

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

'5 minutes, 10 questions' survey asking frontline advisors about their experiences in helping others to apply for benefits. We are looking into understanding more about third party representation.



The survey should take no more than 5 to 10 minutes of your time and you can complete it on your mobile, PC or any device that suits you.

The details of the survey are here: www.surveymonkey.com/r/QMY8XV5

Once we've received everyone's responses, we may get in touch with you to see if you'd be willing to share more details about some of your responses. We'll let you know in advance what we'd like to know more about – and offer you a variety of ways to take part including over email or telephone, which means we can have a shorter follow up that takes up less of your valuable time.

If you are willing to do this - please provide your email address in the final question of the survey. There's no pressure to do this and otherwise your survey will come through as anonymous. Likewise if you have any others in your network who work for third sector organisations and help clients in accessing social security benefits, it would be amazing if you could forward it on.

We're hoping to get all survey responses back before **Friday, Sept 25th**

Claiming PIP during the COVID-19 pandemic

Craig Samuel, the National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers ([NAWRA](#)) rep for Scotland, has written a report on our members experiences of helping clients to claim PIP during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Read the report.](#)

Council extends free school meal entitlement

Aberdeen City Councillors today (Thursday 17 September) agreed to extending their free school meal entitlement to additional families in receipt of Universal Credit.

Members of the Education Operational; Delivery Committee agreed to extend the provision, effective as of Monday 26 October to include:

- Single claimants working less than 16 hours per week with a gross annual income of less than £16,105;
- Joint claimants working less than 24 hours per week with a gross annual income of less than £16,105.

[SOURCE](#)

Universal Credit — scams

A short form article on Universal Credit scam claims. (This September 2020 article is an updated version of an article that was first published in August 2019)

Read [HERE](#)

New legislation has been issued that makes consequential amendments to social security legislation for Great Britain to provide for the treatment of certain benefits introduced under the [Social Security \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#).

[The Social Security \(Scotland\) Act 2018 \(Young Carer Grants, Short-Term Assistance and Winter Heating Assistance\) \(Consequential Provision and Modifications\) Order 2020](#)

Lets Talk Energy Fund is now open. This is a fund for clients on benefits/low income to access free white goods.



Funding has been provided by energy companies as part of their commitment to help with energy bills and energy usage.

At present the Fund is able to consider applications from the customers of the following energy suppliers:

- Boost: White Goods awards and Boiler repairs or replacements awards
- OVO: White Goods awards and Boiler repairs or replacements awards
- Spark: White Goods awards and Boiler repairs or replacements awards
- SSE: White Goods awards and Boiler repairs or replacements awards
- Scottish Power: White Goods awards only
- Tonik Energy: White Goods and Energy Debt Relief awards only

Applications for White Goods from customers of other suppliers will be stored for up to 10 weeks and may be considered when further funding becomes available later in the year. Should an application close after 10 weeks you are free to reapply to the scheme at any time.

Applicants can submit multiple applications but can only apply for one request type per application.

<https://fund.lets-talk.online/>

Will you add your voice to let the UK government know you want them to give EU citizens physical proof of their status?

As a friend of the 3 million I want to tell you about our new campaign to give millions of EU citizens physical proof of our right to live and work in the UK. A safety net when digital fails.

We launched our Crowdfunder and would love your help to get it off to a good start. You can find more information here:

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/denied-my-backup>

We have already got the support of organisations like AgeUK and Equity - will you join them by adding your voice too? Together, we can make a difference:

- By mobilising local communities and recruiting volunteers;
- Getting people in key constituencies to go and see their MP
- Running a media awareness campaign including targeted, paid-for social media ads;
- Educating and lobbying MPs, businesses and other stakeholders;
- Building a network of allies and stakeholders, e.g. AgeUK, Mind, Children's Society;
- Run webinars using Zoom;
- Gather more evidence from businesses and people affected - a credible poll costs an estimated £3,5k;
- Produce and disseminate accessible information material, and much more!

With your help we can give EU citizens the backup we so desperately need and shield them from discrimination and heartache. Can you help us with spreading the word and a small donation today?

No recourse to public funds — what is it, has it changed and can it be lifted?

