



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Aberdeen & Shire Advice Forum meeting  
29th April @ 10:00 via Teams**

Speaker:

- Paweł Kopeć Outreach and Information Officer, Citizens Rights Project, Providing information, advice and support for EU citizens in Scotland

Updates from:

- SCARF
- Social Security Scotland
- Jobcentre+
- NRPf (No Recourse to Public Funds)
- EUSS & Help to Claim Service

Join on your computer or mobile app - [Click here to join the meeting](#)

**Shared Futures: [Equality & Human Rights themed Election Hustings](#) - Tuesday, 20th April at 4pm**

**Mon 19th April 2021  
Issue.40 (Fortnightly)**

## Locations of Aberdeenshire polling places for Scottish Parliament election now available



The list of polling places managed by Aberdeenshire Council for the upcoming Scottish Parliament election on **Thursday, May 6**, is now available.

The updated list includes a number of changes to polling places since elections in 2019, and can be found in full at <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/elections/where-to-vote-during-scottish-parliamentary-elections/>

Website visitors will also be able to find where Aberdeenshire-resident electors can vote within the constituencies of Aberdeenshire South and North Kincardine (*administered by Aberdeen City Council*), and Angus North and Mearns (*administered by Angus Council*).

<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/apps/news/release.aspx?newsid=8134>

## UC50 Work Capability Questionnaires

Staff at Central England Law Centre have noticed that UC claimants in Coventry have not been receiving their UC50 Work Capability Questionnaires when we would have expected them to have done so.

They are also concerned that there seem to be instances of incorrect backdating of awards to the correct date following work capability assessment.

They are trying to find out whether this has been a national problem and whether there is some kind of underlying systemic cause which they can try and address.

They would be really grateful if you could find the time to complete the questionnaire at this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/eDEypPZ4u9>.

The link will work on any device, but we recommend using a laptop or desktop rather than a mobile device.

Central England Law Centre is working with students from Warwick University on this issue and they return on **26 April** after the Easter vacation. It would be really helpful to have responses by then.

If you have any questions, please contact [karen.ashton@centralenglandlc.org.uk](mailto:karen.ashton@centralenglandlc.org.uk). Thank you for any help you can provide.

**nawra**  
national association of  
welfare rights advisers

## Universal Credit Claimants TAP into Employment



DWP TRAINING HELP - Millions of jobseekers will be able to access longer work-related training while in receipt of benefits to boost their chances of finding employment.

Later this month, DWP Train and Progress (TaP), a new DWP initiative aimed at increasing access to training opportunities for claimants, will see an extension to the length of time people can receive Universal Credit while undertaking work-focused study.

Initially available for 6 months, the amount of time Universal Credit claimants can take part in full-time training will extend to up to 12 weeks throughout Great Britain - up from the current 8 weeks.

The change will ensure those receiving UC and in the **intensive work search group** can take advantage of sector-specific training from digital skills to social care and engineering while receiving the financial support they need.

[www.abc.org.net/item/3648-universal-credit-claimants-tap-into-employment](http://www.abc.org.net/item/3648-universal-credit-claimants-tap-into-employment)

## Universal credit - Failure to attend and participate in Jobcentre telephone interview

The issue of lawful notification arises once more. Read the full decision in [CUC/563/2020](#).

### Judicial Summary

Universal credit - Failure to attend and participate in Jobcentre telephone interview - Whether nature of requirement and consequences for non-compliance properly notified to claimant - Whether good cause for failing to attend - JB v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (UC) [2018] UKUT 360 (AAC) applied.

Published 18 December 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/administrative-appeals-tribunal-decisions/kg-v-secretary-of-state-for-work-and-pensions-uc-2020-ukut-307-aac>

## MS v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (DLA and PIP): [2021] UKUT 41 (AAC)

Published 7 April 2021

Read the full decision in [CPIP/932/2020](#), [CPIP/934/2020](#), [CDLA/1079/2020](#) & [CDLA/1080/2019](#).

### Judicial Summary

Claimant awarded Disability Living Allowance continuously with effect from start of DLA scheme in early 1990s - Secretary of State in 2008 superseded entitlement decision and imposed recoverable overpayment from January 2003 - Tribunal issued appellant with warning at start of hearing that it had power to go back to an earlier date - Appellant elected to proceed following short break to consider his position - Tribunal superseded DLA entitlement decision going back to October 1998



## Total number of households subject to the benefit cap has more than dou- bled during Covid-19 outbreak

rightsnet

New DWP statistics show that 180,000 households were capped as at November 2020 compared to 89,000 prior to the pandemic taking hold in March 2020

In Benefit cap: number of households capped to November 2020, published today, the DWP reports that 180,000 households had their housing benefit or universal credit capped at November 2020, an increase of 6 per cent (10,000 households) on the previous quarter to August 2020 and more than double the number capped in March 2020 (89,000).

