

April 2022 Newsletter

2022/23 budget approved with focus on people and economic renewal

Monday 7 March 2022

Aberdeen City Council today approved a budget protecting vital public services whilst accelerating inclusive economic recovery.

The 2022/23 spending plan includes £1 million for a new **Aberdeen Fuel Poverty Assistance Fund** for people not covered by national schemes, which is expected to benefit over 6,000 households in the city.

www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/news/202223-budget-approved-focus-people-and-economic-renewal



Benefit calculator



Our benefits calculator will help you find out what benefits you can claim.

If you are affected by Coronavirus please go through the calculator and we will tell you about your entitlements. Also see our guide [To benefits for people affected by Coronavirus](#).

The calculator is free to use, and the details you provide are anonymous.

Before you start, make sure you have information about your savings, income, pensions and existing benefits (for you and your partner).

If you run out of time, you can save your calculation and come back to it later, and pick up right where you left off.

- ⇒ Should take 10 minutes to complete
- ⇒ Please complete all fields with an asterisk(*)

[START >>>](#)

Important Meter Reading Day 31st March 2022

EVERYONE needs to take gas and electricity meter readings on March 31st. Regardless of what type of meter you have, smart or otherwise. Ideally a photo of both meters showing the readings and meter serial number.

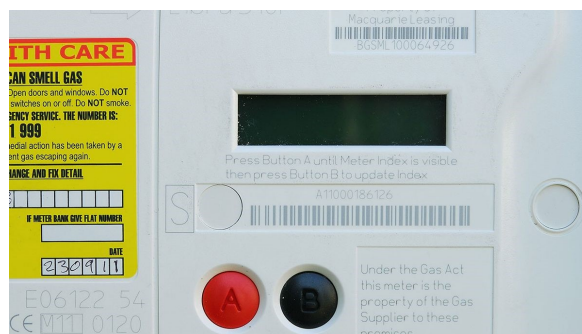
Submit the meter reading to your energy supplier right away. If for whatever reason you can't submit that day. You should have photos as evidence of meter readings and the date they were taken. It's going to be a very busy day for suppliers, and you might not be able to submit readings that day.

Why does everyone need to do this?

As most people now know, on Friday 1st April 2022, the new Ofgem energy price cap comes into force. This means much higher energy rates for millions of people. It's incredibly important; therefore, suppliers are not given the opportunity to charge energy units used at the old lower rates before 1st April 2022, at the newer higher price caps rates after 1st April 2022

Remember Thursday, March 31st, 2022, is National Meter reading day.

Martin Lewis (from MoneySavingExpert.com) warns us about the energy bill crisis and has: Three tips to help you with the looming price cap increase. [See tips from Money Saving Expert.com](#).



THE TAX CREDITS, CHILD BENEFIT AND GUARDIAN'S ALLOWANCE UPDATING REGULATIONS 2022

2022 No. 231

These regulations set the annual rates of Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit from 6 April 2022, and the weekly rate of Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance from 11 April 2022

- ◆ This means that the annual rates of Working Tax Credit elements will increase from 6 April 2022 as follows: the basic element will increase from £2,005 to £2,070; the couple and lone parent element will increase from £2,060 to £2,125; the 30-hour element will increase from £830 to £860; the disabled worker element will increase from £3,240 to £3,345; the severe disability element will increase from £1,400 to £1,445.
- ◆ The annual rates of Child Tax Credit elements will increase from 6 April 2022 as follows: the child element will increase from £2,845 to £2,935; the disabled child rate will increase from £3,435 to £3,545; the severely disabled child rate will increase from £4,825 to £4,975.
- ◆ The Working Tax Credit income threshold will increase from £6,565 to £6,770.
- ◆ The income threshold for those entitled to Child Tax Credit only will increase from £16,480 to £17,005. The calculation of this figure depends on other rounded elements.
- ◆ The regulations increase the weekly rate of Child Benefit by 3.1%, rounded to the nearest 5 pence. This means that, from 11 April 2022, the weekly rate for the eldest child will increase from £21.15 to £21.80, and the rate for any subsequent children will increase from £14.00 to £14.45.
- ◆ The regulations increase the weekly rate of Guardian's Allowance by 3.1% rounded to the nearest 5 pence. This means that, from 11 April 2022, the weekly rate of Guardian's Allowance will increase from £18.00 to £18.55.

[Explanatory memorandum](#)
[SI.No.231/2022](#)

LH v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (PIP): [2022] UKUT 32 (AAC)

Upper Tribunal Administrative Appeals Chamber decision by Judge Church on 4 February 2022.

Read the full decision in [CPIP/737/2021](#).

