

## No Recourse, North East Partnership meeting.

The next Partnership meeting will be held on **Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March at 10am via Teams.**

Contact [Laura](#) for details



Mon 22nd Feb 2021 - Issue.36 (Fortnightly)

## Free events

- **Joining family members of EU nationals after Brexit.** Wednesday 3rd March 2021 at 4 PM on Zoom - Please register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/64811234567>
- **Implications for homeless EEA nationals.** Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 2-4pm (zoom). Please register by emailing [trainingscotland@shelter.org.uk](mailto:trainingscotland@shelter.org.uk) by no later than 4pm on 25th February 2021.
- **Fuel poverty e-learning module - [fuel poverty e-learning course](#).**
- **Climate Week North East interactive online events.** All sessions are bookable via [Ticketsource link](#) or for more information check out the [Climate Week North East events page](#).

## Temporary Restrictions Fund for Child-care Providers

Aberdeen City Council is administering a £175,000 of grant funding to support those childcare providers who are currently only permitted to operate for vulnerable children or those of key workers.

The Temporary Restrictions Fund, which is now live, is to help childcare providers cope with the loss of private income incurred to comply with the current public health guidance in response to COVID-19.

The government funding is available for private, voluntary and not-for-profit sectors, including out-of-school care providers with the level of grant available to each setting based on its registered capacity with the Care Inspectorate.

The size of grants available to applicants are between £575 to £2,800.

The Fund has now opened for applications and can be accessed by visiting:

[www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/coronavirus-covid-19/temporary-restrictions-fund-childcare-providers](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/coronavirus-covid-19/temporary-restrictions-fund-childcare-providers)

The last date for submitting a grant application will be **Monday 1 March 2021.**

## CORONAVIRUS - Aberdeen City Council's response so far...

Number of conversations AB-1 has had with residents:

**7,641**



Number of Scottish Welfare grants granted:

**13,543**

Awards:

**8,903**

Totalling:

**£646,701**

Number of calls for financial assistance & advice:

**8,784**



Number of business grant applications processed:

**5,623**

Awards:

**5,336**

Totalling:

**£38,947,425**



Number of food boxes sent out to vulnerable/shielded people:

**4,652**



Number of key worker/vulnerable child receiving childcare:

**Children Registered:**

**1,354**

**Supported in School:**

**829**

**Supported through outreach model:**

**1,111**

**Pupils/Staff active in Google Classroom over any 7 day period:**

**25,600**

Number of calls to support line:

**43,578 calls**



Calls to those self-isolating by Test and Protect:

**6,903**

Follow up Calls:

**3,007**



Homeless support:

**Homeless Applications:**

**1,299**

**935 households in temporary accommodation**



Number of visits to ACC coronavirus web pages:

**619,635**



Percentage increase in online library membership:

**310%**



Percentage increase in eBook/eAudio loans:

**216%**



[www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/covid19](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/covid19)

Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership  
A caring partnership

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL



<http://citizensrightsproject.org>



CitzRights



EURightsProject



citzrights

Company limited by guarantee in Scotland, company number SC561815  
Regulated by the OISC Ref No. N201900077  
St Margaret's House | 151 London Rd | Edinburgh | EH7 6AE

## Joining family members of EU nationals after Brexit

Wednesday 3rd March 2021 at 4 PM on Zoom

- Who can bring family members to the UK after Brexit?
- What is the difference between EEA Permit and EUSS Permit?
- What family members can be brought to the UK?
- How they can apply to the EU Settlement Scheme?

Join our FREE webinar with immigration solicitor Janey Armstrong for EU/EEA/Swiss citizens who would like to bring their family members to the UK after Brexit.

Please register here: [https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/WN\\_jW7psbwrQUmy26938wLJYQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/WN_jW7psbwrQUmy26938wLJYQ)

## Are you affected by new rules for UK benefits that started on 1st January 2021?

**Which?**

Changes to some UK Benefits paid in the EU, and for EU citizens living in the UK came into effect on 1st January.

Please consider sharing [our useful guide](#) on what that means for those affected and their families.