With many people unable to work or at risk of losing their jobs — especially with the furlough scheme coming to an end — 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPf) has become a more acute issue during the pandemic. There has been a big rise in the number of applications to lift the condition and some developments in the guidance on how the Home Office deals with applications.

This article will look at what the condition means, how to make an application to have it lifted and how to apply for a fee waiver. Read article [HERE](#)



No Recourse, North East Partnership

We recently had a good news story from [Shelter](#) of an NRPf family who have finally been granted their visa.

I was wondering if good news stories is something the partnership would be happy for us to share on the No Recourse, North East social media page?

We would keep each story anonymous but can give a shout out/tag the organisation in each post. We feel it would be great to celebrate clients wins however big or small and will bring attention to each organisation along with the partnership.

www.acvo.org.uk/working-with/no-recourse-north-east



@RecourseNo

← Tweet



No Recourse, North East Partnership
@RecourseNo

Success of the week (everyone needs a happy motivational story when working with NRPf!)
Lady+3 kids supported by partner @shelterscotland for last 2 years finally been granted their visa! 🥳
After 4 years of destitution finally they can plan for their future 😊
#NRPf

9:04 AM · 11 Sep 20 · Twitter for Android



JOB OPPORTUNITY



Instant Neighbour is about to enter the planning phase for the 30th Annual Giving Tree Appeal & we are looking for someone to join the team on a short term basis to Co-ordinate this incredibly important Appeal.

Instant Neighbour has been delivering a 'Happy Christmas' to thousands of children & young people across the City & North East for the past 29 years.

This is a fast-paced role requiring a methodical approach. You will be required to manage a database, teams of volunteers, be very organised & be comfortable working autonomously.

You will need to be highly organised, able to multi-task, be IT literate & preferably have some volunteer management & project delivery experience.

Key Tasks

- Design the overall schedule for successful delivery of the Appeal & make necessary adjustments if/when problems arise.
Assign tasks to volunteers & team members for the completion of the Appeal.
- Motivate & build enthusiasm for the Appeal by keeping focused on its main objectives & ensuring completion of the deadline.
Prepare Appeal updates & a final report which showcases its value & status.
- Stay familiar with the Charity's policies & make sure that all members of the Appeal team adhere to set standards

This is a short term contract - part time for 2 months & then full time for approx 5 weeks, followed by time spent writing the final report at the end of the Appeal. Fee to be agreed but circa £3000.

For all expressions of interest in this please email reception@instantneighbour.co.uk along with your contact details.

Organisations are growing increasingly concerned about the mental health of their staff and service users, a new report has shown



Research compiled by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations ([SCVO](#)) shows the main pressures charities have faced in recent months as a result of the Covid-19.

The report analyses various studies that have been undertaken between June and August, including national surveys carried out by the Scottish Charity Regulator ([OSCR](#)) and [Third Sector Interfaces](#) (TSI) Scotland Network.

It has found that although many of the issues that organisations faced at the beginning of the crisis remain, emerging themes such as workforce issues; furlough and staff morale. Issues pertaining to 'return to work', mental health and wellbeing, both of staff and service users, also came across strongly.

Other main themes of the report include the continued financial threat that hangs over organisations. One in five charities report a critical threat to their finances in the next year, and 60% of UK organisations will not be able to afford to bring back all of their furloughed staff if the scheme is withdrawn before social distancing ends. This is against a background of rising need for services - a quarter of Scottish charities reported a significant increase in demand for their services.

And although informal volunteering increased during lockdown, third of charities have seen a decrease in the number of volunteers with which they engaged.

[The full report can be viewed on the SCVO website.](#)

Severe Disability Premium (SDP) transitional payments in Universal Credit will convert to 'transitional elements' on 8 October 2020

Unlike the SDP transitional payment, the transitional element can be eroded - in cases where another element included in the universal credit award increases or when a new element is included (although not in the case of inclusion of, or an increase in, the childcare element).

Read [Mr Tomlinson's statement](#)

DWP have confirmed that when DWP phones a claimant it will no longer show up as 'withheld number' but 0800 0232 635.

If claimants then ring the number, a pre-recorded message will inform them that DWP called them, and that they will call them back.

