

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 14th December 2020 - Issue.31



Low-income families whose children are eligible for free school meals will receive a one-off £100 winter payment to help alleviate financial hardship

The financial boost is part of a £100 million winter support package that will help communities at risk.

Parents who were eligible for free school meals on the 30 Nov 2020 should receive a payment into their bank before Xmas.

Those eligible for free school meals between 30th Nov and 18th Dec will receive a payment early Jan 2021.

Winter support fund for families and children

Extra support for families on low incomes

Aberdeenshire Council - [Funding available to support families eligible for Free School Meals](#)

#RainbowRobinAbdn and 12 Days of Family Activity projects.

The Family Learning and Creative Learning Teams from Aberdeen City Council have worked with lots of partners to bring a bit of festive cheer to the City and Beyond with these two connected projects.

#RainbowRobinAbdn is a simple project that we hope the whole City and beyond will get behind. We want everyone to download and print a copy of the #RainbowRobinAbdn colouring in page or create their own unique robin and display it in their window over the winter, similar to the way people did with the rainbows for the NHS. We are encouraging people to share their photos and experiences on social media with the hashtag **#RainbowRobinAbdn**. We are delighted to work with local artist Gabi Reith of Small Stories who created the beautiful illustration.

You can also follow our [Facebook page @RainbowRobinAbdn](#), where you will find lots of activities, videos and challenges that will keep you busy throughout the 12 days of Christmas! (25 December to 5 January)

This project brings together inspiration and activities from a number of services and organisations: [Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums](#), [CityMoves Dance Agency](#), [Creative Learning](#), [Duthie Park Ranger Service](#), [Family Learning](#), [Library Services](#) and [PEEP](#). Expect to take part in Robin Rambles, story time, dance routines, and ideas for making inside and out.

The Rainbow Robin has been shared with schools and nurseries in the city as well as sheltered housing and care homes, there is no age limit to joining in.

Madelene MacSween – Development Manager

"Our Rainbow Robin project is a great source of activities for families in the city and beyond. Perhaps more importantly though, is that by taking part and interacting with the Facebook page parents and carers will be able to access direct support. While most services will be closed for the festive period this could be a lifeline which can be accessed simply by sending us a message."

Head to [Aberdeen City Council website](#) or visit the Facebook page @RainbowRobinAbdn

Useful resources:

DWP Advice for Decision Making: Staff Guide

www.abccorg.net/item/3559-dwp-advice-for-decision-making-staff-guide

LA Welfare Direct bulletins: 2020

These LA Welfare Direct bulletins provide information that affects Housing Benefit and other areas of DWP, to local authority staff.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/la-welfare-direct-bulletins-2020



Christmas Holiday Support and Information 2020

If you need help over the Christmas period, there are people and places to support you and your family.

Food

Instant Neighbour 5 St Machar Drive, Aberdeen AB24 3YJ Tel: 01224 489955

- Closes 1pm on Wednesday 23rd December and re-opens 8.30am on Wednesday 6th January.
- The food bank will be open between 10am-3pm on Tuesday 29th and Wednesday 30th December.

Somebody Cares Tel: 01224 460700 Email: info@somebodycaresuk.org

- Somebody Cares are now taking request phone calls for Christmas Food parcels. These will be delivered on Monday 21st and Tuesday 22nd December and are large food parcels, providing two weeks of supplies.
- Somebody Cares close on Wednesday 23rd December and re-open on Monday 4th January.
- The Megastore on Hazledene Road will be open 9:30am - 4:30pm (closed only Friday and weekend of Christmas and New year) parcels can be collected from here – no deliveries available. **Tel: 01224 313453**

CFINE 2-4 Poynerook Rd, Aberdeen, AB11 5RW Tel: 01224 596156 or email info@cfine.org

Closed: 25th December 2020 (Christmas Day), 1st January 2021 (New Year's Day)

- Will try and deliver food parcel to homes within 48 working hours. However, due to limited cover over the Christmas period this may be slightly more difficult.

Aberdeen Cyrenians Tel: 0300 303 0903 or e-mail directaccess@weareac.org

- Aberdeen Cyrenians will be running every day over the festive period providing food and advice to those that are struggling or find themselves in crisis.
- 9am to 5pm every day except for Friday and Sunday which will be 9am to 4pm.
- They will have access to food, staff to support contact to emergency funders for those struggling to put gas/electric in the meter and support with gifts for children amongst many other things.

