

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.



Next Advice Forum meeting - Wed 21st October 2020. 10:00-12:00 via Microsoft Teams

Warm Home Discount Scheme

You could get £140 off your electricity bill for winter 2020 to 2021 under the Warm Home Discount Scheme.



The [Warm Home Discount Scheme](#) for winter 2019 to 2020 closed on 31 March 2020. The 2020 to 2021 scheme will open on **12 October 2020**.

The money is not paid to you - it's a one-off discount on your electricity bill, between September and March.

You may be able to get the discount on your gas bill instead if your supplier provides you with both gas and electricity. Contact your supplier to find out.

The discount will not affect your [Cold Weather Payment](#) or [Winter Fuel Payment](#).

Eligibility

There are 2 ways to qualify for the Warm Home Discount Scheme:

- you get the [Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit](#) - known as the 'core group'
- [you're on a low income](#) and meet your energy supplier's criteria for the scheme - known as the 'broader group'

How you apply for the Warm Home Discount Scheme depends on how you qualify for the discount.

Pre-pay or pay-as-you-go meters

You can still qualify for the discount if you use a pre-pay or pay-as-you-go electricity meter.

Your electricity supplier can tell you how you'll get the discount if you're eligible, for example a voucher you can use to top up your meter.

Councillors agree Aberdeenshire Local Child Poverty Action Plan



Councillors have welcomed and agreed the Aberdeenshire Local Child Poverty Action Report for 2019/20.

Members of Aberdeenshire Council's Communities Committee heard on Thursday (Sept 3) that the Action Plan was taking a long-term strategic approach to tackling the complex issue of child poverty.

The intention is for the Action Plan to add value and complement existing strategies including NHS Grampian's Child Health 2020 and the Aberdeenshire Children's Services Plan which also sets out a wide range of actions.

SOURCE

[Reducing Child Poverty Action Plan – Update Report July 2020](#)

Barnardo's Works Opportunities

Please find below our list of opportunities for September/October in Aberdeen.

Most of our programmes will involve some degree of blended delivery but we are attempting to arrange face to face meetings with all new referrals.

[Barnardo's Work Opportunities](#)



There's still time to respond to NAWRA's survey on how your advice service is responding to the pandemic



[SURVEY](#)

Tackling Poverty & Inequality

the POVERTY ALLIANCE
WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY

Save the date: 5th – 11th October
Aberdeenshire Challenge Poverty Week

The impact of Covid19 will be felt for some time – therefore partners are developing a range of online sessions, workshops and talks which will be delivered throughout the week.

This week-long event will be for members of the public and practitioners. More details to follow.....

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has called on the government to make the £20 a week uplift to universal credit and working tax credit permanent, and extend it to legacy benefits

[New briefing](#) highlights risk that 700,000 more people will be pulled into poverty if uplift ends, as planned, in April 2021.

NES Transforming Psychological Trauma

Level 2 training via Microsoft TEAMS (first come first served)

- Thursday September 24th Sept (1:30 – 4pm) and
- Tuesday September 29th Sept (9:30 – 12 noon).

Contact Maureen Nicol (NHS Grampian) maureen.nicol2@nhs.scot

for details about the above training. If there is enough interest more dates can be provided.

Trauma Skilled practice (level 2) includes staff who have more direct and substantial contact with people who may have been affected by traumatic events, whether the trauma is known about or not.

Framework

NES have developed the Transforming Psychological Trauma Training Plan and Strategy which map out **4 levels of practice** matched to the roles and levels of involvement staff have in working with individuals affected by trauma.

Levels of Training

There are 4 trauma practice levels, depending on who your work brings you into contact with and the type of work you do.

1. Trauma Informed – If your work requires you to have direct contact with people then this level of training is relevant for you. Even if you don't work closely with people or provide direct care as such, if you have contact with people (e.g. in an administrative role), you are working at **trauma informed level**

You may be able to access training online delivered by a local trainer, but there is also an excellent video resource which you can open [here](#)

- [Opening Doors](#) (if you work primarily with adults)
- [Sowing seeds](#) (if you work with children and young people)

2. Trauma Skilled practice level includes staff who have more direct and substantial contact with people who may have been affected by traumatic events, whether the trauma is known about or not. You may be able to access local training delivered online (½ day- full day), and there is an excellent e module on Turas Learn ([see here](#)). Everyone can register for a free Turas Learn account [here](#).