The DWP has issued further guidance on how it will identify personal independence payment (PIP) claimants affected by the Supreme Court's judgment *Secretary of State for Work and Pensions v MM* ([\[2019\] UKSC 34](#)).

New list of responses to 'frequently asked questions' also includes details of the period over which arrears may be paid and the circumstances where claims will not be reviewed

DWP will be checking claims where claimants may be entitled to more points for Activity 9 (Engaging with other people face to face), in line with the Supreme Court judgment.

DWP started to implement the *MM* judgment on 17 September 2020 and published updated [PIP assessment guidance](#) the same day that reflects the new interpretation of social support;

[Personal Independence Payment \(PIP\). Implementation of legal judgment MM: frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) is available from parliament.uk

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Appellant) v MM (Respondent)(Scotland) 18 July 2019 <https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2017-0215-judgment.pdf>

Social Security Administration and Tribunal Membership (Scotland) Bill briefing Stage 2 consideration briefing

Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) welcomes the Bill, which provides an opportunity to make minor amendments to address issues which have been identified since the passage of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018, including making provision for the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment. CAS welcomes the amendments brought at Stage 2, which cover a number of further areas which CAS and others identified in evidence at Stage 1.

[View publication](#)

Citizens Advice Scotland response to the Scottish Child Payment regulations

Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft regulations. CAS warmly welcomes the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment (SCP), which is an excellent example of imaginative use of Scotland's devolved social security powers to provide much-needed support to Scotland's citizens. Scotland's CAB network regularly advises clients who have required crisis support from the Scottish Welfare Fund or food banks due to their social security entitlements not being adequate to pay for essential costs. The Scottish Child Payment promises to be an effective tool for reducing child poverty in Scotland.

CAS is broadly content with the draft regulations. We have a number of comments arising from them related to the delivery and future development of Scottish Child Payment that might be helpful for the Committee to consider in its scrutiny.

[View publication](#)

**citizens
advice**

Official Statistics Personal Independence Payment: Official Statistics to July 2020

Published 15 September 2020



Department
for Work &
Pensions

The statistics cover the PIP customer journey from registration through to payment, mandatory reconsideration (MR) and appeal.

This release includes:

- PIP registrations
- PIP clearances
- PIP awards and award rates
- claimants entitled to PIP at a point in time (caseload)
- PIP Award Reviews and Changes of Circumstance (experimental)
- average clearance and outstanding times
- award types and review periods (experimental)
- MR registrations
- MR clearances
- MR clearance times
- customer journey statistics tracking initial decisions following a PIP assessment through to MR and appeal (experimental)

Read [HERE](#)

Updated (17 September 2020) [Personal Independence Payment assessment guide for assessment providers](#) is available from gov.uk

Updated guidance also sets out examples of health conditions that may mean claimant could struggle with the PIP journey

The DWP advises -

'In some cases ... claimants may not be able to engage effectively with the claims process, due to reduced mental capacity or insight – for example, they may not understand the consequences of not returning a claim form and not have [an appointee] to help them. In the PIP journey, such claimants are considered to require additional support from DWP and elements of the PIP claims process have been adapted to provide further support for this group.

PIP new claims and change of circumstances requests show gradual recovery to near-normal levels in quarter ending July 2020

However, new DWP statistics also show that mandatory reconsiderations are at their lowest level since September 2015

In *Personal Independence Payment: Official Statistics to July 2020*, the DWP says that the figures for May to July 2020 continue to reflect the disruptions caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to claimant and Departmental activity - caused to a large extent by operational changes that suspended face-to-face health assessments and delayed routine re-assessments and reviews - including data that shows -

- clearance times for normal rules new claims fell in April 2020 but have since risen to 23 weeks for the end to end claim process in July 2020 - the highest level since December 2014;
- clearance times for normal rules reassessed claims have continued to rise over recent quarters, excepting a dip in May and June 2020, and are currently 28 weeks end to end - the highest level since October and November 2014;
- although some disability living allowance (DLA) reassessment and award review activity restarted towards the end of July, numbers remain low so far with 6,300 registrations for DLA reassessments and 14,000 planned award review registrations; and
- mandatory reconsideration registrations have fallen to 15,000 - the lowest number since September 2015.

