs from the last day of the month to the penultimate day of the next month. In some months, due to a weekend or bank holiday falling at the end of the month, her wages are paid into her bank account two days earlier than normal.

The universal credit system reads this as her having earned twice as much in one month and none in the next, meaning that her benefit payment amount fluctuates wildly, and cancelling her work allowance in several months, leaving her £500 a year worse off.

Commenting on the judgment, [Leigh Day solicitor Tessa Gregory, who acted for the respondents, said:](#)

'The Secretary of State committed to a "test and learn" approach in rolling out universal credit yet she refused to listen to these four hard working mums when they raised this issue over two years ago. Our client hopes the Secretary of State will now accept the ruling and take urgent steps to fix this perverse situation which as noted by the Court only serves to disincentivise work.'

The DWP said: "We are carefully considering the court's decision as part of our ongoing work."

The judgment is [HERE](#). More background on the case and how the universal credit assessment period affected CPAG's three clients in the case is [HERE](#).

New video and a brief update by [Gareth Morgan](#) on June 9, 2020

A brief update to my post on Surplus Earnings of May 24th. The team at [legislation.gov.uk](#) have corrected the current version of the Universal Credit regulations and pulled the incorrect consolidated versions, that they said had been provided by the DWP.

I have put up a Youtube video trying to explain the serious flaws in Universal Credit Assessment periods and how a proportioned earnings rate might help solve them. 25 minutes I'm afraid, but there's a lot to cover. It's at youtu.be/HMYLknF9da8