

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.



Mon 06th September 2021 - Issue.49

Vacancies

Development Worker: New Scots Active Citizens Project

10 hours per week, fixed term until 29 October 2022
Salary: £24,000 (full-time equivalent)



Digital Inclusion Project Co-ordinator

36.25 hours a week, fixed term until 29 October 2022
Salary £24,000-£27,000 depending on relevant experience

Money Advice Assistant

PERMANENT, FULL TIME
CLOSES: 8/9/2021



Central England Law Centre and Warwick Law School have updated their [summary briefing note](#) and [detailed report](#) on problems in the process of issuing UC50 forms.

nawra
national association of
welfare rights advisers

Dr Tara Mulqueen, Director of Warwick Law in the Community will be talking about this work at our conference next week and there will be an opportunity to ask questions so do join us. You can [read the agenda](#) and [book a place](#) online. NAWRA events are free and open to members only. Please [get in touch](#) if you have any accessibility requirements or if you've got any questions.

Scottish government urged to expand 4 day working week trial



Think tank IPPR Scotland calls for pilot to reach 'all kinds of workplaces' and home workers as poll shows majority of Scottish workers back experiment.

www.bigissue.com/latest/scottish-government-urged-to-expand-4-day-working-week-trial/

Social Security Scotland issues guidance on transfer of child disability living allowance cases to devolved child disability payment



Social Security Scotland is taking control of some benefits that used to be handled by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Clients who get Disability Living Allowance for children will be the first to have their award transferred.

Their award will be replaced by Child Disability Payment. Clients will have their award transferred to the new payment in stages, with the oldest clients having their award transferred first.

Guidance confirms that claimants will not need to be reassessed

www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/guidance-resources/guidance/case-transfer-guide



<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

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children: welcoming young people to Aberdeen

Wednesday September 29th - 4.30-6pm

We will be joined by a range of experienced professionals from across Scotland, as well as sharing the stories of young people themselves. The purpose of the event is to:

- Raise awareness of the situation of young asylum seekers and the National Transfer Scheme
- Share experiences of supporting resettlement of young people in Aberdeen and other parts of Scotland
- Identify some practical steps, support and interventions that local community groups could get involved in to promote welcome and sanctuary for young people arriving in Aberdeen as asylum seekers

Although we are an Aberdeen-focused group, we believe learning from this event will be relevant Scotland-wide, and all are welcome to join.

To register, for the free event, visit: <https://uascaberdeen.eventbrite.co.uk>

Thanks,

Dave

On behalf of the **Shared Futures Partnership**

Power-sharing agreement between SNP and Scottish Green Party includes commitment to extend financial support to people subject to no recourse to public funds



www.gov.scot/news/agreement-with-scottish-green-party/

1.3 million people living in the UK with no access to social security are sign of 'broken system'



See [1.3 million people living in the UK with no access to social security are sign of 'broken system'](#) from ippr.org



We are proud to announce the launch of our brand new [social enterprise JRS Knowhow](#). The start-up social enterprise was created in April 2021, marking almost exactly four years since JustRight Scotland was set up in May 2017.

JRS Knowhow creates accessible, inclusive, engaging and fun digital learning experiences. We created JRS Knowhow because we know there is more work to do in Scotland to achieve an inclusive and equal society. JRS Knowhow is working towards [a vision](#) of Scotland where everyone has access to accurate information to help them understand their legal rights and where organisations leave training sessions equipped with the knowledge and tools to fully enact their legal duties.

www.justrightscotland.org.uk/2021/09/introducing-our-new-social-enterprise-jrs-knowhow/



Warm Home Discount schemes now open

Energy companies have started opening up their Warm Home Discount scheme. Those eligible could benefit from £140 towards the cost of their fuel bills this winter.

You can keep an eye on our social media channels to find out if your supplier's scheme is open or simply give us a call to find out more about how Warm Home Discount works.

For more information on reducing your fuel bills or help applying for WHD, get in touch and we'll arrange an appointment one of our home energy advisors. **ARRANGE A CALL** OR CALL US ON **0808 129 0888**

Win £500 towards your energy bills!

Good news for households all across the North East our competition is back, giving you the chance to win £500 towards your energy bills!

You have until Monday 28 February 2022, to put your energy-saving knowledge to good use. By testing your knowledge in our competition and leaving your details, you'll not only be in with a chance to win big, but you will pick up some very useful money-saving tips along the way. Could it be you?

How good is your energy-saving knowledge?..

TAKE QUIZ TO FIND OUT!



Covid security

Our renewable specialists and home advisors are now back carrying out home visits when requested by customers. Householders can rest assured that we are carrying out COVID risk assessments before entering homes and that our advisors are issued with lateral flow tests for additional COVID security.

Help at hand as energy bills on the rise

We're urging householders to get in touch with our advisors as household fuel bills are set to increase this autumn.

