

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.

Monday 07th December 2020 - Issue.30



Homeless Network Scotland we are all in

Frontline Network

8 December 2020 1-4pm

TO CAP IT ALL - Understanding the reach and impact of the benefit cap

A free webinar was held on Thursday 26 November 2020.

A recording of the webinar has now been uploaded, which can be found on the project website:

www.welfare-reform-larger-families.org.uk/events/to-cap-it-all-understanding-the-reach-and-impact-of-the-benefit-cap

The website also includes copies of the slides and blogs on the presentations.

Scottish Government announces temporary ban on enforcement of evictions from rented properties for six-week period until 22 January 2021

The First Minister has announced that - given the relaxation of rules with regards to the mixing of households over the festive period and the potential that this could lead to people needing to self-isolate safely, at home – the Scottish Government will take forward regulations to introduce a ban on the enforcement of eviction orders across the private and social rented sectors for 6 weeks, from 11 December to 22 January.

It is a temporary action in direct response to the continued need to protect public health during the pandemic. The regulations are being finalised and there will be some exceptions, for example the most serious circumstances, such as illegal occupation, antisocial or criminal behaviour and domestic abuse.

A press release in relation to this announcement is available on the Scottish Government website (see: [news.gov.scot/news/christmas-eviction-ban-introduced](https://www.news.gov.scot/news/christmas-eviction-ban-introduced)).

Acronyms Aweigh! HARSAG And EHT For Frontline Workers

Join us on Tuesday 8 December 1-4pm for our latest members' event, Acronyms Aweigh! HARSAG and EHT for Frontline Workers.

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) made over 100 recommendations in July 2020. Scottish Government and COSLA included these in the new Ending Homelessness Together (EHT) plan published in October 2020.

We will be hosting this free reflective workshop for frontline workers from all sectors across Scotland to explore these new priorities and what they mean for people working every day in frontline roles.

We will provide an overview of the HARSAG recommendations and how these were carried into the EHT plan. And reflect together on what the four main themes – prioritise prevention, settled housing options, equalities competence and responsive systems – mean for people working in direct frontline roles.

To get your online joining link, email hello@homelessnetwork.scot or call **0141 420 7272**.

<https://homelessnetwork.scot/2020/11/25/acronyms-aweigh-harsag-and-eht-for-frontline-workers/>



The EU rights and Brexit Hub is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (a public body). The project offers a unique, specialist, **free** second-tier advice and advocacy service on EU welfare rights.

To request consultation for a case please fill in the consultation form and consent form below and send both to: law- eurightshub@york.ac.uk

[Consultation Form.doc](#)

[Adviser Consent Form.doc](#)



More people can claim Self-Isolation Support Grant

Help extended to parents of children self-isolating

The £500 Self-Isolation Support Grant is being extended to include parents on low incomes whose children are asked to self-isolate, Social Security Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville announced today.

The grant will also become available to those who may be eligible for Universal Credit, but have not yet applied. Both changes will be introduced from 7 December.

The Self-Isolation Support Grant provides £500 for low income workers who are in receipt of Universal Credit or other benefits and will lose earnings as a result of having to self-isolate.

Parents or carers of children under 16 who are asked to self-isolate, but who are not required to self-isolate themselves, are not currently eligible for the grant.

This is why the grant will be extended to those parents and carers, where they fulfil the other eligibility criteria:

- employed or self-employed and unable to work from home
- in receipt of Universal Credit or one of those which will be replaced by UC (legacy benefits)
- facing a loss of income from looking after the child during the period of self-isolation

Only one claim per household can be made, where a parent or primary carer is required to look after a child who must isolate.

Eligibility will also be extended to people with a low level of income which means they would be entitled to Universal Credit.

[news.gov.scot/news/more-people-can-claim-self-isolation-support-grant](https://www.news.gov.scot/news/more-people-can-claim-self-isolation-support-grant)



Social Security Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Winter support fund for families and children Published: 30 Nov 2020

£100 million package will help communities at risk.

Funding to help people pay for food, heating, warm clothing and shelter during the winter is part of a new £100m support package.