## Training Event: Brexit - Implications for homeless EEA nationals



Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 2-4pm (zoom)

Human Rights lawyers, Justright Scotland and Shelter Scotland's Migrant Destitution Project are pleased to offer free training on the implications of Brexit for homeless EEA nationals.

The aim of this training is to provide participants with an overview of the relevant changes to immigration law and homelessness law with a view to helping you better advise and support your clients. This training is aimed at frontline advice and support staff working with homeless EEA nationals across the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector.

This will be a zoom event. If you would like to attend this event, please register by emailing [trainingscotland@shelter.org.uk](mailto:trainingscotland@shelter.org.uk) by no later than 4pm on 25th February 2021.

## What risks EEA Nationals now face due to the new benefit rules...

...in place from 1st January 2021, with further changes from 1st July 2021

New benefit rules can into play on 1st January 2021 - following the end of the Brexit 'transition period'. EEA Nationals that do not understand the new systems could miss out.

Read the full article here—

[www.housingsystems.co.uk/News/News/id/134](http://www.housingsystems.co.uk/News/News/id/134)

## The UK's New Immigration System – Summary of Problems for Disabled People and Why Changes are Needed Urgently

None of the current Immigration routes for non-UK staff, who require Home Office permission to work, appear to be available for disabled people to use if they are individual employers whose social care and support for independent living is funded through Local Authority Direct Payments or Continuing Health Care funding when they need to recruit new, or replacement staff.

Published on 7th Feb 2021 read [DPAC's article HERE](#)

## Immigration Policy Post Brexit

**UK IN A CHANGING EUROPE**

The authoritative source for independent research on UK-EU relations

Immigration was a major factor — perhaps the major factor — in the Brexit vote. Over the past two decades, migration from the EU has boosted growth, helped address skill and labour shortages, and benefited the public finances. It also led to rapid population growth in some areas.

Against a background of austerity and cuts to public services — and a hostile media and opportunistic politicians looking for convenient scapegoats — it generated significant social and political tensions, which provided much of the impetus behind Brexit.

[ukandeu.ac.uk/immigration-policy-after-brexit/](http://ukandeu.ac.uk/immigration-policy-after-brexit/)

# Brexit Updates (relevant to EUSS) February 2021

## 1. EU, EEA, Swiss nationals visiting the UK from 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2021

- EU, EEA and Swiss citizens can travel to the UK for holidays or short trips **for up to 6 months** without a visa.
- They can cross the UK border using a valid passport which should be valid for the whole time they are in the UK.
- Until 1st of October 2021 they can also use their EU, EEA, Swiss national ID to enter the UK. People with settled/pre-settled status can use their national ID until 31st December 2025.
- Non-EU family members of the EU/EEA/Swiss nationals living in the UK will need a passport **AND** either EUSS Family Permit, EEA family permit or a UK-issued biometric residence card.
- People **visiting** the UK have no rights to work, education, social services, accessing NHS (unless they have private insurance), benefits, etc.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/visiting-the-uk-as-an-eu-eea-or-swiss-citizen>

## 2. Family members joining their EU/EEA/Swiss relatives living in the UK

- EU/EEA/Swiss family members can join the EU/EEA/Swiss residents in the UK if the residents started living in the UK before 31/12/2020, but the UK residents have to have settled/pre-settled status granted or prove that if they apply the status will be granted. The family members **can apply for pre-settled status from abroad, but ONLY if they have a biometric document** (passport or national ID). They also need to prove their relationship with, and dependency on an EU/EEA/Swiss relative living in the UK.
- Non-EU family members can also join their EU/EEA/Swiss relatives in the UK (if the relatives started living in the UK before 31/12/2020), and can do that from abroad **ONLY** if they have an UK residence document (a residence card, a permanent residence card, a derivative residence card)

<https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families/join-EU-EEA-Swiss-family-member>

## 3. Family members joining their EU/EEA/Swiss relatives living in the UK -EUSS Family Permit

- If the EU/EEA/Swiss family members who would like to join their EU/EEA/Swiss relatives in the UK do not have a biometric document they need to apply for an **EUSS Family Permit BEFORE they travel to the UK**. Once they get to the UK they can apply for a pre-settled status