3. Trauma Enhanced practice level includes staff who have more regular and intense contact with people who are known to be affected by traumatic events. Currently Safety and Stabilisation Training is the main training package offered at this level and requires that staff have completed the Turas e module, and also that they have a level of core skills training and experience. This is a 3 day training (2 days, plus 1 f/up day). It is being developed for delivery on line.

It may also be possible to access shorter individualised training via CPD slots and workshops for staff groups working at this level.

4. Trauma Specialist practice level includes staff whose role involves delivering evidence based psychological therapies to individuals affected by traumatic events. If you are working at this level you will require a knowledge base of trauma theory, specialist training in therapy modalities and approaches used in trauma work, and ongoing regular supervision.

For details on the NES Transforming Psychological Trauma see [HERE](#).

Employment Minister Mims Davies has confirmed that the DWP has no plans to amend the current 39 week qualifying period for Support for Mortgage Interest in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Home owners struggling with mortgage repayments should 'contact their lender as soon as possible', says Employment Minister

Responding yesterday to a written question in parliament, Ms Davies said -

'The Department has no plans to amend the qualifying period for Support for Mortgage Interest.

Home owners struggling with mortgage repayments because of COVID-19 should contact their lender as soon as possible to discuss what support might be available.'

NB - [commenting on draft Financial Conduct Authority \(FCA\) guidance for mortgage lenders](#) on 26 August 2020, Money Advice Trust Director of External Affairs Jane Tully said that there was a limit to what the FCA and lenders can do to prevent repossessions, and that the government should 'step up' to close gaps in the mortgage safety net, for example by -

'... reforming the Support for Mortgage Interest scheme - including reducing the 39 week wait for payments to 13 weeks, and increasing the £200,000 mortgage cap that was set 11 years ago and has not been updated since.'

[Ms Davies' written answer](#) is available from parliament.uk

The date for increasing the repayment period for universal credit advances can not be brought forward from October 2021, the government has said.

Following the July 2020 Work and Pensions Committee evidence session on universal credit and the wait for a first payment, Committee Chair Stephen Timms wrote to the Welfare Delivery Minister Will Quince seeking further details on a number of points including whether the timetable for introducing changes to advance payments - including the extension of the recovery period to 24 months announced in [Budget 2020](#) - can be moved forward.

The [correspondence between Mr Timms and Mr Quince](#) is available from parliament.uk

Up to £3.5bn furlough scheme cash may have been wrongly paid out

Error and fraud rate for scheme estimated at between 5% and 10%, says HMRC chief

The government believes it may have paid out up to £3.5bn in wrong or fraudulent claims for the furlough scheme.

Jim Harra, the top civil servant at HM Revenue & Customs, said that his staff had calculated for the possibility that as much as 10% of the money might have gone to the wrong places.

"We have made an assumption for the purposes of our planning that the error and fraud rate in this scheme could be between 5% and 10%," the permanent secretary said.

He was speaking in front of MPs on the public accounts committee.

The government has so far made £35.4bn in furlough payments, according to the latest figures. It means that somewhere between £1.75bn and £3.5bn could have been paid out wrongly.

"That will range from deliberate fraud through to error," Harra added. "Although we will expect employers to check their claims and repay any excess amount ... what we will be focusing on is tackling abuse and fraud."

It is the first time HMRC has spoken publicly about the level of potential fraud that could have been committed as part of the job retention scheme, which covered up to 80% of an employee's salary while they were on furlough.

Furlough is now winding down and is expected to end for good next month. However, businesses that bring staff back from furlough will receive another £1,000 if the employee is still in work by the end of January.

By 16 August, 9.6 million people had been put on government-supported furlough, with 1.2 million employers claiming the support.

Meanwhile, roughly 2.7 million self-employed people have claimed about £7.8bn in support from the government.

Harra said that an academic study had estimated the level of fraud and error might be even higher than 10%.

[SOURCE](#)



The ACVO Survey 2020

3rd Sector Organisations have been working extremely hard throughout this crisis.



As we move into living with the impact of Covid-19, ACVO would like to let you know more about what we do, hear from you about what you need and how we can best support you.

To do this we have put together this short survey that will help inform our work going forward.

We would really appreciate if you took some time to complete this survey which can be found [here](#).

The DWP has issued further guidance to housing benefit decision-makers on the treatment of the additional earnings disregard in housing benefit that accounts for the temporary increase in the basic element of working tax credit.