The statistics highlight that while the number of capped households on housing benefit continues a downwards trend, dropping to 25,000 at November 2020 from 29,000 in March 2020, numbers of capped households on universal credit have increased sharply during the Covid-19 pandemic

[Benefit cap: number of households capped to November 2020](#) is available from gov.uk

## DWP Guidance

### Universal Credit and prison leavers

- Information for prison leavers, work coaches and probation officers about Universal Credit.

### Find out about money taken off your Universal Credit payment

- Help to understand debts and deductions taken from Universal Credit payments and who to contact about your debts and deductions if you're struggling financially.

### Universal Credit and homeless people.

- Information about Universal Credit for homeless people, those at risk of homelessness and the organisations supporting them.

### Universal Credit advances

- If you don't have enough to live on while you wait for your first payment you may be able to get an advance of your first Universal Credit payment.

### Universal Credit work allowances

- Information about changes to the Universal Credit work allowances from April 2016.

## Government issues new Treasury Direction in relation to extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to the end of September 2021 rightsnet

Direction sets out the scheme applying for the period beginning on 1 May 2021 and ending on 30 September 2021

The government has issued a new Treasury Direction in relation to the extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS).

Further to the [announcement in Budget 2021](#) that the scheme – which was due to end on 30 April 2021 – will be extended to the end of September 2021, the new [Treasury Direction](#) is made under [section 71](#) and [section 76](#) of the *Coronavirus Act 2020*, and -

- sets out that the CJRS is extended for the period beginning on 1 May 2021 and ending on 30 September 2021;
- sets out the scheme rules that apply for the period beginning on 1 May 2021 and ending on 30 September 2021; and
- confirms that HMRC is responsible for the payment and management of amounts to be paid under the scheme as extended.

For more information, see [Treasury Direction made under Sections 71 and 76 of the Coronavirus Act 2020](#) from gov.uk

## Extending COVID Local Support Measures

Statement made on 14 April 2021



### Statement BY THE Secretary of State for Works and Pensions

The Covid Winter Grant Scheme has enabled Local Authorities in England to provide targeted support to families and individuals, keeping them warm and well fed over the winter period, with the principal focus being on disadvantaged children.

The initial scheme was issued at £170 million and was due to conclude at the end of March 2021. In the first two months of the scheme, covering December 2020 and January 2021, Local Authorities spent over £86 million, with 94% awarded to support families with children and 96% used on the provision of food and support with utility bills. In the same period, nearly 2.4 million awards had been made to vulnerable households through the scheme. The scheme was subsequently extended with an additional £59.1 million of support and was due to conclude this Friday 16th April.

Recognising that some restrictions on the economy continue, we are extending the scheme until the 20th June 2021 with funding of £40 million and re-naming it the Covid Local Support Grant. This brings the scheme in line with the Prime Minister's roadmap out of lockdown as on the 21 June, provided we continue to pass the four steps needed to progress through the roadmap, most of the remaining restrictions will be lifted.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-04-14/hcws914>



<http://citizensrightsproject.org>



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Regulated by the OISC Ref No. N201900077  
St Margaret's House | 151 London Rd | Edinburgh | EH7 6AE

## Shared Futures: Equality & Human Rights themed Election Hustings

Tuesday, 20th April at 4pm

In advance of the May 6th Scottish Parliament elections, the Shared Futures partnership have invited candidates from the major political parties to join a panel hustings event at **4pm on Tuesday, 20th April**. We are pleased to confirm that 4 candidates have already confirmed.

The panel will be taking questions from local community groups on equality issues impacting the North East that are key to Shared Futures' work, namely: **Brexit, Gypsy/Travellers, New Scots, refugees in the Aegean Islands, and No Recourse to Public Funds**.