<https://www.gov.uk/family-permit/eu-settlement-scheme-family-permit>

## 4. Changes for EU/EEA/Swiss students

What if EU students cannot apply to the EU Settlements Scheme (i.e. they started their studies in the UK but then left because of the pandemic for more than 6 months and do not qualify for pre-settled/settled status)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-eu-settlement-scheme-guidance-for-applicants>:

- They'll need to complete an application for Student Visa and have it accepted before arriving in the UK
- Application fee is £348 + an Immigration Health Surcharge (£470 per year)
- Application is made online <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa/apply>
- Students are allowed to work up to 20 hours per week during term time and full time during vacations
- A visa would be granted for the full length of the course plus four months "wrap up" period

**Tuition Fees for students** (<https://www.saas.gov.uk/need-to-know/brexit>):

### Arriving before 31 December 2020

- EU students enrolling in 2020-21 are eligible for tuition fee support from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS)
- Eligible to apply for the UK's EU Settlement Scheme, allowing them to remain in the UK after studying, provided they have applied by 30 June 2021.

### Arriving after 31 December 2020

- EU students enrolling in a course in February 2021 are eligible for tuition fee support from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).
- Will need to apply for a student visa through the new **Student visa**.

### Starting in 2021-22 arriving after 31 December 2020

- Are not eligible for home fee status and tuition fee loan.
- Will need to apply for a student visa through the new **Student visa** <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa>
- May be eligible to apply for the **Graduate Immigration Route**.

## 5. European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

- All EU/EEA/Swiss nationals and their family members who started living in the UK before 31/12/2020 can apply for a new UK-issued EHIC card, which will cover their **STANDARD** treatment in the EEA. **Their previous EHIC card expired on 31/12/2020**
- Dual UK/EU nationals can also apply for a new UK-issued EHIC BUT only if they: acquired their British nationality by naturalisation AND they were EU/EEA/Swiss citizens before moving to the UK, AND they have retained the nationality of the European country
- Also eligible for the new UK-EHIC are: Frontier workers, UK students who have been studying in the EEA/ Switzerland since before 01/01/2021, some UK pensioners, some eligible family members.
- All other residents in the UK (including British citizens and Irish citizens and people living in Ireland) can apply for a GHIC (Global Health Insurance Card) **once their current EHIC card expires**, to receive standard necessary medical treatment in EU (**GHIC is not valid in Norway, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Switzerland**)

**NOTE:** there is no designated website for the new UK-EHIC and you can find information/application on the GHIC page: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/>

## 6. National Insurance Number

- EU/EEA/Swiss nationals with settled or pre-settled status can now apply for a National Insurance Number (this service was on hold between March and December 2020)
- Call the National Insurance Number application line: **08001412075 (Mon-Fri 8am-6pm)**. Choose option 1: (EU, EEA, Swiss national who is looking for work or is already working). You will be transferred to an agent who will assist with an application for a NINo. Due to the pandemic, the waiting time can be very long, so **patience is needed.**
- We have infographics about this in various languages on our padlet: [https://padlet.com/pawel25/CRP\\_shared](https://padlet.com/pawel25/CRP_shared)

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number>

## 7. Frontier Worker Permit

**WHAT IS IT?** A permit lets you come to the UK to work while living elsewhere.

### WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- people from the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein
- they must live outside of the UK
- they have worked in the UK by 31 December 2020
- they have kept working in the UK at least once every 12 months since you started working here
- If you're an Irish citizen, you do not need to apply for a Frontier Worker permit but you can choose to do so.
- You cannot apply if you're a British citizen (this includes dual citizenship).

**HOW TO APPLY** Online. Similar process to the EUSS. First scanning the ID document in the app "UK Immigration: ID check app." and finishing the process in a browser (mobile or computer)



## Child Benefit Case Law

Does **Zambrano** right of residence assist entitlement to child benefit?