With the announcement that the energy price cap is going up, the cost of heating your home looks likely to rise and you might need extra help to beat the increased costs.

If you're worried how this will affect you contact Scarf for free, expert advice. We'll check the best tariff across all providers, even your current one, to get the best price. Rest assured will take Warm Home Discount into consideration if applicable, so you have all the information. And of course, we offer top tips on reducing bills as standard.

CALL **0808 129 0888** FOR FREE ADVICE OR **CLICK HERE** TO ARRANGE A CALL BACK



Under 26s can now get free NHS dental treatment in Scotland

Anyone aged 25 and under who is registered with a Scottish dental practice can now get free NHS treatment. The change takes force immediately and patients aren't required to opt-in. Those who started a course of NHS treatment before their 26th birthday can also now get this for free.

The change in policy comes after the Scottish Government invested a further £7.5 million into the dental sector to help boost capacity and build-back to the sector's pre-pandemic capabilities.

Until now, only those aged 18 and under and in full-time education, those receiving certain benefits (income support, universal credit, income-related employment and support allowance, income-based jobseeker's allowance or pension credit guarantee credit) or those who held a held an NHS Tax Credit Exemption certificate were entitled to free NHS dental treatment in Scotland. These entitlements will continue.

www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2021/08/nhs-scotland-removes-dental-charges-for-all-young-people-under-2/

DWP confirmed that it has a discretion to waive hardship payment debt

Following a successful judicial review brought by PLP's client last year, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) confirmed that it has a discretion to waive hardship payment debt and [has changed the guidance](#) issued to work coaches and other DWP staff. The case has settled and the DWP's [consent order can be read here](#).

The DWP has now [written an open letter](#) to PLP explaining how Universal Credit (UC) claimants can apply for recoverable hardship payments after a sanction, and the process by which claimants can request that hardship payments are waived. A summary of the main points is below.

[Read the DWP's open letter](#)

[Read the sealed consent order](#)

<https://publiclawproject.org.uk/latest/dwp-agrees-to-waive-hardship-payment-debts-after-successful-judicial-review/>

New research also finds that people's attitudes to claimants, while softening during the first and second waves of the pandemic, rebounded to almost pre-pandemic levels following the lockdowns

WELFARE—AT A SOCIAL DISTANCE

In [Solidarity in a crisis? Trends in attitudes to benefits during COVID-19](#), Welfare at a (Social) Distance - a national research project investigating the benefits system during the Covid-19 pandemic - examines how the pandemic has affected public opinion on welfare benefits.

For more information, see [Attitudes to benefits during Covid-19](#) and [Covid-19 welfare claimants are seen as more deserving of support](#).



Public
Law
Project



Benefit Sanctions and Getting Hardship Payments Written Off

CHALLENGING SANCTIONS - Here is some useful information:

1. When a sanction is imposed the DWP should inform the individual of the details of the sanction(s) in a letter uploaded to the UC journal, along with the option to claim hardship payments. If the individual thinks the sanction is wrong, they can request a mandatory reconsideration from the DWP. If that is unsuccessful, the claimant can appeal the DWP's sanction decision to the tribunal. There is guidance on challenging a sanction from Citizens Advice and Mental Health & Money Advice.
2. A claimant that receives a sanction can apply for hardship payments by calling the UC helpline. On the call, the DWP official will ask about the individuals' living costs, so the individual should make a note of these in advance. The individual will need to explain why the sanction has made it hard for them to meet their basic needs (such as food or utilities costs) and what they have done to find other sources of financial support. Citizens Advice have published useful guidance on getting a hardship payment.
3. Hardship payments are recoverable (meaning the DWP can ask for them to be repaid), and when a claimant applies for a hardship payment the DWP official will ask them to agree a 'declaration' that they will repay it once their sanctions are lifted. If a claimant's application for hardship payments is refused, this decision can be challenged by making a mandatory reconsideration request to the DWP.
4. Once the claimant's sanction has ended the DWP will take steps to recover the hardship payment by making deductions from the individual's UC. However, importantly, DWP does have a choice not to recover hardship payments. This choice applies in all cases, including where the individual's sanction has been subsequently overturned, for example following mandatory reconsideration or a tribunal appeal.
5. If the claimant cannot afford to repay the hardship payment they can ask DWP for the deductions to be reduced and / or request that the hardship payment be waived in full. This is not affected by the fact that the claimant has agreed a declaration that they will repay the hardship payment.



Courtesy - www.abcorg.net/item/3745-benefit-sanctions-and-getting-hardship-payments-written-off

Change to the Universal Credit system helps claimants ahead of bank holiday

Universal Credit has been improved with a new automatic process to ensure claimants receive more consistent benefit payments, even if their employer pays them early because of a bank holiday.

DWP has changed its processes so that the Universal Credit system now automatically identifies claimants who receive a second monthly salary payment in one benefit assessment period.