Book your free ticket via **Eventbrite**: <https://sharedfutureshustings.eventbrite.co.uk>

This is a virtual event and will be hosted on Zoom. Meeting details will be distributed to ticket-holders

### SHARED FUTURES

DEVELOPING SANCTUARY AND ACTIVE  
WELCOME IN ABERDEEN

## Late applications to the EU Settlement Scheme

From 1 July 2021, EU, EEA and Swiss citizen living in the UK without having applied for pre-settled or settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme will be here unlawfully. The Home Secretary **confirmed** a few months ago that people can apply after that deadline, but they must have "reasonable grounds to apply late". Clarity on what grounds might be considered reasonable was lacking until 1 April 2021, when the Home Office released guidance on how it will deal with late applications: pages 26 to page 44 of the [main caseworker guidance](#).

Since the Home Office also requires those with pre-settled status to make a further application in order to upgrade to settled status, this guidance also applies to those who fail to upgrade before their pre-settled status expires. It also applies to family members joining an EU citizen sponsor via the family permit route, and to a few other scenarios.

Read FreeMovements article [HERE](#)

## EU Settlement Scheme: EU, other EEA and Swiss citizens and their family members

Published for Home Office staff on 6 April 2021

This guidance tells you how, from 6 April 2021, to consider applications made under the EU Settlement Scheme

The EU Settlement Scheme provides a basis, consistent with the Withdrawal Agreement with the European Union reached on 17 October 2019 and with the citizens' rights agreements reached with the other European Economic Area (EEA) countries and Switzerland, for resident EEA and Swiss citizens and their family members to apply for the UK immigration status which they will require in order to remain here. Those agreements now have effect in UK law through the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020.

The immigration status granted under the EU Settlement Scheme is either indefinite leave to enter (ILE) (where the application is made outside the UK) or indefinite leave to remain (ILR) (where the application is made within the UK) – also referred to for the purposes of the scheme as 'settled status' – or 5 years' limited leave to enter (LTE) (where the application is made outside the UK) or 5 years' limited leave to remain (LTR) (where the application is made within the UK) – also referred to as 'presettled status'.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/975993/main-euss-guidance-v11.0ext.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975993/main-euss-guidance-v11.0ext.pdf)



Home Office



<http://citizensrightsproject.org>



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# ONLINE ESOL FOR WORK COURSE

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[language-cafe@grec.co.uk](mailto:language-cafe@grec.co.uk)

\*£15 refundable booking deposit

Grampian Regional Equality Council T:01224595505, [info@grec.co.uk](mailto:info@grec.co.uk)





## Retrospective on Remote Social Security Hearings



Prior to the national lockdown, Z2K's Tribunal representation project largely revolved around client contact. From our initial meeting with clients at outreach sessions and appointments at our offices to scan their paperwork, to clients meeting their representative and ultimately attending the Tribunal with them on the day of their hearing.

**07 April 2021**

**Lucy Isaac, Tribunals Co-ordinator**

In March 2020 as the UK entered into a national lockdown, Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) adjourned all existing appeals with hearing dates by phoning each individual appellant. Gradually, they were re-listed for telephone hearings that could take place remotely in line with the 'stay at home' guidance. As we reach the one year anniversary of remote social security hearings, I reflect on where they've worked, where they've not, and some key learnings that should be taken forward beyond the pandemic.

[Structure of remote hearings](#)

[The good and the bad](#)

[Moving forward](#)

[www.z2k.org/latest/retrospective-on-remote-social-security-hearings/](http://www.z2k.org/latest/retrospective-on-remote-social-security-hearings/)

## Z2K benefits assessments survey

NAWRA member Z2K has launched a survey that looks at where the benefits assessment process isn't working, and what needs to change. The responses from this survey will be vital in their upcoming campaign, which will include calling for the publication of the long-awaited Health & Disability Green Paper which we are told will include proposals to improve support for those on disability benefits, including the reform of the existing assessment process.

Z2K would really appreciate it if you could [share this survey](#) with the people in your network who have experience of the benefits assessment process. **The survey deadline is 28th April.**

## TFN's April edition is out now

TFN's April edition is out now and you can [read it here](#).

This month's magazine previews next month's Scottish Parliament elections – with the main party leaders setting out how they will support the voluntary sector if elected.

We also have a special features to mark 10 years since SCIOs were launched, a look at how Covid-19 is affecting cancer care in Scotland, and suggestions for some great post-lockdown spring days out.

## British families took bigger hit to income during Covid pandemic than Europeans

British households were plunged into the Covid pandemic with lower savings, more debt and weaker welfare support than their French and German counterparts, according to analysis revealing how inequality increased the impact of the UK crisis.