Department
for Work &
Pensions

New edition of LA Welfare Direct confirms that claimants treated as 'in remunerative work' for tax credit purposes continue to be entitled to the disregard in housing benefit

In LA Welfare Direct 9/2020, the DWP highlights that the Tax Credits (Coronavirus, Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2020 (SI.No.534/2020) enable people who are furloughed, self-isolating or shielding to be treated as still being engaged in remunerative work for working tax credit purposes and that, for housing benefit entitlement, this means that -

'If a claimant is in receipt of statutory sick pay (SSP) due to an illness, including COVID-19 related illness, the additional earnings disregard will cease to apply unless they are receiving the 30-hour element of working tax credit.

If a claimant is on SSP or furloughed and holiday pay is received, this should be taken into account as earnings in any assessment, alongside any SSP or furlough payment received.

If a claimant returns to work on reduced hours, local authorities will need to confirm if this is a permanent change, and assess if the claimant's new circumstances affect their additional earnings disregard eligibility.'

[LA Welfare Direct 9/2020](#) is available from gov.uk

FAO Advisers who are involved in Tribunal Representation

Tribunal Update on Social Security & Child Support appeals



HM Courts &
Tribunals Service

Thank you for your co-operation in recent months as we have continued to run tribunal hearings during the Covid-19 lockdown period. We are continuing to identify new ways of working but appreciate that complications still exist and we are all still not working the way we were before the pandemic.

I wanted to update you on a few matters that I thought would be of interest.

Core Case Database:

We are continuing to develop our new digital processing system, known as Core Case Database (CCD). This is currently being operated in parallel with our existing computer database. CCD is now being used to process appeals for Personal Independence Payment, Employment & Support Allowance and Universal Credit.

CCD also has a facility called Manage Your Appeal (MYA) which representatives can sign up to. You can receive updates about your appeals by email or text message. They contain useful information and a link so you can track the progress of appeals online. You can sign up to this service when appeals are lodged online. We can also update your subscription for existing appeals if they are registered on CCD.

Please note that the new CCD system does not allow for the numbering of further evidence in the same way we have done previously. Further evidence sent in after the DWP written response has been received is annotated as follows:

Addition A – page 1, page 2 etc

Addition B – page 1, page 2 etc.

Issuing the DWP written response

You will be aware that it is the responsibility of the DWP to issue their written response to parties involved in the appeal. We did put in place a temporary measure during the pandemic to assist representatives who did not have the submission and requested that we send a copy to them. We have now ceased this practice and would request that you contact the DWP if you require a copy of their written response. HMCTS are not staffed or resourced to send out their submission and it can impact on our ability to provide the service we are responsible for delivering.

Production of further evidence

We are receiving some further evidence for appeals on the day of the hearing or just a day or two before. I appreciate the difficulties and pressures on representative groups at this time. However, receiving further evidence at such short notice also puts pressure on HMCTS and there is a risk that a hearing may be adjourned in these circumstances. It would be extremely helpful if you could try wherever possible to send any further evidence at least 7 days prior to the hearing date. This allows us to process and issue to the panel members and other parties before the hearing.

Status of your offices

Could you please provide us with an update in terms of whether your offices are now open? I appreciate that most staff are probably still working from home but is there any presence in your offices at this time who can distribute correspondence that we post out; or should we continue to email some further evidence, decision notices etc? I should point out that any further evidence uploaded on to the CCD system is then sent to parties by post only so you will already be receiving some correspondence this way. There are also items that we must continue to post such as CD recording of hearings, DVD evidence etc.

Availability to attend hearings

I would be grateful if you could review your current availability to participate in oral hearings. Is there any scope for you to increase the days you can provide representation?

Oral hearings

As you know, oral hearings are currently being held via telephone. We would like to recommence face to face hearings as soon as possible but safety of all tribunal users is paramount so no date has been proposed for this yet. We will continue to run telephone hearings in the meantime. You may also be aware that we are looking to hold more hearings by video link using the Cloud Video Platform (CVP).

Three judges will be holding as many CVP hearings in September as they can with a view to us increasing this going forward. We recognise though that not all appellants will have the equipment to participate in a hearing of this nature. We are therefore looking into whether they can access the necessary facilities at an existing hearing venue or even from your offices. Do you have any points or feedback you think might be helpful to us at this stage?

You can find out more about CVP hearings by clicking on the following link:

<https://intranet.justice.gov.uk/documents/2020/04/cvp-faq-public.pdf>

Thank you for taking the time to read this update.

When responding, please email sscsa-glasgow@justice.gov.uk and add Tribunal Update in the subject heading.