Staff will be able to move the second payment forward to the next assessment period in the system, ensuring the claimant's benefits don't fluctuate from one month to the next due to the system thinking a claimant has received increased wages in one month.


To learn more about Universal Credit, please visit understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk.

Learn more about the [benefits you can claim alongside Universal Credit](#).





News
Low Incomes Tax Reform Group



Do you have tax credits or child benefit paid into a Post Office Card Account? You must act before 30 November 2021

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From 30 November 2021, HMRC will stop making any payments into Post Office Card Accounts (POCa). This is because their contract with the Post Office is ending.

Anyone who uses a Post Office Card Account for their payments from HMRC must provide different bank account details otherwise payments will stop.

What kind of payments are affected?

The change affects payments made by HMRC covering:

- Tax credits (HMRC)
- Child benefit (HMRC)
- Guardian's Allowance (HMRC)

If you get DWP benefits such as universal credit, you may get a similar letter from DWP as their contract with the Post Office is also ending. You should follow the instructions in any letter from DWP.

Will HMRC contact me?

HMRC are writing to people who are affected by this change asking them to provide alternative bank account details as soon as possible.

More details - www.litrq.org.uk/latest-news/news/210825-tax-credits-child-benefit-post-office-card-account-30-November-2021



Human Rights Watch warns MPs that removal of universal credit and tax credit 'uplift' would breach UK's international human rights obligations

Human Rights Watch, which investigates and reports on international human rights abuses, has warned MPs that the removal of the Covid-19-related universal credit and tax credit 'uplift' from October 2021 would breach the UK's international human rights obligations.

The [letter from Human Rights Watch to UK MPs](https://www.hrw.org) is available from [hrw.org](https://www.hrw.org)



WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY

Scotland's faith leaders unite to back call to double Scottish Child Payment now

Faith leaders from across Scotland have today united in urging the Scottish Government to "use its powers to do the just and compassionate thing" by committing to doubling the Scottish Child Payment this year.

In a joint statement released ahead of Tuesday's publication of the Scottish Government's Programme for Government for 2021/22, the leaders say ... [Read more](#)

The temporary coronavirus (COVID-19) increase to your Universal Credit payment will end soon



You have been getting an extra £86.67 each month since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This increase will end soon. . This is a temporary increase because

Your payment on will be the last time you receive this amount.

Get help with managing your money in the 'How to manage your Universal Credit claim' guide: [Help with debt and managing your money.](#)

The government has said the DWP will not be writing to claimants. So, it is not clear how people with offline (telephone) claims will be warned about the cut.

Impact

Although provided as a safety net and aimed to 'make work pay', recent research has shown that even Universal Credit claimants who have jobs are falling into poverty - with in-work poverty being at a record high. And one in six working households were living below the breadline just before the pandemic.

Clearly the cut will have an impact on household budgets for all UC claimants. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has some statistics [here](#).

Anti-poverty campaigners and MPs have said that the extension should stay, and that it comes at a time when many will face other pressures. Even former Conservative welfare ministers have written to the Chancellor urging him to make the £20 increase permanent to avoid sending families into financial crisis.

Many organisations are campaigning for the uplift to be left in place permanently - on the grounds that people were already struggling before the Coronavirus pandemic.

Check UC award is correct

Mistakes are frequently made, leaving a UC claimant with a lower amount than they are actually entitled to. So it is well worth trying to spot these now to keep the impact of the loss of the uplift to a minimum.

Here are some mistakes to watch out for:

- Carers Allowance being taken as income but no Carer Element included in award.
- Claimant on New Style ESA in support group but no LCWRA Element included in award.
- Untidy tenancies - where only 50% of the claimant's rent is being covered.
- Claimant (or non-dependant) in receipt of daily living PIP but a non-dependant deduction (or what the DWP call Housing Costs Contribution) is being deducted from the Housing Costs Element
- Where the older member of a mixed age couple is receiving enhanced daily living PIP (or high rate care DLA or Attendance Allowance) but no LCWRA Element is included in the award.
- No Housing Costs Element even though the claimant is liable for rent or for use and occupation charges.

Get involved

In last month's newsletter, we highlighted the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 'Keep the Lifeline' campaign - one of many putting pressure on the government to keep the uplift. They are encouraging as many people as possible to write to their MPs.

They have produced template letters for:

- UC claimants - [click here](#)
- ESA, JSA & IS claimants - [click here](#)
- People who are not directly affected by the cut but are concerned about the impact it would have on people they know or wider society - [click here](#)

Don't forget

The amount of a Third Party Deduction taken from a claimant's UC award for certain debts - including rent - is based on a % of their Standard Allowance. So when the £20 uplift is removed, this will mean the amount of any Third Party Deductions will also drop.

Courtesy of www.housingsystems.co.uk/News/News/id/142