[www.theguardian.com/inequality/2021/apr/18/british-families-took-bigger-hit-to-income-than-european-households](http://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2021/apr/18/british-families-took-bigger-hit-to-income-than-european-households)

## Benefit Rates 2021-2022

- Rightsnet Benefit Rates Poster [www.rightsnet.org.uk/pdfs/rightsnet\\_benefit\\_rates\\_poster\\_april\\_2021.pdf](http://www.rightsnet.org.uk/pdfs/rightsnet_benefit_rates_poster_april_2021.pdf)
- Big Book of Benefits. Benefit Rates [bigbookofbenefits.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/benefit-rates-2020-21.pdf](http://bigbookofbenefits.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/benefit-rates-2020-21.pdf)
- City of Wolverhampton. A Quick Guide to Benefit Rates - April 2021 [www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-03/WRS%20Benefit%20Rates%20Quick%20Guide%20-%20April%202021.pdf](http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-03/WRS%20Benefit%20Rates%20Quick%20Guide%20-%20April%202021.pdf)
- City of Wolverhampton. Summary of Benefit Rates - April 2021 [www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-03/WRS%20Benefit%20Rates%20Booklet%20-%20April%202021.pdf](http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-03/WRS%20Benefit%20Rates%20Booklet%20-%20April%202021.pdf)



## Building new foundations for the wobbly pillar of the welfare state



### **Housing and welfare reform**

Within the broader debate on the UK housing sector as a whole, the experience of low-income households is one of perpetual crisis – a **perfect storm** of under-supply, unaffordability, and welfare reform.

Over the past decade the welfare reform agenda has multiplied the challenges for low-income tenants in both **social housing** and the **private rented sector** (PRS), including:

- The 'bedroom tax' – cutting Housing Benefit for 'under-occupancy' in social housing
- Benefit and rent caps – restricting total benefits or the amount of rent eligible
- Sanctions and suspension of benefits – imposing strict conditionality on job seekers

These changes, combined with the shift away from direct payment of rent, also create difficulties for social and private landlords struggling to collect rent. And the impacts of the pandemic have only exacerbated the problems – whilst evictions have been paused during lockdown, there are growing fears of an **arrears crisis** impacting on rental incomes and potentially leading to large numbers of evictions. All of these issues undermine the already weak foundations for the wobbly pillar, reinforcing inequality.

[www.social-policy.org.uk/spa-blog/building-new-foundations-for-the-wobbly-pillar-of-the-welfare-state/](http://www.social-policy.org.uk/spa-blog/building-new-foundations-for-the-wobbly-pillar-of-the-welfare-state/)

# Shelter

### **Universal Credit Alert Briefing**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) released their new Universal Credit statistics. We have analysed these numbers to show how the Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted those renting privately. The new numbers show us that private renters have been hit hardest with a huge spike in those needing housing support – an increase of 46% since February 2020.

There has also been a rise in the proportion of private renters claiming housing support which will cause difficulties now and in the future. Local Housing Allowance (LHA), the housing benefit for those renting privately, only covers the cheapest 3 in 10 privately rented homes in each local rental market. However, as shown in this briefing, now 45% of privately renting households are claiming LHA. There are just not enough affordable homes to go round.

An urgent review of housing benefit levels are required.

[\*\*Universal Credit Alert Briefing\*\*](#)



The Jimmy Reid Foundation

### **New JRF paper**

[\*\*As featured as the main story on the front page of the Herald newspaper today \(Monday 19 April 2020\):\*\*](#)

The Jimmy Reid Foundation releases this new paper to coincide with the first day of the 2021 STUC annual congress. The full paper can be found here: [\*\*JRFeducation-paperfinal\*\*](#)

Summarising the paper, Boyd, Kelly and Maitles argue: 'Whilst there are some strong positive aspects to Scottish education and which can be improved with some relatively small alterations, the key negative factors operating within our education system — a neo-liberal agenda and inequality of attainment and achievement, stemming from too many of our population living in poverty — mean that a radical overhaul is needed'.

Read the article [\*\*HERE\*\*](#)

## PR v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (PIP): [2021] UKUT 35 (AAC)

Published 7 April 2021. Read the full decision in [CPIP/2401/2019](#)



### Judicial Summary

Tribunal practice and procedure – rules 5(3)(d) and 15(2) of the Tribunal Procedure (Upper Tribunal) Rules 2008 - proper approach to deciding whether to admit new evidence which is sought to be adduced to support a ground of appeal that the decision appealed against involved the making of a mistake of fact amounting to a material error of law.