In the first month of the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown, Scotland saw the largest monthly rise in council tax reduction (CTR) recipients since the scheme was devolved in April 2013.



New statistics also show a more than 10 per cent increase in the total value of council tax reduction awarded from March to April 2020

New quarterly statistics on the CTR scheme in Scotland for April to June 2020 show that the total number of CTR recipients increased sharply in April 2020 to 490,160 from 469,370 in March 2020.

Other key findings include that -

- by June 2020, the total number of CTR recipients had increased to just under half a million (497,960), an increase of 1.6 per cent since April 2020, the first time the total has risen during this period since the scheme was introduced;
- total weekly CTR awarded (as a result of the increase in CTR recipients and the annual increases in council tax bills in April 2020) rose by 10.6 per cent to £7.2 million in April 2020 from the previous month's total of £6.5 million; and
- by the end of the quarter, the total weekly CTR awarded had risen further to £7.3 million.

Commenting on the figures, the Scottish Government says that the start of lockdown on 24 March 2020 affected employment in Scotland with the knock-on impact of more individuals becoming eligible to claim CTR. It also notes that CTR recipient levels at the end of the April to June quarter are now similar to the levels seen four years ago in June 2016.

For more information, see [Council Tax Reduction in Scotland: April to June 2020](#) from gov.scot

Asylum claims in the UK: common questions

Published Tuesday, September 08, 2020



Many Members often receive questions and correspondence from constituents about the UK's asylum system.

This briefing provides an overview of international and UK asylum law and processes, related statistics, and other issues commonly raised by constituents:

- Differences in definitions between asylum seeker, refugee and migrant
- Whether people must claim asylum in the first safe country they reach
- How asylum claims are decided in the UK
- Recent statistics on asylum application outcomes
- Asylum seekers' eligibility for welfare benefits
- Comparative information about asylum in other European countries
- Refugee family reunion and refugee resettlement schemes

Recent statistics

In the year ending June 2020:

- 32,423 asylum applications were submitted in the UK
- 11,116 asylum applications were granted at initial decision stage
- 1,387 grants of humanitarian protection and 889 grants of alternative types of immigration permission following an asylum application were made,
- 2,932 asylum applications were allowed at appeal stage, and
- 3,560 grants of protection were made through resettlement schemes.

Initial decisions on asylum applications often take place in a different year to that in which the application was made.

[Asylum claims in the UK: common questions](#)

Employment and benefits support



If you are affected by coronavirus or its effect on the economy, there is a wide range of support available.

These pages provide information about the changes the government has brought in to support people who are already claiming benefits, need to claim benefits, or are at risk of losing their job as a result of coronavirus. Use the links at the top of this page to find the benefits information you need.

You do not need to attend the jobcentre unless we ask you to do so. If you need to contact us the quickest way to do this is online or by phone. If you need to attend a jobcentre, they are open and one of our colleagues will be able to assist you. Please wear a face covering when entering a jobcentre.

These pages will continue to be updated. Please check here regularly for updates on the arrangements the Department for Work and Pensions is making to support those who are affected by coronavirus.

See [HERE](#)



Department for Work & Pensions

The Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) has recommended that the DWP undertake further work to explore using the 'implicit consent' model within universal credit.

While recognising the Department's need to safeguard personal data, Committee says stakeholders have provided a 'persuasive case' in favour of the model

In its report '*Consent in Universal Credit*', published today, the SSAC highlights that many respondents to its [2018 consultation on the proposals for universal credit managed migration](#) expressed concern about the 'explicit consent' model used under universal credit and queried why the Department's implicit consent procedure, used for other benefits, did not apply to universal credit. As a result the Committee recommended that -

'... the concept of 'implicit consent' which applies in legacy benefits should be extended to Universal Credit, but with appropriate safeguards in place to ensure that personal data held by the Department are not compromised. This committee would be willing to work with the Department and other interested parties to identify what those safeguards should be.'

NB - 'implicit consent' provides for DWP to disclose information about a claimant to their representative provided certain criteria are met to confirm that representative's validity - as set out in the Departments [Working with Representatives](#) guidance - whereas 'explicit consent' is time-limited, must be given in writing, on the telephone, or face-to-face, and outline what information the DWP may disclose and who to.

Responding to the SSAC's recommendation, the DWP developed a prototype which would present universal credit claimants with a 'give consent' tab in the online journal enabling them to provide relevant information - who the representative was, why help was needed, the areas where help was sought, and how long the help would be needed. The claimant would then be given a unique code to pass to the representative which they could use to access relevant parts of the claimants account within the relevant period.