The figures also show that activity initiated by claimants has gradually recovered in parts of the PIP claims process, with 45,000 registrations for new claims in July 2020 (8 per cent lower than the level a year earlier) and 7,300 reported changes of circumstances (2 per cent higher than the same month a year ago).

For more information, see [Personal Independence Payment: April 2013 to July 2020](#) from gov.uk



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Poverty Alliance

Registration for our annual conference on 9 October - 'Never the Same Again: Addressing Poverty After the Pandemic' - is now open!

It's an exciting line-up of speakers, and we're looking forward to some great discussion.

[Full info](#)

Poverty Alliance Annual Conference

Never the Same Again?
Addressing Poverty after the Pandemic

9th October, 2020

Back by popular demand, Alcohol & Drugs Action (ADA) have added more dates to our Naloxone and Overdose Awareness Training.

Please email training@alcoholanddrugsaction.org.uk and state which date you would like to attend. Spaces are going fast!



NALOXONE & OVERDOSE AWARENESS TRAINING NEW DATES

Monday 21st Sept 9.30am-10.30am
Thursday 24th Sept 1pm-2pm
Wednesday 30th Sept 2pm-3pm
Monday 5th Oct 9.30am-10.30am
Friday 9th Oct 9.30am-10.30am
Monday 19th Oct 1pm-2pm

Please email: training@alcoholanddrugsaction.org.uk in the first instance to notify us of your date preference



Alcohol & Drugs action

Family Support Group

September Timetable

ADDICTION AFFECTS THE WHOLE FAMILY

SEPTEMBER 2020
every Wednesday @ 1930-2100

2ND SEPT - HOW DO PEOPLE CHANGE?
9TH SEPT - OPEN SESSION
16TH SEPT - EXPLORING TRIGGERS
23RD SEPT - OPEN SESSION
30TH SEPT - KEEPING SAFE

TO LEARN MORE & GET THE ZOOM I.D -
✉ FSG@ALCOHOLANDDRUGSACTION.ORG.UK

☎ HELPLINE 01224 594700
FREEPHONE 0333 3 448 355
(LANDLINES AND INCLUSIVE PAY MONTHLY ONLY)

CPAG's bestselling title Universal Credit: what you need to know has been fully refreshed for the 6th edition.

It now covers all changes made to UC as a result of Covid-19 and these changes are highlighted throughout making them easily identifiable.


Details [HERE](#)

Clients in receipt of highest rate care component of DLA Child on the week of 21 September will automatically receive a £200 Child Winter Heating Assistance payment from @ScotGov later this year.

The exact payment date is to be confirmed. Keep an eye on here for the latest info.

Clients in receipt of the highest rate care component of DLA Child on the week of 21 September will automatically receive a £200 Child Winter Heating Assistance payment later this year.

Social Security Scotland
Ùaramteachd Shìonaillta Alba



Get in touch if you work with people that require paper copies of our application forms.

Social Security Scotland
Ùaramteachd Shìonaillta Alba

Social Security Scotland

If you support someone who would prefer to apply for our benefits by post, you can download a PDF copy from <http://mygov.scot>

Freephone 0800 182 2222 or use our web chat service to request a form.

Talk Money Week is an annual campaign to get the nation talking about money.

Talk Money Week 2020 will take place on 9-13 November.

Join the conversation on social media at the hashtag **#TalkMoney**.

Each November we encourage the UK to talk about managing money – from pocket money right through to pensions – and celebrate the work done by thousands of organisations to build financial wellbeing across the country.

The week provides a platform to have a conversation about money between families and friends, at work or at school or any other walk of life. Our goal is to turn talking about money from one of the UK's least favourite topics into something commonplace.

[DOWNLOAD YOUR PARTICIPATION PACK](#)

Talk Money Week is a great opportunity to join, start or lead the conversation. It's for anyone who wants to manage money better, or any organisation working to help people deal with money matters. Organisations can also use the week to learn more about financial wellbeing and what it might mean for them and their customers.

www.moneyandpensionservice.org.uk/talk-money-week/



Money & Pensions Service

talk
money
week

9-13 November 2020
#TalkMoney