The fund will help those on low incomes, children and people at risk of homelessness or social isolation cope with winter weather and the economic impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) and Brexit.

The Winter Plan for Social Protection, announced by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, will also address domestic abuse and digital exclusion.

COVID-19 has had a significant negative effect on Scotland's economy hitting jobs and living standards hard - and Brexit will exacerbate the situation.

With winter approaching, some of Scotland's most at-risk communities are facing rising costs for food, fuel and other essentials.

Key elements of the plan include:

- £22m for low income families including £16m to give the low income families of an estimated 156,000 children in receipt of free school meals a one-off £100 payment by Christmas
- £23.5m to help vulnerable children through additional support for residential and care homes, social work, and the Children's Hearing system
- £15m for the Communities and Third Sector Recovery Programme to support the work of local organisations
- £5.9m to promote digital inclusion for older people, support social isolation and loneliness and to promote equality
- £7m to help people who are struggling to pay fuel bills
- £5m to help those at risk of homelessness find a settled home

The Winter Plan for Social Protection also includes £15m of flexible funding for local authorities entering COVID-19 protection level 4 - announced by the First Minister earlier this month – which can be used to pay for food and essentials.

Background

The £100m Winter Plan for Social Protection has been developed to mitigate social harms posed by the concurrent risks of COVID-19, winter cost of living increases and EU exit, as well as to promote equality and human rights.

The full breakdown of the £100m fund is:

- Support for families on low incomes (£22m)
- Supporting services for children and young people (£23.5m)
- Enhancing capacity within the third sector and communities (£15m)
- Funds for local authorities moving into level 4 (£15m)
- Further help with fuel costs (£7m)
- Further investment in strategic national food activity (£2m)
- Further investment to support people affected by homelessness (£5.14m)
- Increased digital inclusion through Connecting Scotland for older people, support for social isolation and loneliness and strategic investment to promote equality (£5.91m)
- A campaign on benefit uptake and income maximisation (£0.25m)
- Reserve fund to meet potential pressures (£4.2m)

www.gov.scot/news/winter-support-fund-for-families-and-children/

£500 bonus for health and social care staff

Every full time NHS and social care worker will receive £500 as a one-off thank you payment for their extraordinary service in this toughest of years. Those who work part time will get a proportionate share.

A pro rated payment of £500 will be made as soon as is practicable to all NHS and social care workers employed since 17 March 2020 - including staff who have had to shield, or who have since retired.

This investment of around £180 million will see over 300,000 staff gain some benefit from this bonus, including nurses, porters, doctors, primary care staff, homecare workers, care home staff, hospice staff and residential child care staff.

Background

The pro rata £500 bonus scheme, which will be funded from the Scottish Government's COVID-19 support package, applies to employees employed since March 17, for:

All NHS Employees, including:

- staff who have been active in the NHS since 17 March 2020 but who have since left NHS employment, including retirees
- staff who accepted and worked on temporary contracts since 17 March to aid pandemic response but who have since left NHS employment, including students who worked under temporary contracts but who have since returned to University
- staff covered by the Two Tier Agreement
- General Practitioners and their practice teams, including 2C practices

Staff providing NHS services under independent contractor arrangements including:

- GP surgery staff
- NHS Dental surgery staff
- NHS pharmacy services staff
- NHS optometry staff

Staff working in Adult Social Care including:

- Care home staff
- Homecare staff
- Palliative care/hospice staff
- Adult Personal Assistants
- Social care staff in residential child care settings
- Social Workers (including those working with children and families and in criminal justice)

<https://news.gov.scot/news/gbp-500-bonus-for-health-and-social-care-staff>

Social Security Scotland reports on its first full financial year - £540 million in benefit payments since launch of new system

The Scottish Government has provided people who need it with over £540 million in payments since launch in September 2018 up to 31 March 2020, according to the Social Security Scotland's annual report published today.

From 1 September 2018 to 31 March 2020, benefits were delivered that support low income families during key stages in a child's life, people struggling to pay for funerals and unpaid carer

The support paid over the course of the financial year reporting period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 totalled £346.7 million.