St Marys Cathedral Tel: 07378 219503 Email: standrewscommunity@cathedral-abdn.org

- Call for details. 14th December – Christmas meal on offer

Aberdeen North Foodbank Tel: 01224 651000

- **King's Community Church Centre - 10 Urquhart Road, Aberdeen, AB24 5LL**
Final Foodbank Session: 18th December 2020. Re-open: 8th January 2021
- **Tillydrone Community Campus - St Machar Dr, Aberdeen, AB24 3RX**
Last Foodbank Session: 21st December 2020. Re-open: 4th January 2021
- **The Mission - Tillydrone Community Campus, Hayton Road, AB24 2UY**
Open 24th December 2 – 3:30pm. Open 31st December 2 – 3:30pm. Open: January 7th

ASDA

- Throughout December, all ASDA supermarket cafes are taking part and will provide children under the age of 16 with a meal completely free of charge when accompanied by an adult. There are no minimum spend requirements or restrictions on the number of children in a family or group that can take advantage of this offer.

Free school meals

- Vouchers with a value of £30 will be provided for every child who receives Free School Meals on 18th December 2020.
- More information about the criteria to receive free school meals and applying for this benefit is available online at <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/education-and-childcare/school-life/apply-free-school-meals>.

Benefits & Money

Financial Inclusion Team, Aberdeen City Council Tel: 01224 522709 E-mail: moneyadvice@aberdeencity.gov.uk

- Open until 5pm on 24th December 2020 (Christmas Eve), Re-open 9am on 4th January 2021

Aberdeen Action on Disability. Tel: 01224 641355 Email: office@aad-online.com

- Office closed Monday 21st December to Monday 4th January both inclusive.
- Phone messages & e-mails will be checked every couple of days and we will get back to people and deal with any concerns.

Kincardine and Mearns CAB. Tel: 01569 766578 Web: www.kamcab.org.uk

- Last day for appointments is Wednesday 23 December, and the Aberdeenshire helpline is shutting at 2pm on the 24 December. We will be offering phone appointments and the helpline will be operational again on Tuesday 5 January 2021. On the 29, 30, and 31 December people in Aberdeenshire can call us on these days between 10am and 2pm.

South West Aberdeenshire CAB. Tel 01224 747714 or contact via www.swacab.org.uk/contact-us

- will close at 1pm on Wednesday 23rd December 2020 and re-open on Tuesday 5th January 2021.

Perennial Tel 0800 093 8543 Web perennial.org.uk/

- UK's only charity dedicated to helping everyone who works in horticulture, and their families, when times get tough.
- Will be closing from 12.00 on Christmas eve, reopening on 2nd January..

Scottish Government £100 COVID hardship grant for children

- Families with children in receipt of free school meals due to reasons of low income are eligible for a £100 per child COVID hardship grant from the Scottish Government.
- Eligible families will be contacted by Aberdeen City Council via GroupCall for how to apply. If you are eligible and haven't heard by the morning of **Thursday 10th December** or need support applying, please get in touch with your school.

Gas and Electricity. Vulnerable energy customers

- From **15 December 2020**, energy suppliers must issue credit to prepayment customers so that their meters don't run out if they are temporarily unable to afford to top up, have mobility problems, or are self-isolating due to coronavirus restrictions. Separately, suppliers will also have to offer extra prepayment credit to households in vulnerable circumstances to give them "breathing space" to arrange alternative payment plans with their provider.
- Emergency credit will be a fixed amount of credit that a supplier will put on to a customer's prepayment meter. This will be done remotely in most cases, without customers needing to go to a shop or post office to top up their key or card.
- If you're in a tough financial situation and are having problems paying your bills, you should contact your supplier straightaway.
- If you're in a vulnerable situation and you need extra support, you can also sign up to the [**Priority Services Register**](#) with your supplier.

See also:

- [**Winter fuel payment**](#) - Paid automatically if you are eligible
- [**Cold weather payments**](#) - You may get a Cold Weather Payment if you're getting certain benefits
- [**Warm home discount**](#) - If you receive Guaranteed Pension Credit or you're on a low income and meet your energy supplier's criteria.
- [**Child Winter Heating Assistance**](#) - Paid automatically If your child usually gets the highest rate care component of Disability Living Allowance.
- [**British Gas Energy Trust**](#) - If you're in debt to your energy supplier. Grants and schemes that are open to anyone.

Housing

Shelter Aberdeen. Tel 0808 800 4444 or scotland.shelter.org.uk/about_us/contact_us

- 25th Dec until 5th January – closed. Up until then and from the 5th of January our phonelines are open 10-5pm, apart from early closure on Christmas Eve.