**Basically, the tribunal judged the claimant could walk more than 50 metres but not more than 200 metres, largely based upon its assessment that her home to the local shops was an estimated 310 to 390 metres.**

The claimant's appeal to the Upper Tribunal focused on the tribunal's findings in relation to her walking ability, arguing that these were based on an erroneous assessment of the distance between the claimant's home and the local shops. The claimant's representative submitted that the distance was in fact 140 metres, demonstrated by performing a google maps search

### Decision

Appeal allowed and decision set aside and remitted for rehearing on the grounds that new evidence provided after the conclusion of the appeal hearing can be admitted, which in turn supported a finding that the tribunal made a factual error that amounts to a material error of law.

## Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted 'flawed rationale' behind two-child limit

New report from CPAG highlights how policy has removed safety net that social security should provide when crisis hits

In a new report with the Church of England and the Welfare Reform and Larger Families research project, CPAG estimates that in April 2021, four years after the two-child policy was introduced, at least 350,000 families and 1.25 million children have been affected by it, up from 243,000 families and around 900,000 children in April 2020.

Although Covid-19 has played a role in the increases, CPAG points out that crises such as job losses, ill health and relationship breakdown inevitably hit individual households all the time and could affect anyone, and the pandemic has merely highlighted that the rationale behind the two-child limit - that parents who receive benefits should make the same financial choices about having children as those supporting themselves solely through work - is flawed -

'A primary function of social security is to provide support to us when a crisis hits. It helps us recover and shields children from the worst impacts while we get back on our feet. But, the two-child limit removes this safety net, penalising families and their children for changes in circumstances that are beyond their control.'

The report, ["It feels as though my third child doesn't matter" - The impact of the two-child limit after four years](#), which draws on an ongoing survey of families affected by the two-child limit, goes on to set out some of the impacts of the policy over the last four years, including -

- its disproportionate effect on women - while 70 per cent are families affected are couples, 29 per cent are single-parent families headed by women and one per cent are single-parent families headed by men;
- its disproportionate effect on black and minority ethnic communities - although the 2019 Annual Population Survey shows that 16.2 per cent of families have three or more children, this rises to 42 per cent among families with a Pakistani head of household, 38 per cent among Bangladeshi households and 28 per cent among Black households;
- on child poverty - while the number of children in poverty (after housing costs) in families with one or two children fell by 190,000 between 2016/2017 and 2019/2020, for families with three or more children it rose by nearly 370,000;
- on families lives - affected families report that they are having to cut back on essentials, such as clothes, dentistry, baby equipment, and the quality and quantity of food; and
- on abortion rates - the number of women with two or more children who had an abortion in 2019 was 16.4 per cent higher than in 2016, more than twice the rate of increase seen among women with one previous child.

Highlighting that, if the two-child limit were removed today, 200,000 children would immediately be lifted out of poverty and 600,000 children would be living in less deep poverty, at a cost of only £1 billion, the report concludes -

'Our social security system should be there to support families through tough times. Two-thirds of the UK population now agree that the two-child limit should be suspended or lifted altogether. It is time for the government to lift the two-child limit and help all children thrive.'

For more information, see [It feels as though my child doesn't matter](#) from [cpag.org.uk](#)

## Number of DWP disability employment advisers falls by a third during the pandemic

6 April 2021

The DWP is facing questions over its commitment to disability equality after new figures revealed the number of Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) fell sharply during the pandemic, while the number of mainstream Work Coaches soared.

The figures were finally released – weeks late – by the DWP, in response to a freedom of information request by the [Disability News Service](#) (DNS).

They show that at the start of 2021 there were just 447 full time equivalent DEAs in post across the DWP, compared with 661 on 1 February 2020.

But over the same period, the number of Work Coaches across the DWP rose from 12,555 full time equivalent on 1 February 2020 to more than 19,000 at the start of this year, as part of ministers' pledge to recruit 13,500 new Work Coaches to deal with the pandemic unemployment crisis.

This means that the number of DEAs fell by 32% during the pandemic while the number of Work Coaches was rising by 51%.

Read DisabilityRightsUK article [HERE](#)

## Government unveils new support for disabled jobseekers

More disabled people will be helped into work thanks to new government support.

The government will boost the number of specialist advisers dedicated to helping disabled jobseekers to secure and stay in work, with an additional 315 Disability Employment Advisor (DEA) roles to be in jobcentres across the UK by May 2021.

[www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-new-support-for-disabled-jobseekers](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-new-support-for-disabled-jobseekers)

## New FREE guide on what to teach kids about spending money safely online launched

Not-for-profit internet safety body Internet Matters has today launched a free ten-point guide with tips to help kids and young people build good online money management habits.