A further three benefits have been introduced since March 2020. Job Start Payment, Child Winter Heating Assistance and the Scottish Child Payment which is estimated could pay an extra £142 million to people in Scotland every year.

Background

- Payments made during the reporting period of 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 include Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment, Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment, Best Start Grant School Age Payment, Best Start Foods, Carer's Allowance Supplement, Young Carer Grant and Funeral Support Payment.
- Social Security Scotland also reports on Carer's Allowance payments that are made on its behalf through the Department for Work and Pensions.
- Over £537 million in benefit expenditure was recorded in the Social Security Scotland annual report (£346.7 million in 2019/20 and £190.9 million in the seven months of 2018/19) with an additional £6.9 million in 2019/20 Best Start Foods payments coming from the Scottish Government's health budget. Best Start Foods spend is accounted for in the Scottish Government's annual accounts.
- As of 23 November 2020, Social Security Scotland now directly administers ten benefits. Benefits introduced in 2020/21 include Job Start Payment (introduced August 2020), Scottish Child Payment (applications accepted from November 2020 with payments to start end February 2021) and Child Winter Heating Assistance (introduced November 2020)
- Read [Social Security Scotland's latest Annual Report](#)
- Read [Social Security Scotland's Charter Measurement Framework](#)
- Read [Social Security Scotland's Corporate Plan](#)
- People can find out more and apply for Social Security Scotland benefits by visiting mygov.scot/benefits

<https://news.gov.scot/news/gbp-540-million-in-benefit-payments-since-launch-of-new-system>

Compensation for poor service: staff guide

Last updated 30 November 2020

A DWP staff guide that explains DWP's financial compensation principles and processes.

This document describes:

- the scope of, and authority for, the department's special payment scheme
- the underlying principles for ensuring that financial redress is used correctly

It's not a rigid set of rules. Though it shows important principles, it cannot and does not intend to provide a blueprint for every situation. Each case must be considered on its own merits, in the light of the particular circumstances of the case. However, as the department aims to provide similar remedies for similar injustices, the principles must be applied to every case. What is maladministration?

Unfortunately, we don't always get things right first time. The term 'maladministration' is not defined, but is sometimes used to describe when our actions or inactions result in a customer experiencing a service which does not match our aims or the commitments we have given. It applies to situations in which we have not acted properly or provided a poor service. For example: wrong advice, discourtesy, mistakes and delays.

Why we publish this guide

We publish this guide to help people understand how we make decisions.

Complaints procedure

If you want to complain about the service you get from DWP or from an organisation that provides its services, use our [complaints procedure](#).

www.gov.uk/government/publications/compensation-for-poor-service-a-guide-for-dwp-staff

How many people who were in receipt of disability living allowance have not migrated to personal independence payments (PIP)



Personal Independence Payment

Question for Department for Work and Pensions, tabled on 25 November 2020

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people who were in receipt of disability living allowance have not migrated to personal independence payments (PIP); and whether his Department has been in contact with people who have not migrated to PIP.

Answered on 30 November 2020 by Minister for Disabled People Justin Tomlinson

There were 274,970 claimants with entitlement to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) as of the end of May 2020 who were aged 16-64 on 8th April 2013, the day Personal Independence Payment (PIP) was introduced, who remain in scope to be invited to claim PIP. Children in receipt of DLA will continue to be invited to claim PIP on reaching age 16.

In July 2020, we started to resume some activity on reviews and reassessments where it was possible to do so safely and without compromising the delivery of new claims and change of circumstance cases, which remain our priority.

DLA claimants have been informed of the roll-out of PIP, including who is in scope to be invited, through their annual uprating letters and information published on GOV.UK.