In order to understand whether the prototype was viable, the Committee took it to stakeholders and, while feedback was generally positive, there was a strong feeling that even an enhanced explicit consent process would not address all of the problems faced by those supporting universal credit claimants in crisis situations, and that it should be supplemented with some form of implicit consent.

Highlighting that it is essential that the final consent model works effectively - both for those who need support and those who provide it - the SSAC recommends that the DWP -

- undertakes further work to ensure there is a comprehensive understanding of how the implicit consent model is currently used, what sort of information advisers ask for under it and the degree to which it is used differently by the advice sector and individuals (such as family and friends) and what the risks are for each; and subsequently; and
- runs a small number of pilots - in a controlled and careful way - to test its assumptions around data concerns associated with retaining this model which evidently works well for many who use it.

Emphasising that these issues need exploring before reaching a final view, the SSAC concludes -

'If the model that exists for legacy benefits can be safely imported into universal credit, stakeholders have provided a persuasive case to do so. However, if that would compromise the ability of the Department to safeguard personal data, it would be important to consider how the Department's proposals can be adjusted to retain some of aspects of the current arrangements that work well for many users.'

For more information see [Consent in Universal Credit](#) from gov.uk

Facing redundancy or recently made redundant?

Redundancy can be one of the most challenging, stressful things you'll ever face. You may be experiencing a range of emotions and you might feel unsure of where to go next.

Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) is the Scottish Government's initiative for supporting people dealing with redundancy. PACE can provide free, confidential advice to help you with your next steps.

[Online redundancy support session](#)

Join our online redundancy support session on **Tuesday 22 September from 9am - 4pm.**

It's a great opportunity to hear from organisations who can help with:

- Job search, updating CVs and careers advice
- Identifying learning and training opportunities
- Information on funding and benefits
- Advice on starting up your own business.

Sign up to attend: pacevirtualevent.eventbrite.co.uk or call **01224 285200**. The session is free to attend.

For more information about PACE redundancy support, visit redundancyscotland.co.uk, or call **0800 917 8000** to find out more.

PACE

Programme for Government

The Programme for Government (PfG) the First Minister announced on 1 September “promotes equality and wellbeing, with decisive action to combat child poverty. At its heart is the new, game-changing Scottish Child Payment.”



Significant work, under incredible pressures, has meant that we will aim to start taking applications for under 6s in November 2020 and for first payments to be made to eligible families from the end of February 2021. This new benefit will increase family incomes and reduce child poverty.

The PfG also shows how over the last year we have continued to put clients at the heart of our approach and points the way to the further investments we are making in the people of Scotland.

During the pandemic, we made a one-off Coronavirus Carer's Allowance Supplement payment of £230.10, in addition to the regular six monthly Carer's Allowance Supplement, benefitting around 83,000 of Scotland's lowest income carers with some of the most intense caring roles – meaning that eligible carers in Scotland in receipt of Carer's Allowance will receive an additional £690.30 this year on top of their Carer's Allowance. Last month, we delivered the new Job Start Payment, providing a £250 payment, or £400 for people with children, to support young people starting a new job after a period of unemployment.

We continue to introduce new benefits – in addition to the Scottish Child Payment, we will deliver our new Child Winter Heating Assistance this winter, subject to DWP providing the necessary data on time. This will provide families of the most severely disabled children with £200 per child to help with the cost of heating in the winter months.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the Scottish Government, on Social Security Scotland, and on the Department for Work and Pensions, whose support we need to transfer social security powers. As set out in the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People's statement to Parliament on the 1st of April this year, we are having to rework our timetable to deliver the remaining devolved benefits and to complete case transfer. This is an on-going and complex exercise.

We need to consider the impact of the pandemic not only on our own services, but also on the availability of health and social care professionals to bring their expertise to the co-design of disability and carer benefits at a time when many are still needed on the frontline. We also have to account for the extraordinary pressures that the DWP is still experiencing, following the unprecedented demand for Universal Credit, which is impacting on the resources they are able to devote to the devolution programme. The Cabinet Secretary will update Parliament on revised delivery dates, once the re-planning work is complete. We remain committed to delivering the disability benefits as soon as it is safe to do so.

[SOURCE](#)

Social Renewal Advisory Board

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have had an impact on people across Scotland, but this impact has not been felt equally. We know that the pandemic has entrenched already existing inequalities in our society. However, we have also seen an inspiring community effort across the country and a significant amount of work undertaken to support people and communities which was delivered at pace and challenged traditional ways of working, cultures and mind sets.