You can download the FREE ['Online money management tips to support young people'](#) guide from the Internet Matters website.

For more help on teaching kids about money, you can also download [Martin's free financial education textbook](#). And for free online adult financial education, see [MSE's Academoney course](#).

[www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2021/04/free-guide-parents-kids-spending-money-online/](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2021/04/free-guide-parents-kids-spending-money-online/)

## Scotland's electricity distribution and water networks have joined forces to launch PSR Scotland, an innovative partnership to inform customers of the free support available when they need it most.



With the launch of the new PSR Scotland website, customers across the country now have a one-stop-shop where they can learn more about the free help available in their individual area, with links straight to the specific pages on each company's website to make the registration process as simple as possible.

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) Distribution, SP Energy Networks (SPEN) and Scottish Water, have each been running their own Priority Services Registers (PSR) for several years, offering free support to customers during a power cut or an interruption to local water supplies.

Customers are eligible to register if they: are deaf or hard of hearing, have a disability, live with children under five, are blind or partially sighted, have a chronic illness, are over 60, depend on electricity or water for home or medical care, or feel they may need additional support, even for a temporary period of time.

The new service will make it easier than ever to raise awareness of the additional support available nationwide, encouraging sign-ups from customers who may be eligible but are not yet registered for priority services.

SSEN Distribution owns and operates the electricity infrastructure north of the central belt and SPEN is responsible for the electricity network in central and southern Scotland, while Scottish Water manages the nation's water and waste water services.

To learn more about the free help and support that is available in your area and check if you are eligible, visit the new PSR Scotland website at [PSRScotland.com](http://PSRScotland.com)



The universal credit journal is a crucial part of maintaining your claim. Here The Big Issue explains what it's for and why it's important

### What is the universal credit journal?

The journal is just one part of the online account used to manage your universal credit claim. It's where you will communicate with your work coach, exchanging messages about your search for work.

You can log details about jobs you have applied or interviewed for, exchange documents you are working on together such as **CVs**, or update your work coach on training you are doing.

### Where do I login to my universal credit journal?

You can login to the universal credit journal on the Government website **here**. This is also where you can apply for universal credit payments for the first time.

### What else can I do online for my universal credit claim?

You can use the online service to inform the Department for Work and Pensions about a disability or health condition which affects your ability to work or look for work, and it's where you can check to see how much you are to be paid through universal credit.

Crucially, the universal credit online to-do list is where you can check what you agreed to do in the search for work as part of your claimant commitment. Once you have completed a task, it will be moved to the journal.

This is also where you let your work coach know you will not make a meeting if you are unwell – to avoid being sanctioned – or record childcare costs which could also impact your universal credit payments.

### Do I have to use the universal credit journal?

You must use the online service to maintain your universal credit. You could be **sanctioned** and lose out on income if it is not kept up to date.

### Am I eligible for universal credit?

People living in the UK aged 18 or over who are on a low income or are out of work can use the journal to apply for universal credit. A person or their partner must be under state pension age and have £16,000 or less in savings.

In some cases, exceptions are made to pay universal credit to 16-17 year-olds and students. There is no limit on the number of hours people can work if they are employed and claiming universal credit, but payments will reduce depending on how much is earned.

[www.bigissue.com/latest/universal-credit-journal-what-it-is-where-to-login-and-more/](http://www.bigissue.com/latest/universal-credit-journal-what-it-is-where-to-login-and-more/)

## 'System in crisis' as ministers fail to fight food waste and poverty

The Government should stop using food waste to stop people going hungry and give them more money instead, nearly 40 groups said

The Government must "step up to the plate" and crackdown on the UK's "shameful" food waste and poverty problems, nearly 40 organisations have said, in a call to address the low wages and patchy benefits forcing people to go hungry.

"The prevalence of both food waste and food poverty in this country is shameful. It's high time the Government steps up to the plate and shows proper leadership," said Tessa Clarke, chief executive of food sharing app OLIO.

"We cannot continue to puzzle over how we'll keep the world to within 1.5 degrees warming, and feed the ever expanding population, whilst simultaneously allowing such widespread waste and unconscionable inequality to persist."

British businesses waste millions of tonnes of food each year, according to the report, some of which goes towards emergency food parcels for people who would otherwise go hungry. Such food waste should be "designed out of the system" instead of being seen as a solution to poverty, according to OLIO and nearly 40 other groups including Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and Feeding Britain.