Judicial Summary

Tribunal practice and procedure – Statements of Reasons – concessions - whether Tribunal obliged to explain why it decided against greater points award for Appellant when that award was recommended in Respondent's submissions – Personal Independence Payment – Mobility Activity 2

Universal Credit and students

Guidance on claiming Universal Credit if you're a student.

Last updated 4 March 2022

Contents

- ◆ [Studying full-time](#)
- ◆ [What counts as a full-time course](#)
- ◆ [Studying part-time study](#)
- ◆ [Student income and your Universal Credit](#)
- ◆ [Help and advice](#)

www.gov.uk/guidance/universal-credit-and-students

Disregarding payments from energy rebate scheme (for 12 months) as capital for universal credit purposes

New statutory instrument

[The Universal Credit \(Energy Rebate Scheme Disregard\) Regulations 2022](#)

ESA: outcomes of Work Capability Assessments including mandatory reconsiderations and appeals: March 2022

Outcomes of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Work Capability Assessments, including mandatory reconsiderations and appeals information.

This release includes:

- ◆ outcomes of initial and repeat WCAs to end of September 2021
- ◆ outcomes of completed Incapacity Benefit (IB) reassessments up to September 2021
- ◆ completed initial WCA appeal outcomes for ESA claims with a start date to December 2020
- ◆ end to end initial ESA claim clearance times to end of September 2021
- ◆ Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) information to end of January 2022:
- ◆ number of MR registrations
- ◆ number of MR decisions
- ◆ MR outcomes by type of decision
- ◆ Median MR clearance time

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/esa-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessments-including-mandatory-reconsiderations-and-appeals-march-2022

Fast-tracked benefit access extended to more nearing end of life

New regulations have been issued in respect of the definition of terminal illness for the purposes of universal credit and employment and support allowance (ESA).

Fast-tracked access to benefits will be extended to a year from six months for people nearing the end of life, under changes due to take effect from 4 April.

- ◆ Changes will extend eligibility to end of life support from six to 12 months from 4 April 2022
- ◆ Those nearing end of life will be given fast-tracked access to Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance
- ◆ Delivering on 2021 commitment, the move ensures more people receive vital financial support quicker

Regulations are being laid today and come into force next month. They mean that from 4 April 2022, people who are thought to be in their final year of life will be able to receive vital support through the 'Special Rules', six months earlier than they are able to at present.

Those who are eligible will not be subject to a face-to-face assessment or waiting periods, and in the majority of cases they will receive the highest rate of benefits.

www.gov.uk/government/news/fast-tracked-benefit-access-extended-to-more-nearing-end-of-life

Irish widow's pension should be counted as claimant's unearned income to be deducted from calculation of universal credit

LR v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (UC): [2022] UKUT 65 (AAC)

Upper Tribunal Administrative Appeals Chamber decision by Judge West on 16 February 2022.

Read the full decision in [CUC/1019/2020](https://www.cuc.gov.uk/cuc/1019/2020).

Judicial Summary

Universal Credit Regulations 2013 - regulation 66(1)(c) – unearned income - claimant in receipt of Irish widow's contributory pension (IWCP) (which was not time-limited) – whether such a pension, paid under the law of a country outside the United Kingdom, was analogous to a widow's pension as mentioned in regulation 66(1)(b)(vii), such that IWCP should be counted as unearned income properly to be deducted from any calculation of universal credit.



Government launches 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme, with recipients of help to have full and unrestricted access to benefits and other support



Secretary of State confirms that those arriving under the scheme will be granted three years leave to remain, and that sponsors will be able to access a tax-free payment of £350 a month

The government has launched its '[Homes for Ukraine' scheme](#) to enable sponsors living in the UK to provide a home for Ukrainian individuals or families.

All those coming to the UK under the scheme will be granted three years leave to remain, and will have 'full and unrestricted' access to benefits, healthcare, employment and other support. Sponsors can be of any nationality with any immigration status provided they have at least six months leave to remain within the UK.

Full information - www.gov.uk/government/news/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-launches

Video hearings at the Social Security and Child Support Tribunal

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- Introduction
- How you can prepare for your hearing
- What will happen on the day
- How you should behave in the hearing

<https://youtu.be/Sd0ldV2GKcY>



Press release Immediate benefit support for those fleeing the invasion in Ukraine



People fleeing Ukraine and arriving in the UK can claim benefits immediately.

The Department for Work and Pensions is laying emergency regulations today (Monday 21 March 2022) so those arriving in the UK from Ukraine as a result of the Russian invasion can access Universal Credit and jobs support immediately.