Disabled Persons Housing Service Aberdeen (DPHS). Contact is 01224 810222 or email on [in-fo@dphsaberdeen.org](mailto:info@dphsaberdeen.org)

- Closing for the festive period at 5pm on Friday 18th December and will re-open at 9am on Tuesday 5th January 2021.
- Office will remain closed in early 2021 and all staff will continue to work from home until further notice.

Castlehill Housing Association. Telephone 01224 625822 info@castlehillha.co.uk

- Closed from 1pm on Christmas Eve and returns at 9am on Tues 5th Jan.

Health and Wellbeing

Maggie's Cancer Care Aberdeen. Telephone 01224 645928 or email aberdeen@maggies.org

- Closing on 24th December at 5pm. We will reopen on Tuesday 5th January.

Local GP and Pharmacy

- Get in touch with your local GP/ medical practice and pharmacy to find out their festive opening times

NHS 24. Telephone 111

- If you need urgent care advice or mental health support and your local GP/ medical practice is closed, telephone NHS 24 on 111. Only phone 999 or go to A&E for emergencies.

Samaritans. Call us for free on 116 123

- Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. We're here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Breathing Space. Call free 0800 83 85 87

- Sometimes our thoughts and feelings can overwhelm us. Pick up the phone - we're here to listen.
Weekdays: Monday-Thursday 6pm-2am. Weekend 6pm-Monday 6am

Shout. Text free 85258

- In a crisis? Anxious? Worried? Stressed? Get 24/7 help from our team of Crisis Volunteers, 365 days a year.

Domestic Abuse. Call us on the Helpline 0800 027 1234

- We provide a confidential, sensitive service to anyone who calls us.
We are here 24 hours, 365 days a year.
It is free to call the Helpline from all landlines and from most mobile network providers.

Help and support

Aberdeen City Council support line 0800 0304 713 (8am-6pm Monday-Friday)

- The support line is available until 5pm on Christmas Eve. Open on the 29th and 30th December 9am-3pm. Normal opening times resume on the 4th January.

Grampian Women's Aid. Tel 01224 593381 www.grampian-womens-aid.com

- Phone line is open 9:30 - 4pm, Monday to Friday.
- Open as normal apart from Christmas day and new year day, when the phone lines are closed.

Parent Learning Hub

- Ideas for learning, activities and parenting advice and further organisations that will help.
<https://sites.google.com/ab-ed.org/parent-learning-hub>

Carer's Allowance Supplement: evaluation

Published: 04 Dec 2020

The Scottish Government has confirmed that it will use findings from an evaluation of carer's allowance supplement (CAS) in developing its replacement for carer's allowance.



Social Security Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

The evaluation contained three strands: an analysis of management data, an overview of survey data, and qualitative research with benefit recipients. The report has two Annexes containing the commissioned research report conducted by Ipsos MORI Scotland and a summary of wider government activity (outside of social security) which is designed to contribute to wider long-term outcomes for carers.

The findings demonstrate that Carer's Allowance Supplement has gone some way to meeting its overall aims: to improve outcomes for carers by providing extra financial support and to provide greater recognition of the essential societal contribution that carers make.

While Carer's Allowance Supplement has positively impacted on carer finances, carer quality of life, and on carer feelings of recognition to some extent, it is accepted that more significant impact on the wider governmental outcomes of improving carer health and wellbeing, improving carer quality of life and increasing societal recognition in the long-term may require additional actions to supplement financial support for carers and/or higher levels of financial support.

www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-carers-allowance-supplement/

Increased support for tenants

Published: 07 Dec 2020

A £10 million fund which offers interest-free loans to tenants who are struggling with rent arrears opens for applications today.

The Tenant Hardship Loan Fund is designed to help people who have had their finances or employment impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and do not have other means of housing support.

The new fund is part of a range of support and interventions in response to the pandemic. By giving tenants access to loans to cover a maximum of nine months worth of rent arrears and long repayment terms, it provides another option for people who have lost out financially due to the pandemic, but who can't claim support from other means, such as welfare benefits.

Background

Applications for the Tenant Hardship Loan Fund can be [completed online](#).

Learn more about renting and your rights during coronavirus if you have a [private landlord](#) or a [social landlord](#). Loans will be available for social and private tenants up to a maximum of nine months' rent costs covering rent arrears and future rent, where those arrears have arisen since 1 January 2020 (the loan will not be available where a tenant had rent arrears before this date). The loan can include up to a maximum of three months of future rent payments as part of the nine-month total.