[www.bigissue.com/latest/system-in-crisis-as-ministers-fail-to-fight-food-waste-and-poverty/](http://www.bigissue.com/latest/system-in-crisis-as-ministers-fail-to-fight-food-waste-and-poverty/)

## Council to provide city taxi drivers with £860,000 top up funding

Aberdeen City Council is to provide the city's taxi drivers who are current recipients of Taxi Fund support with an additional top up grant of £1000 each.

A total of £860,000 extra support for taxi and private hire drivers is being made available in Aberdeen City. The discretionary top up payment which will be paid automatically in the next fortnight and is in addition to the £1500 which has already been paid out to eligible licence holders.

With the restrictions on travel and reduction in footfall, taxi and private hire drivers in the city have faced significant challenges as direct result of the pandemic. The extra support recognises those challenges and aims to address some of the hardship encountered to date.

There is no need for drivers to reapply, as the council is contacting eligible drivers to arrange the top-up payments to be made into their nominated bank accounts.

The Scottish Government's Taxi Driver and Private Hire Fund closed on March 25<sup>th</sup>, with Aberdeen City Council administering and disbursing £1,278,000 to date to drivers in the city. .

Aberdeen City Council has received a total of £6 million through the £120m Local Authorities Discretionary Fund. The Council allocated over £1.3m in the first phase, while the second phase remains open for other businesses that have not received other support since October and can evidence a loss of income linked to COVID-19 restrictions.

Discretionary Fund applications can still be made at: <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-discretionary-business-fund>



## The Government has issued a new Treasury Direction in relation to the fourth payment under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).



Direction confirms that claims for SEISS 4 must be made on or before 30 June 2021

Following the [government's confirmation of a fourth SEISS grant in Budget 2021](#), the new Treasury Direction has been made under [section 76](#) of the *Coronavirus Act 2020* and clarifies that SEISS 4 is a modification and extension of the SEISS and accordingly all the provisions of [SEISS](#), the [SEISS Extension](#) and [SEISS 3](#) will apply.

In addition, the Schedule to the Direction advises that -

- a claim for SEISS 4 must be made on or before 30 June 2021;
- a claim is now possible by a person who has filed a tax return for the 2019/2020 year;
- the grant will be paid in respect of the period from 1 February to 30 April 2021; and
- the amount of the SEISS 4 payment will be the lower of £7,500 or 80 per cent of average trading profits over a three month period.

The [Further Treasury Direction made under Sections 76 of the Coronavirus Act 2020](#) is available from gov.uk



## Scottish Statutory Debt Solutions Statistics: March 2021

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

Main points for April 2020 to March 2021 (compared with April 2019 to March 2020)

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

- There were 7,600 personal insolvencies in the 12 months to March 2021 (inclusive), 5,891 (43.7%) fewer than in the previous 12 months.
- Bankruptcies decreased by 50.8% in the 12 months to March 2021 when compared with the previous 12 months.
- PTDs decreased by 39.8% over the same period.
- There were 3,676 approved DPPs under the Debt Arrangement Scheme in the 12 months to March 2021 compared with 3,130 for the previous 12 months, an increase of 17.4%.

A full statement of Scottish Statutory Debt Solutions Statistics for March 2021 is available: [www.aib.gov.uk/scottish-statutory-debt-solutions-statistics](http://www.aib.gov.uk/scottish-statutory-debt-solutions-statistics)

[www.aib.gov.uk/news/releases/21212121/0404/scottish-statutory-debt-solutions-statistics-march-2021](http://www.aib.gov.uk/news/releases/21212121/0404/scottish-statutory-debt-solutions-statistics-march-2021)

## Call for people who have suffered universal credit problems due to digitisation



I am Joanna Bates, part of a team from the Just Algorithms Action Group (JAAG <https://www.jaag.org.uk>) searching for credible claimants who have suffered inaction or injustice due to the shortcomings of the UC system.

We are involved in highlighting the inadequacies and injustices of UC and the unregulated and indiscriminate algorithms responsible - in order to take them to judicial review and change the system for the better.

The people we are looking for will have experience of at least one of these problems claiming Universal Credit:

1. Lack of secure, affordable access to the internet and/or lack of digital skills to access and use the UC system, or restricted smart phone access only.
2. A swing in calendar monthly payments from UC because the claimant's employer pays wages weekly, 2-weekly or 4-weekly.
3. Six or more weeks delays to appeal conversation appointment.
4. Penalties as a result of failures across DWP, HMRC and employers.