**CF/2239/2019**

Published 15th January 2021

## Regulations allowing EEA nationals to continue to claim funeral payment expenses for UK funerals

**Funeral expenses for EEA nationals in UK**



**New regulations have been issued in relation to the introduction of child disability payment in place of disability living allowance (DLA) for children and young people in Scotland.**

**[SSI.No.73/2021](#)**

## **The treatment of Scotland's Devolved Benefits in the Withdrawal Agreement**

This briefing looks at how Scotland's devolved benefits are treated in the **[EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement](#)** ('the Withdrawal Agreement').<sup>1</sup> It is the second of three briefings on Brexit and devolved social security.

The briefing outlines key features of social security co-ordination in the Withdrawal Agreement. It presents tables to show how the principles of EU social security co-ordination apply to **[Scotland's devolved benefits](#)**. Case studies of **[Young Carer Grant](#)** and **[Best Start Grant](#)** illustrate the operation of these principles. The briefing highlights the importance for legislators of how Scotland's benefits are classified by the **[Administrative Commission for the co-ordination of social security systems](#)**.

Download **[HERE](#)**.

Published Monday 8th February 2021

## **Taxi and Private Hire Driver Support Fund (Scotland only)**

10. On 19 January 2021, the Scottish Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills announced that benefit recipients who are taxi or private hire drivers may also be eligible for a £1,500 grant, if they have been licensed for the period 9 October 2020 to at least 31 January 2021 and have been affected by the pandemic. Full details **[regarding the update to the taxi grant criteria can be found on \[www.gov.scot\]\(http://www.gov.scot\)](#)**.

Scottish LAs will directly approach an estimated 38,000 private hire and taxi drivers inviting them to claim the grant, which is intended to assist with fixed costs and expenses, including licence plate fees, rental fees and insurance payments for taxis not on the road.

**[LA Welfare Direct 2/2021](#)**

Updated 5 February 2021

## **Scottish Government announces new £100 Covid Spring Hardship Payment for low income families**

Following on from its **[Covid Winter Hardship Payments](#)**, the Scottish Government has today announced a package of measures worth £37.2 million aimed at tackling poverty and inequality during 2020/2021 including -

- a £100 Covid Spring Hardship Payment for qualifying low income families whose children receive free meals in schools and early learning and childcare settings; and
- additional funding of £20 million for councils to tackle financial insecurity at a local level.

For more information, see **[Funding to tackle poverty and inequality](#)** from [gov.scot](http://gov.scot)

## **Food insecurity and poverty - United Nations: Scottish Government response**

**[Scottish Government position statement](#)** in response to a joint letter to the UK from the UN Special Rapporteurs responsible for food and poverty. It outlines Scotland's human rights approach to the challenges of food insecurity and poverty, including actions taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

This Scottish Government position statement responds to concerns identified by the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on the right to food (Professor Michael Fakhri) and on extreme poverty and human rights (Professor Olivier De Schutter) in a joint communication sent to the UK Government in August 2020. This statement puts on record Scotland's distinctive approach to the human rights concerns raised by the two UN Special Rapporteurs and reflects our commitment to ending hunger by 2030 in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It describes Scotland's human rights approach to tackling food insecurity and poverty, including the actions taken in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Scottish Government actions on food insecurity are focused on measures to: • Prevent food insecurity through increased incomes; • Improve dignified and 'cash first' food insecurity responses; and • Coordinate action on food policy.

The statement includes the Scottish Government's response to food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic and addressing food insecurity beyond the pandemic as part of recovery and renewal.

Download report - **[Food Insecurity and Poverty](#)**

### Deadline to claim the Warm Home Discount

The Warm Home Discount (Core Group) provides a £140 rebate on electricity bills to customers who get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit and are a named account holder with a participating energy supplier.

Most eligible customers will receive the Warm Home Discount (WHD) automatically from their energy supplier, but those who have received a letter advising them to contact the WHD Helpline to claim the rebate, must call by **26th February 2021** (telephone 0800 917 1003).

WHD (Broader Group) rebates may also be available, direct from energy suppliers for recipients of certain other benefits.