The loan provides an additional short-term offer that supports tenants to manage rent arrears and helps them to come back into paying their rent. Loan repayments will be deferred for six months as standard and repaid over a five-year period. This recognises the continuing uncertainty around the impacts of the pandemic.

The Tenant Hardship Loan Fund offers will be subject to an affordability assessment as part of the Scottish Government's commitment to responsible lending. The affordability assessment looks at the applicant's incomings and outgoings to check whether the applicant has enough surplus income, after other costs, to make the loan payments.

The application process for the loan highlights that there may be other more appropriate financial support options available to them and will signpost people to sources of further advice and support before making an application.

The Fund is part of the range of support and interventions in response to the pandemic, including the extended notice periods within the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act, introduction of private landlord pre-action requirements and the increases to Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs), along with interest free loans for landlords.

www.gov.scot/news/increased-support-for-tenants/

Child Disability Payment pilot areas announced

Initial applications to be taken in three local authority areas.

Families of children with a disability or long term health condition living in Dundee City, Perth and Kinross and the Western Isles will be able to apply for Child Disability Payment from summer 2021. This new benefit will be available across Scotland from autumn 2021.

Child Disability Payment will replace Disability Living Allowance for Children, which is currently delivered through the Department for Work and Pensions.

This new support is there for families applying for disability assistance for the first time. Families currently getting Disability Living Allowance for Children from the Department for Work and Pensions will start to be transferred to the new Scottish system from 2021.

This is the second form of disability assistance to be delivered under the new Scottish social security system following the introduction of Child Winter Heating Assistance in November 2020.

Child Disability Payment is the first disability benefit to be introduced that will require people to submit an application. People will be able to apply for this payment by post, phone, online and face to face. This is the first time in Scotland that people will be able to apply for a disability benefit online.

Background

People who currently get UK Government disability benefits will be transferred to the new Scottish system in stages after the new benefits are introduced. This work is expected to be completed to the previously announced timeline of 2025.

Young people and children in Scotland who are currently getting Disability Living Allowance for children from the DWP will no longer need to apply for PIP when they turn 16. They will stay on Disability Living Allowance to age 18. <https://www.gov.scot/news/16-year-olds-will-no-longer-need-to-apply-for-pip-in-scotland/>

Child Winter Heating Assistance was the first disability assistance to be introduced by the Scottish Government. This is an annual £200 payment for children and young people who receive the highest rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance will help families meet day and night-time winter fuel costs. <https://www.gov.scot/news/child-winter-heating-assistance-payments-to-start/>

From autumn 2021, Social Security Scotland will administer 11 benefits.

- Carer's Allowance Supplement
- Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment
- Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment
- Best Start Grant School Age Payment
- Best Start Foods
- Funeral Support Payment
- Young Carer Grant
- Job Start Payment
- Scottish Child Payment (for children under 6 years old)
- Child Winter Heating Assistance
- Child Disability Payment.

[news.gov.scot/news/child-disability-payment-pilot-areas-announced-1](https://www.gov.scot/news/child-disability-payment-pilot-areas-announced-1)



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba



Adult Disability Payment - consultation launch

A public consultation on Adult Disability Payment will start in the coming weeks.

The consultation will ask for feedback on the draft Disability Assistance for Working Age People (Scotland) Regulations and overarching Adult Disability Payment policy intent.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks, and will include virtual stakeholder events to be held in the New Year to enable disabled people an accessible opportunity to engage.

Once the consultation responses have been analysed the draft Regulations will be amended where required before being scrutinised by the Scottish Commission on Social Security.

Follow [@ScotGovFairer](https://twitter.com/ScotGovFairer) on twitter for latest news on our progress with developing a new social security system for Scotland.

Guidance - New Style Employment and Support Allowance: detailed guide

Last updated 9 December 2020

More detailed information about New Style Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for stakeholders and claimants.

www.gov.uk/guidance/new-style-employment-and-support-allowance-detailed-guide

Guidance - New Style Employment and Support Allowance

Last updated 9 December 2020

You may be able to claim New Style Employment and Support Allowance with, or instead of Universal Credit, depending on your National Insurance record.

www.gov.uk/guidance/new-style-employment-and-support-allowance

Guidance - New Style Jobseeker's Allowance

Last updated 9 December 2020

You may be able to claim New Style Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) with, or instead of, Universal Credit, depending on your National Insurance record.

www.gov.uk/guidance/new-style-jobseekers-allowance

A list of the benefit rates and pension rates for 2021 to 2022.