If you think you might be able to help please email [jbates@icloud.com](mailto:jbates@icloud.com) with 'Universal credit - judicial review' in the subject bar.

## THE BIG ISSUE

### Household debt 'kicked down the road' by Covid support, warns charity

Emergency pandemic support inspired a "wait and hope" approach to debt, but thousands could be left without support when measures are rolled back this year

Covid-19 was one of the top five causes of debt across the UK last year, new analysis revealed, as experts warn there is no clear route out of financial trouble for thousands.

People who faced unemployment or redundancy, health problems or cuts to their income were just as at risk of debt as in previous years, the figures showed – despite Government support measures – and remained the most prevalent drivers of debt and **UK poverty**.

But the types of people most likely to fall into debt changed during the pandemic, according to the **StepChange report**. The proportion of single adults without children facing money troubles and turning to the charity for help increased more than any other group, from 36 per cent in 2019 to nearly 45 per cent in 2020.

[www.bigissue.com/latest/household-debt-kicked-down-the-road-by-covid-support-warns-charity/](http://www.bigissue.com/latest/household-debt-kicked-down-the-road-by-covid-support-warns-charity/)

## Case studies of poor decision-making

The Advice Sector Panel of the Administrative Justice Council is working on a project to highlight, amongst other things, the consequences to the claimant of poor decision-making by the DWP in relation to PIP and ESA claims and reassessments. The resultant report will seek to offer ways in which decision-making could be improved.



We are looking for case studies to include in the report that illustrate the wide-ranging knock-on effects to individuals who then went on to have DWP decisions overturned at the tribunal stage.

We want to shine a light on problems that claimants face while waiting for reconsiderations and tribunal hearing dates, such as –

- Debt
- Rent arrears, leading to the threat of homelessness and/or the use of local authority housing departments
- Loss of a mobility vehicle
- Reliance on food banks
- Deterioration in health, including mental health, leading to an increased use of local services such as GP visits, consultant appointments
- Reliance on family or friends for caring duties

Anonymised case studies (half to a full A4 page in length) should be sent to: [shunt@justice.org.uk](mailto:shunt@justice.org.uk) by **Friday 30 April 2021**.

## Ferret Reckoners

These reckoners, which are amongst those normally only supplied with Ferret's calculation advice systems, are intended to help advisers with particular assessments which may fall outside our core systems. They are designed to help advisers.

For the duration of the Coronavirus 19 emergency, Ferret are making them freely available for use by advisers.

They are not definitive advice and advisers should make sure that they check and understand the results carefully. We cannot accept any liability for the use of the reckoners... You are using them at your own risk, and by using them accept those terms.

Please notify any errors or suggestions to [reckoner\\_support@ferret.co.uk](mailto:reckoner_support@ferret.co.uk)

### **Ferret's Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) Reckoner**

This reckoner provides estimates of support for self-employed people during the covid-19 crisis

### **Ferret's Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) Reckoner (2nd Round)**

This reckoner provides estimates of support for self-employed people during the covid-19 crisis

### **Ferret's Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) Reckoner (3rd Round)**

This reckoner provides estimates of support for self-employed people during the covid-19 crisis

### **Ferret's Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) Reckoner (4th Round)**

This reckoner provides estimates of support for self-employed people during the covid-19 crisis

### **Minimum Income Floor reckoner**

If self-employed, there will be a minimum income floor (MIF) which the DWP use for Universal Credit, even if real earnings are lower. Estimate what this should be.

### **Home Equity under loans for mortgage interest (from April 2018)**

See how equity could vary in future as interest rates and home prices change

### **Self-employed Expenses**

Quickly estimate the monthly expenses for Universal Credit

### **Surplus Earnings for Universal Credit**

Estimate how earnings, which have stopped Universal Credit from payment, will reduce further claims within 6 months. Particularly useful for weekly paid people who may see 5 paydays in one period stopping UC.

### **Self-employed Losses carry-forward**

Estimate how losses in previous Universal Credit periods are taken into account for later assessments

### **Emergency Tax for pensions**

How much initial tax is payable when taking lump sums from a pension

### **Pay Periods in Universal Credit**

The payments cycle in Universal Credit

### **State Pension Age**

Shows when State Pension Age is reached and when 'Mixed Age Couple' rules will apply

### **Combined Periods**

Pay & Rent Periods in UC

### **Better Off in Work - no UC**

A Better-Off Changing Work Reckoner for those not receiving UC

### **Better Off in Work with UC**

A Better-Off Changing Work Reckoner for those receiving UC