For full details of eligibility and further information on how to claim visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

### DWP anticipates local authority housing benefit offices will have 'controlled' access to its Debt Management service line from April 2021

New edition of Welfare Direct Bulletin also highlights that resourcing issues limited local authorities' access well before Covid-19 impacted on performance

In the new edition of *LA Welfare Direct*, the DWP advises that it **asked local authorities in December 2019** not to call Debt Management with payment deductions queries while it resolved resourcing issues with its service line. Highlighting that the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted further on performance, the DWP goes on to confirm it **expects to deploy around 450 new recruits over the next few months**, advising that, as a result -

'It is anticipated that the extra staff means that local authorities will be able to raise queries, including on the Payment Deduction Programme, from April 2021. However, this will need to be in a controlled manner initially to avoid overwhelming call centre capacity. We'd like to thank all local authorities for their continued patience in this area.'

**LA Welfare Direct 2/2021** is available from gov.uk

### The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates applicable from April 2021 to March 2022 have now been published.

"The LHA rates from 1st April 2021 have been determined in accordance with The Rent Officers (Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Functions) (Modification) Order 2020 (SI 2020/ 1519) and are the same rates that came into force on 1st April 2020".

**You can find more [HERE](#)**

Basically nothing has changed....and the rates are unlikely to change for years now.

**LA Welfare Direct 2/2021**  
Updated 5 February 2021

### DWP abandons Universal Credit rent change 'bulk uploads'

Ministers have abandoned plans to allow social landlords to update the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about changes to tenants' rents in bulk after testing the system for 18 months.

The 'bulk upload' system, intended to save providers the massive administrative task of verifying each tenants' rent change individually, has been deemed unsuitable for deployment across the sector.

Housing associations have said the news is "disappointing".

But the DWP has promised to pursue a new approach to updating information about the rental costs of tenants receiving Universal Credit which "offers significant improvements for both landlords and claimants".

Currently, the DWP requires individual claimants to declare changes to their rent and service charges in their Universal Credit online journals.

Landlords must then verify the changes reported by tenants to ensure they receive the right amount of benefit.

There are concerns that some tenants do not know about the requirement and so fail to register the changes, leading to them being paid the wrong Universal Credit housing costs.

With the vast majority of housing associations and councils across the UK due to increase rents in April, this could mean these tenants end up receiving less benefit than they are entitled to.

Social landlords **have also warned that the existing process represents a huge admin burden** which diverts resources away from helping tenants who are struggling to use the Universal Credit system.

The government initially told the sector that bulk uploads – allowing landlords to record rent changes for their tenants en masse – **would be introduced in April 2019**.

**Article** dated 05/02/2021 from [InsideHousing](#) (registration may be required)

## Report suspicious HMRC emails, text messages and phone calls

### Online

#### Report a suspicious HMRC phone call

Use the online form to tell HMRC you have received a phone call that you think is not genuine. You'll need to give your email address.

### Email

Forward details of suspicious emails to HMRC's phishing team [phishing@hmrc.gov.uk](mailto:phishing@hmrc.gov.uk)

To help us deal with your email as quickly as possible please give details of what you're reporting in the subject line, for example 'Suspicious email address'.

HMRC never send notifications of a tax rebate or ask you to disclose personal or payment information by email.

### Suspicious text messages

Forward suspicious text messages to 60599. Text messages will be charged at your network rate.

HMRC never send notifications of a tax rebate or ask you to disclose personal or payment information by text message.

## Post Office Card Accounts

DWP is writing to all customers who currently receive their State Pension or benefit payments into a Post Office card account (POCa). The letter informs them the POca service is closing and asks them to provide alternative account details.

Our dedicated customer service centre is available to take calls from POca customers, to accept new account details or answer any questions. We will ensure all future payments are switched to the customer's new account from the next available payment date and there will be no interruptions with their payments.

For anyone who is unable to open a different type of account or provide new account details, a payment exception service will be available.

### Customer Service Centre

Telephone: 0800 085 7133

Textphone: 0800 085 7146

## EE v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (CPIP): [2021] UKUT 17 (AAC)

Upper Tribunal Administrative Appeals Chamber decision of Judge Hemingway on 26 January 2021

Read the full decision in [CPIP/596/2020](#).