This publication lists the proposed benefit rates and pension rates for 2021 to 2022 as set out in the [written ministerial statement](#) made by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Thérèse Coffey, on 25 November 2020.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-and-pension-rates-2021-to-2022

DWP Payment dates and opening times:

Scotland

Some benefits will be paid early as follows:

When your payment is due	When UC will be paid	When other benefits will be paid (not UC)
Thurs 24 December	Thurs 24 December	Wed 23 December
Fri 25 December	Thurs 24 December	Wed 23 December
Mon 28 December	Thurs 24 December	Wed 23 December
Fri 1 January	Thurs 31 December	Thurs 31 December
Mon 4 January	Mon 4 January	Mon 4 Jan (or Thurs 31 Dec if you live in Scotland)

Dates and Opening times:

- Thursday 24 December Offices are open. Phone lines are open for missing or urgent payments only
- Friday 25 December Offices and phone lines are closed
- Monday 28 December Offices and phone lines are closed
- Tuesday 29 December Offices and phone lines are open as usual
- Wednesday 30 December Offices and phone lines are open as usual
- Thursday 31 December Offices and phone lines are open as usual
- Friday 1 January Offices and phone lines are closed
- Monday 4 January Offices are closed. Phone lines are open for missing or urgent payments only

Total value of deductions from universal credit claimants amounted to almost £130 million in August 2020

New DWP figures also show that more than two-thirds of deductions were taken to repay advance payments

The total value of deductions from universal credit claimants amounted to almost £130 million in August 2020, according to new DWP figures.

Responding to a written question yesterday seeking recent figures for deductions from universal credit for the purposes of repaying advance payments, DWP Minister Will Quince attached a document showing total deduction figures - relating to deductions for advance repayments, third party deductions and all other deductions except for sanctions and fraud penalties - at parliamentary constituency level and for Great Britain as a whole in August 2020, that included -

- out of the more than 4.5 million universal credit claims in Great Britain, 1.847 million (41 per cent) had a deduction;
- the total amount deducted from all claims was £129,120,000, and of this, £88,160,000 (68 per cent) was deducted to repay advance payments;
- average deductions per claim for the month was £70; and
- the total amount of universal credit paid out in the month across Great Britain was just under £3.1 billion.

NB - the DWP also notes that while the COVID-19 temporarily suspension of government deductions ended in July 2020, deductions had not yet returned fully to normal by the end of August.

[Mr Quince's written answer and accompanying data table](#) is available from parliament.uk



Settlement as a Skilled Worker – what you need to know

Since 1 December 2020, migrants who would previously have applied for settlement in the UK (aka “indefinite leave to remain”) under the Tier 2 (General) route now need to apply under the new Skilled Worker route. In this article we explain the requirements for settlement as a Skilled Worker and highlight the main differences with the settlement rules under Tier 2 (General).

If you are looking instead to apply for a Skilled Worker visa for the first time, we’ve covered the application process elsewhere on the site: see Nichola’s informative article [here](#).

Read full article [HERE](#)

EU Settlement Scheme deadlines explained

The end of the Transition Period is fast approaching. This can be a very confusing time for many EU citizens and their family members.

What is the 'settled status' application deadline? When do I need to apply for the status? What are the changes for the applicants to the EU Settlement Scheme from 1 January 2021?

Citizens Rights Project, together with Feniks, will try to address this uncertainty and answer any questions related to the EU Settlement Scheme and its deadlines on a series of multilingual online sessions streamed live on our [Facebook page](#).

These will take place on **Wednesday 9th December 2020** at the following times:

- **10:00 - English session:** <https://www.facebook.com/events/371664044061157>
- **11:00 - Polish session:** <https://www.facebook.com/events/161624442307099>
- **12:00 - Spanish session:** <https://www.facebook.com/events/441035257274271>
- **13:00 - Italian session:** <https://www.facebook.com/events/164028152116020>
- **17:00 - Romanian session:** <https://www.facebook.com/events/1077438232696856>

Registration is not required. Sessions will be streamed live on our Facebook page.

Please help us to promote our event within your communities and organisations.

Kind regards, Noelia Martinez. Citizens' Rights Project Coordinator

New Resource: Know Your Rights Guide 2020



This guide is to help you understand your rights in a situation where immigration rules are changing regularly. It is also useful for anyone who cannot prove they are British or have Indefinite Leave to Remain, for example if you don't have a passport or immigration documents. Other migrants, including those from the European Union, refugees and those with Limited Leave to Remain will also find it useful.