Notes

Source: DLA Computer System

- From 8th April 2013, DLA for people of working age was replaced by PIP for new claims. PIP is also gradually replacing existing DLA claims for people who were aged between 16 and 64 on 8 April 2013, or reach age 16 after that date.
- This data includes all claimants with a DLA claim with entitlement who were aged 16-64 on 8th April 2013, this means that they were born between 9th April 1948 and 8th April 1997 inclusive.
- It is assumed that all DLA claimants aged 16-64 on 8th April 2013 will be eligible for a reassessment to PIP in the future.
- The statistics here include those who have had their payment suspended, for example if they are in hospital.
- Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
- Great Britain only
- This is unpublished data. It should be used with caution and it may be subject to future revision

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-25/120840>

A very short introduction to the new Points Based Immigration System

2nd December 2020

The new Points Based Immigration System — replacing the old Points Based System that was **introduced in 2008** — went live yesterday. The government is **hailing it** as a “simple, effective and flexible system”, although there are early **reports** of teething troubles and the feeling of most immigration practitioners is that the new system is **not going to be simple** to use at all.

With the end of free movement for EEA nationals on 31 December 2020, the Points Based Immigration System will very soon be the only option for foreign nationals wanting to move to the UK for work. But Brexit is not the only reason for the changes. The Home Office is simultaneously making a push for “simplification” of the Immigration Rules following **recommendations** from the Law Commission.

Read article [HERE](#)

Six ways the pandemic has actually improved the immigration system 2nd December 2020

2020 has presented huge challenges for people trying to navigate the immigration system, for immigration advisers trying to support them, and for the Home Office and the courts. At **Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit** (GMIAU) we've analysed six immigration changes made because of COVID-19 that have proved beneficial for all involved. We've focused on changes to decision-making which could be made permanent without major legislative amendments.

Read FreeMovement article [HERE](#)

Europeans living in the UK to get new EHICs - but cover for most Brits remains uncertain

Millions of EU citizens who live in the UK will soon be able to apply for a new European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) which will give them access to free or discounted healthcare across Europe next year - but the situation for most Brits still remains unclear with less than a month to go until the end of the Brexit transition period.

The EHIC is free and gives you access to free or discounted medical care in all EU countries, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. EHICs have remained valid during the Brexit transition period, which ends on 31 December 2020, but their future is less certain after this date, and depends upon the outcome of talks between the UK and EU.

However certain agreements have already been made which mean various groups of people WILL definitely continue to have EHIC cover - including EU citizens who live in the UK, and UK state pensioners who live in the EU, at the end of the transition period.

Who'll be covered by the EHIC after the end of this year?

As things stand, if you're British and live in the UK, your EHIC may not be valid after the end of the Brexit transition period on 31 December. We simply don't yet know what'll happen next year.

But we do know that some people who are eligible to keep their existing healthcare rights under the Withdrawal Agreement signed by the UK and EU will be able to apply for a new EHIC which will ensure they're covered in 2021. The people in this situation are:

- EEA or Swiss nationals residing in the UK on 31 December.
- UK state pensioners living in the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland on 31 December.
- UK students studying in the EEA or Switzerland on 31 December.
- People who are 'frontier workers' (ie, people who are EU, EEA or Swiss citizens and are employed or self-employed in the UK but live elsewhere) at the end on 31 December, for as long as they continue to be covered by the Withdrawal Agreement.

If you fall into one of these categories then the Government says you should apply for a new EHIC even if you already have one - it's warned your current EHIC may stop being valid on 31 December. We're checking if there are any exceptions to this though, and will update this story when we hear back.

I'm entitled to a new EHIC - how can I apply?

People in the groups outlined above need to apply for a new EHIC via a [portal on the NHS website](#).

At the moment, you can only use the portal if you have an S1 certificate (a type of certificate for UK pensioners living abroad) or are a student. But others will be able to apply later in December.

www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2020/12/ehic-s-future-uncertain-from-next-month---but-europeans-living-i/

What even is United Kingdom immigration policy right now?

I follow immigration law and policy pretty closely but, I must confess, I simply do not know what UK government immigration policy is right now. We are told there is a new points based immigration system but that tells us nothing about what outcomes the government wants from the new rules. We are told immigration will be “controlled” but, again, that tells us nothing concrete about outcomes. We are told irregular arrivals by refugees are undesirable but no actual policy to prevent it has been proposed. We are told foreign criminals will be deported but numbers of enforced removals were at an historic low even before the pandemic. We are told Global Britain is open for business but the number of visas granted to overseas entrepreneurs has fallen off a cliff. The only explicit immigration policy I can think of is a negative one: ending free movement for EU citizens. What does the government want to happen instead, though?