### Judicial Summary

Is a fear of encountering dogs out of doors relevant to the ability or otherwise to follow the route of a journey for the purpose of entitlement to the mobility component of Personal Independence Payment.

## Up-rating of tax credits, child benefit and guardian's allowance from April 2021

[SI.No.156/2021](#)

## Universal Credit £20-a-week uplift to be extended

The Universal Credit uplift of £20-a-week will be extended by six months, it has been reported.

Under the £3bn proposal, the benefit for 5.9million people would not be cut by £85 a month on April 12 as planned, and would instead have its current level extended by six months.

It follows months of pleas to avoid cutting the benefit relied on by millions, with ITV's Robert Peston reporting a plan is now agreed, pending the final sign-off of the Prime Minister.

The [Resolution Foundation](#) warned extending the current rate by six months was "good news in the short term" but was not enough.





## Articles

### Benefit claimants face mounting debt burden, says thinktank

Resolution  
Foundation

Resolution Foundation study suggests over a third of people who claimed universal credit after pandemic began have seen debts grow

More than three in 10 people who began claiming universal credit after the start of the pandemic last year have acquired new debts, or seen their existing debts grow, according to a new report by the independent Resolution Foundation thinktank.

**The study** – which will add to pressure on the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, not to cut levels of support in his budget next month – finds that of almost 6 million people who are currently claiming it, about three in five made a new claim in 2020.

**The Living Standards Outlook 2021** was published on 18 January 2021



Third Force News:  
the voice of Scotland's third sector

### Scottish child payment hailed as a "game changer"

**Payment is now being distributed across Scotland**

Poverty campaigners have welcomed the formal launch of the Scottish child payment.

The £10-per-week payment is part of the Scottish Government's wider plans to tackle child poverty across the country and became payable from 15 February.

[tfn.scot/news/scottish-child-payment-hailed-as-a-game-changer](https://tfn.scot/news/scottish-child-payment-hailed-as-a-game-changer)

### Shedding light on the DWP Part 1 - We read the UK welfare agency's 995-page guide on conducting surveillance and here are the scariest bits

In 2019, the UK Department for Work and Pensions published their two-part staff guide on conducting fraud investigations. Privacy International went through the 995 pages to understand how those investigations happen and how the DWP is surveilling benefits claimants suspected of fraud.



#### KEY FINDINGS

- The DWP is conducting physical surveillance of benefits claimants
- Private companies (including airlines, PayPal, supermarkets, bingo clubs and others) hand over data on benefits claimants to them
- The DWP works with tabloids to build a narrative that they clamp down on so-called "benefits cheats"

View article [HERE](#)

### Gig economy: What does the Supreme Court's Uber decision mean for workers?

The Supreme Court's decision that Uber drivers are not self-employed has made headline news. But what does it mean for workers? Here's what you need to know.

The Supreme Court has ruled that Uber drivers are workers and not self-employed, ending a four-year dispute which could have wide-ranging implications for the rights of those in the gig economy.

The GMB union said the "landmark" ruling put "all debates to bed" and called it "the end of the road for Uber's mistreatment of drivers".

[www.bigissue.com/latest/employment/gig-economy-supreme-courts-uber-workers/](https://www.bigissue.com/latest/employment/gig-economy-supreme-courts-uber-workers/)

### Mental health and debt: how it affects us and how to recover



Don't let debt impact your mental health - [this practical guide](#) to financial support can help you get control over your money issues

Debt has a massive impact on our mental health. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the link between money and mental health was clear. **Covid has put all our finances under stress**, and there's a spiralling cost to our mental health too.

Laura Whateley speaks to leading mental health charities for our guide on how to cope, with tips, support and insight to get your bank balance – and your stress levels – back on track.