On 9 June 2020, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government and the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People announced the creation of a Social Renewal Advisory Board. The Board aims to build on the shifts in policy and practice that we have seen as a result of working across government and in partnership with frontline service deliverers in local government, the third sector and communities. The Board aims to bank the policy and practice shifts seen during COVID-19 and utilise our current practice and knowledge with an emphasis on delivering equality and social justice. It will focus on reducing poverty and disadvantage and advancing human-rights and equality. This will ensure that as we move from response to recovery, we are able to build back better and create a fairer, more equal Scotland. You can read more about the Board [here](#).

Aberdeen City Council has expressed its support for a new suicide prevention campaign whose visual identity was launched today (Thursday 10th September)



The launch of the visual identity by Scotland's National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG) coincides with World Suicide Prevention Day and is called United to Prevent Suicide.

The new approach to suicide prevention is underpinned by the belief that we each have a role to play in tackling stigma and being prepared to talk frankly about the subject and connecting those at risk.

A Scotland-wide suicide prevention campaign will begin shortly following today's visual identity launch.

View [SAMH article](#) and unitedtopreventsuicide.org.uk

Thousands of new Work Coach vacancies open across the UK

From today (Thursday 10 September 2020), jobseekers across the country will be able to apply for one of thousands of new jobcentre Work Coach vacancies being offered by the Department for Work and Pensions, as part of its pledge to double the number of Work Coaches to 27,000 by March 2021.

These expert Work Coaches will be trained in how to get the best out of people and make sure they have the support they need to get back into work.

Through a rapid recruitment plan, the department will have 4,500 Work Coaches in place by October 2020, with a further 9,000 by March next year.

For more information on applications and deadlines in your region, please visit the Work Coach [recruitment site](#).

Scottish Government response to recommendations on the draft Scottish Child Payment Regulations



The Scottish Government has rejected a call from the Scottish Commission on Social Security (SCoSS) for it to work towards automatic awards of Scottish Child Payment (SCP).

In an annex to a letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security Shirley-Anne Somerville to the Scottish Social Security Committee, the Scottish Government accepts much of what SCoSS recommended following scrutiny of the regulations in [January 2020](#) and [February 2020](#)

[Ms Somerville's letter to the Scottish Social Security Committee](#) - in which she also confirms that the *Scottish Child Payment Regulations 2020* were laid in the Scottish Parliament on 8 September 2020 - is available from [parliament.scot](#)

DWP confirms it will no longer require mandatory reconsideration prior to appeal for ESA claimants who meet the conditions for payment pending appeal

Noting the policy change in a summary of the September 2020 statistics on the [outcomes of completed ESA work capability assessments \(WCA\)](#), the DWP advises -

'As a result of a High Court decision in July 2020 [Connor, R (On the Application Of) v The Secretary of State for Work And Pensions [\[2020\] EWHC 1999 \(Admin\)](#)], mandatory reconsideration has been discontinued for any claimant who, having been found fit for work following a work capability assessment would, if they appealed, be paid ESA pending the outcome of that appeal. This is known as Payment Pending Appeal. Not all claimants qualify, and it applies only to fit for work disallowance decisions, not decisions such as disallowance due to failure to return a questionnaire or failure to attend a WCA.'

The DWP's update is set out in [section 2 of the statistics release](#), available from [gov.uk](#)

According to the [NHS website](#) in the UK, there are almost 2 million people living with sight loss. Of these, around 360,000 are registered as blind or partially sighted.

Focus on Disability

Serving the Disabled Community since 1999



If your vision has deteriorated to a certain level, you may choose to [register as visually impaired](#). Depending on the severity of your vision loss you'll either be registered as sight impaired (previously "partially sighted") or severely sight impaired (previously "blind").

If you are registered as either sight impaired or severely sight impaired you may be entitled to:

- free NHS sight tests
- railcards and other rail or travel concessions
- local travel schemes
- free directory enquiry services from BT
- protection under the Equality Act
- free postage on items marked 'articles for the blind'
- free assessment by social services.

In addition, if you are registered as severely sight impaired you may be entitled to: free loan of radios, cassette players and TV sound receivers

- help with telephone installation charges and line rental
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- Attendance Allowance
- Carer's Allowance
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Tax credits
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax disability reduction
- Universal Credit
- Pension Credit

[SOURCE](#)