If I had to guess, I would say that current government immigration policy seems to be “fewer but better” or, failing that, simply “fewer”. But this is not stated anywhere, and in any case it is more of an aspiration than an actual policy: a proper policy requires some sort of implementation. The only emanations from Priti Patel's Home Office are leaks, briefings and minimum-resistance default behaviours.

Read full article [HERE](#)

Newly developed FASD (Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) e-learning modules and guidance.

The learning has been developed by colleagues in Improving Health and Wellbeing who are keen to convey this information to stakeholders. The learning is free to access and please pass on.

It is not known how many children, young people and adults are affected by this developmental disorder; many are identified when in the care of adoptive parents. It is likely that there are many looked after and care experienced children and young people who may be living with FASD without either them or their carers and family knowing. There are likely also to be many people affected by FASD who are or were not care experienced and who require help and support.

To enable practitioners to understand more about FASD, The Scottish Government in partnership with experts in FASD has created an e-learning module which is available on the NHS Education for Scotland TURAS platform:

- **Understanding FASD**
- **Preventing FASD**
- **Identifying FASD**
- **Interventions and Support for FASD**

Understanding FASD offers a broad overview for practitioners and lays the foundations for understanding why **preventing FASD** and knowledge of the Chief Medical Officer's "*No Alcohol No Risk*" in pregnancy message is so important. It also outlines why **early identification and intervention and support** is essential to fostering positive outcomes for individuals with FASD.

This learning resource outlines why, without identification and support, affected individuals often struggle to attain and acquire life skills for independent living. Those affected but unsupported have a high degree of need for mental health, addiction and criminal justice services.

To access the resource register here: <https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/>

Complete registration using the options noted in the attached screenshot.

Use this link to access the resource once you have registered and signed in: <https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/39148>

Fiona Clements | Professional Advisor Kinship Care| Family Care Team | Scottish Government

Should the self-employed use SEISS to pay their tax bill?

November 30, 2020

entitledto
independent | accurate | reliable

The third instalment of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) became available from today, with the application website opening for the first group of people invited to claim.

Eligibility conditions for the scheme remain the same as in its earlier incarnations, excluding some self-employed from claiming, but for those who are eligible the extra income provided by the scheme will be very welcome.

For those whose average earnings between 2016 and 2019 were between £37,500 and £50,000 a year SEISS remains very generous. They will get the maximum £7,500 allowed under the scheme, which for some comes on top of continued earnings (albeit at a reduced level).

However, for self-employed people who are claiming Universal Credit (UC) the effect of SEISS is more ambiguous. For benefit claimants income from the SEISS counts as earnings towards their award, so the extra income reduces their UC payment.

Something like this effect is inevitable when untargeted benefits like SEISS are super-imposed on a means-tested system. But with careful planning UC claimants can minimise the effect, so that they can enjoy something like the same income boost from SEISS as better-off households.

There are two aspects to consider – when to make a claim and how to use the SEISS income.

Read the full article -

<https://www.entitledto.co.uk/blog/2020/november/should-the-self-employed-use-seiss-to-pay-their-tax-bill/>

Supporting Scotland's unpaid carers

A new report has revealed that unpaid carers in Scotland have valued increased support.

Carer's Allowance Supplement (CAS) was the first payment introduced under the Scottish Government's new social security powers. It is given twice a year to those in receipt of Carer's Allowance as a temporary top-up until full delivery of the benefit is taken over from the Department for Work and Pensions. The payment rate in 2020/21 is £230.10.

The Scottish Government has now published its first evaluation of CAS - and has announced that the next payment will be made on **18 December**.