This guide will explain:

- What your rights are
- How changes in the law may affect you
- What you can do if you face challenges
- Where you can go for support and advice

<https://migrantsrights.org.uk/blog/2020/12/02/new-resource-know-your-rights-guide-2020/>

New statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 1043

On 10 December 2020 the Home Office **published** a statement of changes to the Immigration Rules that appears to be a flagrant breach of the UN Refugee Convention.

The purpose of the main change is to:

Enhance our capacity to treat as inadmissible to the UK asylum system asylum claims made by those who have passed through or have connections with a safe third country.

It does this by changing the rules on inadmissibility in **Part 11** of the Rules.

Full article [HERE](#)

Immigration update podcast, episode 83

Welcome to episode 83 of the Free Movement immigration update podcast. It's a case-law heavy episode, with lots of judgments from the immigration tribunal, Court of Appeal and even the European Court of Human Rights to chew on.

We also talk about a potentially important new policy on deporting people who arrived in the UK as young children, legal preparations for Brexit and of course the new Immigration Act. For discussion of recent changes to economic migration routes under the Points Based Immigration System, see the [previous episode](#) or our [brand new training course](#).

Full article and podcast [HERE](#)

Last Day for submitting your Loan / Savings applications is
TUESDAY 15TH DECEMBER 2020

- Just come into the office to fill in a form – Mondays to Fridays 9.30am to 3pm
 REDUCED HOURS COVID19 (apart from Wednesdays 9.30am to 12.30 lunchtime) Please wear a face covering

Your Loan / share withdrawals / junior withdrawals can now be paid direct to your chosen bank account

Remember to fill in the bank details where you want the monies to be paid

Request a loan / savings form to be sent in the post, give us a phone (01224) 276994

ST MACHAR CREDIT UNION LTD 433 GREAT NORTHERN ROAD ABERDEEN AB24 2EU

FESTIVE OPENING TIMES
Closed lunchtime
Thursday 24th December 2020
REOPEN
MONDAY 11TH JANUARY 2021

All benefits will continue to be administered over the festive period

If you have any emergency regards your benefits we will be in the office up till 10 am (not bank holidays) If you miss us leave a message on the answer machine which we will pick up every morning we are in (01224) 276994

instant neighbour
St Machar Drive Shop
Christmas & New Year Opening

Wed 23rd Dec	Closed 1pm
Thur 24th Dec	Closed
Fri 25th Dec	Closed
Mon 28th Dec	Closed
Tues 29th Dec	Foodbank & Shop open
Wed 30th Dec	10.00 - 3.00
Thur 31st Dec	Closed
Fri 1st Jan	Closed
Mon 4th Jan	Closed
Tues 5th Jan	Closed

Company Number SC165004 Charity Number SC002223

Scarf's opening hours are as follows:

Day	Date	Hours
Wednesday	23/12/2020	9am - 5pm
Thursday	24/12/2020	9am - 3pm
Friday	25/12/2020	Closed - public holiday
Saturday	26/12/2020	Closed
Sunday	27/12/2020	Closed
Monday	28/12/2020	Closed - public holiday
Tuesday	29/12/2020	Closed
Wednesday	30/12/2020	9am - 5pm
Thursday	31/12/2020	9am - 3pm
Friday	01/01/2021	Closed - public holiday
Saturday	02/01/2021	Closed
Sunday	03/01/2021	Closed
Monday	04/01/2021	Closed - public holiday
Tuesday	05/01/2021	9am - 5pm



**citizens
advice**

CAS response to the Cabinet Office consultation: Fairness in Government Debt Management
 Publication: September 2020
 Pages: 13
[Download Publication](#)

Response to the Social Security Committee Inquiry: COVID-19 and Social Security
 Publication: October 2020
 Pages: 14
[Download Publication](#)

CAS response to the revised draft Disability Assistance for Children and Young People (Scotland) Regulations 2020
 Publication: November 2020
 Pages: 4
[Download Publication](#)

CAS response to the Scottish Affairs Committee's Welfare in Scotland Inquiry
 Publication: December 2020
 Pages: 22
[Download Publication](#)

Some UC claimants to see a drop in income when the Benefit Cap 'grace period' that has been applied to their claim ends

What's happening?

We are all aware that there was a spike in UC claims back in March when the first 'lock down' hit. Many of those claimants are about to see a sudden drop in their UC – this is because their UC award should have been reduced due to the Benefit Cap but they were entitled to the 9 month Benefit Cap 'Grace Period'. But that protection is about to run out.