Ukrainians will also be eligible for Housing Benefit, Pension Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Child Disability Living Allowance and Carers Allowance, and Attendance Allowance. Contributions-based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), and Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) are also available for those Ukrainians who meet the criteria.

Translation services are available to help new arrivals with phone applications, with Work Coaches in DWP Jobcentres on hand to support people making claims online.

DWP staff are also delivering additional face-to-face assistance to those who need it – including tailored support to find work and advice on benefit eligibility – and will continue to do so.

Without the emergency legislation people arriving from Ukraine would be subject to the Habitual Residence Test, meaning they would have to wait up to three months before being able to receive income-related benefits, including Universal Credit.

www.gov.uk/government/news/immediate-benefit-support-for-those-fleeing-the-invasion-in-ukraine



Child Disability Payment Decision making guide

The Decision Making Guidance provides an interpretation on how to:

- ◆ use the powers in the [Social Security \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)
- ◆ apply the rules set out in the [Disability Assistance for Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Regulations 2021](#)
- ◆ apply the rules set out in the [Disability Assistance for Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Amendment Regulations 2021](#).

The interpretation of the legislation supports Social Security Scotland case managers during the Decision Making process for disability benefits so that:

- ◆ determinations are made lawfully
- ◆ the Decision Making process is consistent with legislation
- ◆ individuals are treated fairly in accordance with the rules of the benefit.

The main audience for the Decision Making Guidance are case managers in Social Security Scotland. They use the guidance to make decisions on new and existing Child Disability Payment (CDP) cases.

The Decision-Making Guidance, along with training provided to case managers, provides an official interpretation of legislation for Social Security Scotland staff to make decisions about entitlement to CDP.

Case managers should note that approved guidance must be followed when applying the law to the facts of the case. However, a case manager may request advice from the Decision Support Team on the application or clarification of the Decision-Making Guidance where there is any doubt or in complex cases.

The Decision Making Guidance uses examples to support the interpretations and explanations of the legislation. These examples are not Decision Making criteria in themselves. They just illustrate how to apply the criteria set out in the guidance.

www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/guidance-resources/guidance/decision-making-guide

Increase in social security benefits

Additional support to help with cost of living

Eight Scottish social security benefits will be increased by 6% from 1 April.

Benefits and assistance including Job Start Payment, Young Carer's Grant, Funeral Support, three Best Start Grants and Carer's Allowance Supplement were due to be uprated by 3.1% for 2022/23. Subject to parliamentary approval, the increases will now be almost doubled to a 6% uprate.

Ministers have already announced that Scottish Child Payment will double from £10 per week to £20 from 1 April, a 100% increase, while Best Start Foods rose from £4.25 to £4.50 a week in August (5.88%). Child Winter Heating Assistance, which was previously set to rise by 5%, will now also rise by 6%.

Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment will still increase by 3.1% in line with the equivalent benefits (Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment) which are still administered by DWP under agency agreement. This is to avoid creating a two-tier system where individuals paid by Social Security Scotland are paid more than clients whose cases have not yet transferred to the Scottish system.

The Scottish Government is supporting families with the rising cost of living through its £41 million [Winter Support Fund](#) and [£290 million package of measures](#) including £150 for all households in receipt of Council Tax Reduction and those in Council Tax bands A-D and [devolved employment support programmes](#).

www.gov.scot/news/increase-in-social-security-benefits/



Have Your Say on Social Security Scotland

Researchers in Social Security Scotland are running a [short survey](#) for people who work with Social Security Scotland or support our clients. It gives you a chance to tell us about your experience of working with us over the past year.

The survey is open to everyone who works in partnership with Social Security Scotland or with our clients. It is not about the experiences of people who have input into the design of social security in Scotland, which sits with our colleagues in the Scottish Government.

Completing the survey will take no more than 10 minutes. The survey also asks if you would like to have a short conversation with a researcher. Taking part is voluntary and your responses will be confidential.

We would like to hear from as many people as possible. Please feel free to share [this survey](#) with others who work with Social Security Scotland or our clients: <https://response.questback.com/scottishgovernment/chartermeasurement>.

Your views are very important to us. They help us to understand if we are delivering the commitments of [Our Charter](#) and what improvements we can make. We also [survey our clients](#) and our colleagues and all of this inputs to the [Charter Measurement Framework](#) results that we publish annually.

If there's more we can do to help you to take part, or if you would like to speak to a researcher instead of completing the survey, please let us know. You can contact us by emailing researchrequests@socialsecurity.gov.scot or you can phone us on 0800 029 4974, Monday to Friday, 9am to 3pm.

The survey will be open until 29th April, with conversations taking place throughout March and April.