The evaluation found:

- CAS has made a positive difference to carers, not just financially but to their mental health and wellbeing
- while carers feel more recognised by the Scottish Government, they don't feel as visible to, or valued by, the wider public
- carers want more chances to undertake work outside the home, to help give them a sense of identity outside their caring role and reduce feelings of isolation

Read full article - [news.gov.scot/news/supporting-scotlands-unpaid-carers](https://www.news.gov.scot/news/supporting-scotlands-unpaid-carers)

New Debt and Deductions findings from The Trussell Trust

Trussell Trust have **published new research** which shows that almost half of people arriving at food banks in the Trussell Trust network during the Covid-19 crisis are in debt to the Department of Work and Pensions. One of the key drivers of this debt is Advance Payments, loans from the DWP primarily used to cover the five-week wait. In their survey of people arriving at food banks during the crisis, they found that 73% of those receiving UC were repaying an Advance Payment – despite clearly being unable to afford food. This is up from 51% before the pandemic.



<https://asauk.org.uk/new-debt-and-deductions-findings-from-the-trussell-trust/>

Homelessness in Scotland can end in a decade, say campaigners



The Everyone Home Collective has laid out a roadmap setting out the steps to ending homelessness ahead of Holyrood elections next May

Scotland can be free from **homelessness** inside the next decade – if MSPs follow a new roadmap proposed by 30 charities, academics and experts.

The Everyone Home Collective has urged all political parties to back their plan for the next two parliamentary terms to ensure no one goes without a home.

www.bigissue.com/latest/homelessness-in-scotland-can-end-in-a-decade-say-campaigners/

Estimated £15m of Carer's Allowance benefit overpaid

01 December 2020

An estimated £14.8m of a carer's benefit is thought to have been overpaid in Scotland due to error and fraud, a report by the Auditor General has shown.

The Department for Work and Pensions calculated that 5.2 per cent of the £284 million paid out in Carer's Allowance in 2019/20 related to estimated error and fraud, which led to auditors qualifying Social Security Scotland's accounts.

www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/news/estimated-%C2%A315m-of-carers-allowance-benefit-overpaid

Poverty has risen as a result of the pandemic but Government policy has insulated many families from poverty

Published 30 Nov 2020



Creating the Pathways from Poverty to Prosperity

<https://li.com/reports/poverty-during-the-covid-19-crisis/>



Fraser of Allander Institute
The University of Strathclyde

Free school meals and child poverty

November 30, 2020

Read article [HERE](#)

Universal Credit rollout 'devastating' for disabled people, campaigners warn

Disabled and seriously unwell people receive a "severe disability premium" if they are on legacy benefits but this does not exist on Universal Credit, meaning some may find themselves worse off.

<https://www.bigissue.com/latest/universal-credit-rollout-devastating-for-disabled-people-campaigners-warn/>

Press release: The £500 Covid bonus benefit trap

Published on 2 December 2020

The Chartered Institute of Taxation's Low Incomes Tax Reform Group (LITRG) is warning that some of the lowest paid workers stand to benefit the least from the Scottish Government's new £500 bonus payment to NHS and care workers if the payment is taxed.

LITRG said that because the payment is likely to be liable for tax as earnings, NHS and care workers receiving Universal Credit could see their benefits payments reduced as a result of the one-off payment.

<https://www.litrg.org.uk/latest-news/news/201202-press-release-%C2%A3500-covid-bonus-benefit-trap>

Two Parliaments to End Homelessness

Posted on 1st December 2020

Homeless Network Scotland
we are all in

Thirty organisations in Scotland that care about homelessness, including charities, leading academics and people with lived experience, are today calling on political parties, MSPs and candidates in next year's Scottish Parliament elections to get behind a ten-year plan to end homelessness.

<https://homelessnetwork.scot/2020/12/01/press-release-two-parliaments-to-end-homelessness/>

Universal Credit statistics: 29 April 2013 to 8 October 2020

Last updated 1 December 2020

Official experimental statistics including the number of people and households on Universal Credit, starts and claims.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-statistics-29-april-2013-to-8-october-2020>

How the benefit cap has gone from a selective punishment for having high family needs to a generalised curb on benefit incomes

Nov 26

Professor Donald Hirsch, Centre for Research in Social Policy

How the benefit cap harmed mental health and potentially pushed people further away from the labour market

Nov 26