Example:

In March 2020 Kristy, a mother of 4, was furloughed. She's been getting UC (Assessment Periods running 5th – 4th) and her award was reassessed. As she has been working and had had earnings above the Benefit Cap earnings threshold for 12 months, she was entitled to the Benefit Cap 'Grace Period' protecting her from the Benefit Cap for 9 Monthly Assessment Periods (MAPs). Her 9th MAP will be the one that ends on 4th December 2020. Unless she is excluded from the Benefit Cap it will be applied to her award when it is assessed on 4th January 2021 and she will see a drop in her income.



Won't the government put something further in place to protect people affected by Covid and the Cap?

Mims Davies confirmed in parliament that there are no plans to review the Benefit Cap or the Grace Period so many claimants will see a sudden reduction in their UC entitlement.

Any wiggle room?

You cannot ask the DWP to extend the Grace Period or appeal the Benefit Cap if they have acted within the rules. The DWP do not have discretion on whether or not to apply the Cap.

If the claimant's earnings rise to above the Benefit Cap earnings threshold figure, currently £604 month, again then claimants will go back to being exempt from the Benefit Cap.

So – Benefit Cap claimants can only get £1666.67 from UC?

The Benefit Cap limit from total 'welfare' for couples and families is £1666.67 outside greater London and £1916.67 inside greater London.

Or for single applicants £1116.67 outside greater London and £1284.17 inside greater London.

But that figure will also take into account any other 'welfare' the person receives, for instance Child Benefit - it is their total welfare that is capped at this level not just their UC.

So their UC could still be less than the Cap limit.

Example

Iqbal gets Child Benefit for 5 children, all born before April 2017 so the 2 child limit doesn't apply. He lives in social housing, outside greater London and his rent is £130 a week. As he is receiving £76.85 a week (£333.02 per month) from Child Benefit his Maximum UC award would be 'capped' at £1666.67 - £333.02 = £1333.65 a month.

He has been protected from the Cap for the past 9 Monthly Assessment Periods after losing his job and was receiving £2197.79 in Universal Credit. When the Benefit Cap 'Grace Period' runs out his UC will reduce by £864.14 a month!

If Iqbal was able to earn over £604 he would be exempt from the cap again. If he started earning £605 a month his UC would increase to £2000.60 and he would be more than £1200 better off!

Practical Steps

Check the exemptions..

There are many exemptions from the Benefit Cap; one of them is when the claimant earns more than £604 in a Monthly Assessment Period, but there are others - [click here](#) for more information.

For instance, someone can be exempt from the Benefit Cap if they, their partner or a dependent child/young person is in receipt of certain disability benefits, carer benefits or classed as having LCWRA/in support group.

So it is worth checking if any exemption could apply and that the DWP have the correct information for instance they don't always know if a claimant is getting PIP or a War Disablement Pension.

New Claims for a Disability Benefit?

You could also consider, if appropriate, whether the claimant could make a claim for one of the disability benefits that exempt them from the benefit cap. If these are awarded and backdated, the Benefit Cap will be lifted/reconsidered for all the MAP's that the backdate covers.

Example

Terri has 4 children and her Benefit Cap 'Grace Period' will run out in January. Her rent is £650 a month and she isn't under occupying. She gets Child Benefit of £62.90 per week (£272.57 a month) and lives outside Greater London, so her Max UC will be £1666.67 (cap limit) - £272.57 (other welfare) = £1394.10.

During the Grace Period she has been getting £2048.63 per month UC, in January this will drop to £1394.10 – a loss of £654.53!

Her 9 year old has a lot of difficulties and she has claimed DLA for him. She tells UC that she has to care for the 9 year old full time.

In May DLA agree to an award of the middle rate of DLA Care. She tells UC and is now exempt from the Benefit Cap; her UC amount also goes up as she qualifies for the Carer Element and a Disabled Child Element.

Her new UC amount is £2339.80 per month and she receives a lump sum payment of £4728.50 due to the Benefit Cap being lifted and the extra Elements for 5 MAPs!

Find out who is affected

The payment notification will detail if someone is being protected by the Grace Period and when the protection should end. This could give the claimant time to seek budgeting or money advice or consider if any of the exemptions should apply to them.

Check the dates

Although the grace period lasts for 9 months, it is worth checking that it starts and ends at the correct time. If the claimant was already on UC it should start from the first MAP in which the earnings dropped below £604 (or £569 in 19/20).

www.housingsystems.co.uk/Universal-Credit/How-Much/Benefit-Cap/Grace-Period

Extra Help

Have a look at our '[extra help](#)' pages to make sure the claimant hasn't missed out on anything that could help, for instance Council Tax Support, Covid Winter Grant Payment, free school meals etc ..