## Scottish Fuel Poverty Conference 2021

17-19 March 2021 Online

### Fuel Poverty and the Road to Recovery

This past year has seen quite extraordinary measures to protect the **health and wellbeing** of our people. Our members and partners have **worked hard** to provide support to ensure that people could access support, advice and improvements to their homes. It hasn't been plain sailing and there is a **worrying increase** in the number of **fuel poor households** in Scotland. Scottish Parliamentary **elections** are just around the corner, a new fuel poverty **strategy** is being developed and, as Glasgow waits to host **COP26** during 2021, there is a huge focus on the future of our planet. This is a time to focus on what we have learned during **COVID-19** and how we can work together to help make a real change to the lives of people in Scotland.

We will be gathering **online** this year to deliver a series of themed **sessions** with **experts** across a range of fields, leading the **debate** to challenge our perceptions and help us uncover how we are going to make a genuine difference.

The Scottish Fuel Poverty Conference is open to all and unlike our Annual Conference is free of charge. But we need your support to deliver the best possible experience. We anticipate that attendance will exceed 400 unique **delegates** who will interact virtually, across six, two-hour sessions.

Join Energy Action Scotland in helping to change the policy landscape.

**Fuel Poverty and the Road to Recovery** is a series of 6 online events. Please be aware that **you must book to attend each session** as they are individual events. To book a place at our sessions you can follow the links to:

- [Fuel Poverty: are we making progress?](#)
- [Vulnerability: how do we protect people in need?](#)
- [Funding: how can we accelerate change and identify what needs to be done?](#)
- [NetZero: how will we deliver a fair and inclusive transition?](#)
- [Wellbeing: is fuel poverty widening health inequalities and damaging the health of the nation?](#)
- [Political Hustings: what priority will fuel poverty have in the next Scottish Parliament?](#)



## Scottish Statutory Debt Solutions Statistics: January 2021



Accountant in Bankruptcy (AiB) has released experimental statistics reporting statutory debt solutions in Scotland for January 2021.

### Main points for February 2020 to January 2021 (compared with February 2019 to January 2020)

All main points within this section are presented on a 12-month rolling basis.

There were 8,412 personal insolvencies in the 12 months to January 2021 (inclusive), 5,289 (38.6%) fewer than in the previous 12 months.

Bankruptcies decreased by 44.3% in the 12 months to January 2021 when compared with the previous 12 months.

PTDs decreased by 35.5% over the same period.

There were 3,425 approved DPPs under the Debt Arrangement Scheme in the 12 months to January 2021 compared with 2,980 for the previous 12 months, an increase of 14.9%.

Details [HERE](#)

## PIP Case Law

Interpreting the relative definitions of descriptors and key terms in Activity 8 & 10 for a claimant with learning difficulties

[CPIP/1653/2019](#)

Published 27th January 2021

Considering eligibility for mobility component when claimant has walked alone and unaided

[CPIP/2851/2019](#)

Published 21st December 2020

**Advice Direct Scotland benefits calculator will help you to get the benefits you are entitled to.**



The benefits calculator will ask some questions about your circumstances, your household and your finances. Then, it will search across all the benefits and grants you can claim, will calculate how much you can get and what you have to do to receive the benefits you are entitled to.

<https://adsbenefits.inbest.ai/>

# Complaints

## How they can help get a UC decision changed quickly

### Challenging UC decisions

Challenging UC decisions can be a lengthy, drawn out, and often frustrating process. Many claimants report that their requests go unanswered, leading to delays in errors being rectified and leaving the claimant struggling with-out enough to live on when their award is incorrect.

There is a formal process for challenging appealable UC decisions (Appealable decisions include those which determine whether someone is entitled to UC or the amount they are entitled to) - by requesting a Mandatory Reconsideration (MR), and then if the claimant is not satisfied, by lodging an appeal - but many claimants struggle to get this process started.

### So how can a UC claimant ensure their request is actioned?

Using the complaints route in addition to the Mandatory Reconsideration/appeal route can result in a quicker resolution to the problem.

We are aware of cases where - as soon as the claimant has submitted a complaint, or said that they were being left with no option but to do so - DWP have then looked at their case and made a quick decision.

The following is taken from a social media UC advice group:

#### **Original Post:**

*How can I get my case manager to respond to me? I've tried for 2 weeks now to get my issue resolved, my pay date has been and gone, I am struggling and all I want is my missing element to be paid. I've sent numerous messages on my journal and a nice woman messaged for me yesterday marked as urgent but still nothing. I've spoken to 5 different people today, I am so frustrated, it is making me stressed and upset. Everyday is the same, they tell me to wait for her to respond. Surely there is something I can do. I have no money because of this, they owe it to me, I am only asking for the missing element, why is it so hard?*

#### **Comment:**

*I left a note on my payment date saying if previous assessment periods hadn't been updated and a same day payment issued by 5pm I'd be putting in a complaint against my case manager as he was taking up to 2 weeks to reply each time. I also stated if no response by 12pm I would be contacting my local MP to step in. It was all sorted and payment received by 4.45pm that day.*

Reply from original poster:

*I just put that on my journal and within 10 minutes I had 2 phone calls and a promise they would be sending a payment this afternoon! Thank you so much!*

### Complain about what and how?

There are many things that UC claimants may want to complain about. The most common things are unreasonable delays leading to hardship, and poor service.

Where a claimant believes there is an error with their UC award and they have left several notes on their journal or requested a Mandatory Reconsideration, and these appear to be being ignored, then the next step would be to let their work coach know that they intend to submit a complaint.

Complaints can be made verbally over the telephone or in writing in the case of most benefits but the best way to lodge a complaint for UC is to do it online: **[Make a complaint about JSA or UC.](#)**

### Why is it important?

For a customer this is important as it can speed up the process of challenging, but another reason why complaints are essential is for the DWP to know where they are going wrong. It is important for DWP accountability, and for common errors to be recognised and fed into policy changes etc. So official complaints are absolutely vital for future service improvement.

### DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF COMPLAINING!

Some decisions cannot be appealed – instead the claimant can request a review. These are discretionary matters, such as what is in a Claimant Commitment.

**[www.housingsystems.co.uk/News/News/id/135](http://www.housingsystems.co.uk/News/News/id/135)**



## Helping us shape our future

At Scarf we're always keen to hear what you think of us so we can continue to improve our services and meet the changing demands of our customers here in the North East.

So far, our results from our current survey shows that 97% of responses say that Scarf offers advice on how to reduce fuel bills while 83% say we help customers access grants and schemes. Does this sound like the Scarf you know?

The most common words used to describe Scarf are Helpful – Supportive and Friendly. But what do you think?

We're keen to hear your views and by completing the simple survey you can help us meet our customers' needs in 2021 and beyond. Of course, there's also the chance to win £100 so why not take a couple of minutes to help us out!

## [Complete the survey](#)

## Climate Week North East (12-21 March) - book now!

Scarf is delighted to be taking part in this year's Climate Week North East. Our advisors will be offering a mix of interactive online events from Friday 12 March to Friday 19 March.

Climate Week North East is a week packed full of fun, inspiring, and interesting events, designed to raise awareness of climate change but - more importantly - show what we can all do to make a difference and reduce our carbon footprint in a fun way.

Choose from sessions on:

- Renewables at Home and in the Community;
- Reducing Fuel Poverty in Aberdeen City;
- Energy Efficiency in the Home;
- Saving Water, and more.

All sessions are bookable via [Ticketsource link](#) or for more information check out the [Climate Week North East events page](#).

[Book a place on an information session](#)



## Fuel debt on the rise

With recent news about rising fuel prices after Ofgem, the government regulator lifted the price cap on standard tariffs back to pre-pandemic levels, our advocacy and supplier switching services are in even more demand than usual.

If you, or someone you know is worried about rising fuel bill costs and need advice on when and how to switch supplier give our local energy advisors a call on **0808 129 0888** or visit our [website](#) for some top tips and advice.

## Fuel poverty e-learning module

Our friends at Perth & Kinross Council have created an excellent [fuel poverty e-learning course](#). It's on their staff learning platform, but is public for anyone to view.

We're always interested in sharing these types of resources to improve learning and the understanding of fuel poverty and other issues in the North East, for the benefit of our partners and their customers.