Discretionary Housing Payment

Those who have been 'capped' and who have a Housing Costs Element included in their UC award should consider a DHP application to help pay their rent. As so many may be affected at the same time the DHP 'pot' may not be able to support everybody. There hasn't been any extra DHP money due to the pandemic so the budgets will be stretched – but still worth a try!

Courtesy of www.housingsystems.co.uk/News/News/id/130

New Regulations protect EEA Nationals with Pre-Settled Status beyond 30th June 2021



Regulations have been published which protect the benefit entitlement of those with pre-settled status who also have a 'Right to Reside', after 31.12.2020 for, it appears, an indefinite period.

This means that as long as an EEA National (or family member) has been granted pre-settled status under the EUSS they will continue to be entitled to means tested benefits (including Universal Credit), Tax Credits and Child Benefit beyond 31st December 2020 if they can demonstrate that they also have a 'Right to Reside'.

In fact the rules are better than we had hoped, because it appears that they allow those EEA Nationals (or family members) with pre-settled status and a 'Right to Reside' to be entitled to these benefits beyond 30th June 2021 too. These Regulations extend those 'Right to Reside' rules to these claimants after Brexit up to the point of them being granted settled status.

As soon as they have converted their pre-settled status to settled status ie after living in the UK for 5 years, they would then be able to access all benefits without having to demonstrate having a 'Right to Reside' too.

The Detail

These are [**The Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination \(EU Withdrawal\) Act 2020 \(Consequential, Saving, Transitional and Transitory Provisions\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2020**](#). In their original draft form those with full settled status were covered but not those with pre-settled status.

Schedule 4 to these regulations is a "savings provision in relation to access to benefits and services". It states that the provisions of the Immigration (EEA) regs 2016 – the Right to Reside regs - continue to have effect in relation to people in the "post-transition period group" despite these regs being revoked. This means that someone protected by these regulations can continue to rely on their Right to Reside status in order to claim means-tested benefits and tax credits. The regulations also cover housing authority accommodation.

The post transition period group is defined in Schedule 4 as those who have been granted limited leave to remain under the EU Settlement Scheme - ie they have pre-settled status.

Pre-settled status is granted to EEA nationals and their family member who have applied to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) but who have been unable to show continuous residence in the UK for five years. After five years' continuous residence they can apply to the EUSS for full settled status, which is also known as indefinite leave to remain.

To have a Right to Reside they need to be a worker, or retain their worker status after it has ended, or be self sufficient with comprehensive medical insurance, or have permanent residence status; or be a family member of an EEA with one of these statuses or have a derivative right to reside. All of these are explained on the Housing Systems website.

What about those living in the UK on 31st December 2020 who fail to apply to the EUSS?

Alongside these regulations are [**The Citizens' Rights \(Application Deadline and Temporary Protection\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2020**](#) which provide a 'Savings Provision in relation to benefits' for those with no status under the EU Settlement Scheme but only until 30.06.2021.

This is to protect those who have not yet applied to the EUSS between Brexit ie 31.12.2021 and the date applications to the EUSS close ie 30.06.2021 – often referred to as the grace period.

Part 3 of these new Regulations states that the provisions of the EEA Regulations 2016* will continue to have effect in relation to all EEA Nationals (and some family members) during the grace period, despite the EEA Regulations 2016 being revoked.

** With some modifications – although only minor and they do not appear to diminish anyone's rights.*

So will any EEA National living in the UK on 31st December 2021 lose entitlement to benefits?

The only groups of EEA nationals who were resident in the UK by 31.12.2020 who will be ineligible for means-tested benefits and tax credits after 30.06.2021 will be those who have no status under the EUSS, or who have pre-settled status but do not have a Right to Reside.

Someone with no EUSS status at all ie who is eligible to apply but fails to by 30.06.2021 and is thereby too late to apply**, will in effect be treated the same as a non-EEA national - in that their rights to many benefits (including Universal Credit) will depend on their immigration status.

**The government has indicated that in exceptional circumstances someone who was resident in the UK on 31.12.20 could apply to the EUSS past the deadline, so that may be the option open to some, but unless they are granted settled status it does not give them the right to claim many benefits.

Courtesy of Housing Systems - www.housingsystems.co.uk/News/News/id/131

Housing Systems: Combating poverty and sustaining tenancies.