Getting ready to launch Adult Disability Payment

On Monday 21 March, we will launch a pilot for [Adult Disability Payment](#). This will be open to people living in Dundee City, Western Isles and Perth and Kinross who are applying for disability assistance for the first time. It will act as a final check to make sure that our new processes and systems are ready for a national roll out in August 2022.

www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/news-events/news/getting-ready-to-launch-adult-disability-payment

Adult Disability Payment pilot opens for new applications

The new Adult Disability Payment has opened for applications from people living in three pilot areas.

People can apply who live in Dundee City, Perth and Kinross and Western Isles council areas, are aged between 16 and state pension age, and are disabled, have a long-term health condition or have a terminal illness.

www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/news-events/news/adult-disability-payment-pilot-opens-for-new-applications

Adult Disability Payment
Helping with the extra costs of living with a disability or long-term health condition





Social Security Scotland Summary statistics for Personal Independence Payment at January 2022

Main Findings Cases with Entitlement

- ◆ In January 2022, there were 305,279 people entitled to Personal Independence Payment in Scotland. Special rules for the terminally ill applied to 1.1% of these clients [Table 1].
- ◆ The four most common disabling conditions account for 81% of claims. The most common condition was 'Psychiatric disorders' with 38% of claims, followed by 'Musculoskeletal disease (general)' with 20%, 'Neurological disease' with 13% and 'Musculoskeletal disease (regional)' with 9% [Table 2].
- ◆ Around 55% of people entitled to Personal Independence Payment in Scotland were female, and 45% were male [Table 3].
- ◆ The number of cases with entitlement increases with age up to the most common age band of 60-64 with that age band accounting for 15% of cases with entitlement. From age 65 and over the number of cases decreases, with only 6% in the 70 and over age band. This is because people are generally unable to start a new claim for Personal Independence Payment after they reach State Pension Age (see Eligibility section) [Table 3].
- ◆ In the 16-19 age group, 63% of clients are male while 37% are female. From age 30 and above, more than half of clients are female [Table 3].

Mobility Award

- ◆ Around 73% of people entitled to Personal Independence Payment were receiving a Mobility Award in January 2022 [Table 4].
- ◆ Of those entitled to Personal Independence Payment, 44% were receiving the Enhanced Mobility Award, 29% were receiving the Standard Mobility Award, and the remaining 27% were not receiving a Mobility Award [Table 4].
- ◆ The proportions vary with age, with 57% of 16-19 year olds in receipt of Personal Independence Payment getting the Enhanced Mobility Award. This decreases to 35% for ages 30-34 and then increases again up to the age band of 70 and over, where 52% receive the Enhanced Mobility Award [Table 4].

Daily Living Award

- ◆ In January 2022, 96% of males and 97% of females entitled to Personal Independence Payment were receiving Daily Living Award [Tables 5a and 5b].
- ◆ Around 51% of males were receiving the Enhanced Daily Living Award compared to 46% for females [Tables 5a and 5b].
- ◆ For males, 46% were receiving the Standard Daily Living Award, and 4% were receiving no Daily Living Award [Tables 5a and 5b].
- ◆ For females, 51% were receiving the Standard Daily Living Award, and 3% were receiving no Daily Living Award [Tables 5a and 5b].
- ◆ The percentage of people receiving the Enhanced Daily Living Award is highest for 16-19 year olds. For males, 81% of 16-19 year olds receive the Enhanced Daily Living Award and for females this is 73%. This compares to between 43% and 53% for males and females in all age groups from 30 and above [Tables 5a and 5b].

Registrations and Reassessments

- ◆ There were 6,781 registrations for Personal Independence Payment in January 2022, 5% of which were reassessments⁴ [Table 6]. Reassessments are currently only on a voluntary basis, and new invitations for reassessments are not yet being sent out, as explained further in the background section
- ◆ Special Rules for the terminally ill applied to 2% of registrations in January 2022 [Table 6].

Full details [HERE](#)



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba



Social Security Scotland Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer Event



From: NationalEngagementandPartnershipTeam@socialsecurity.gov.scot

Phase one of the pilot for Adult Disability payment will launch in Dundee, Perth & Kinross and The Western Isles on 21 March 2022.

Adult Disability Payment will replace Personal Independence Payment in Scotland.

Adults who currently receive Personal Independence Payment or Disability Living Allowance from the Department for Work and Pensions do not need to apply for Adult Disability Payment. Their awards will be transferred to Social Security Scotland automatically from Summer 2022.

We intend to complete the case transfer process for all disability and carer benefits by 2025. We will write to clients in advance to let them know when their award will be transferred.

Social Security Scotland's National Engagement Team invite you to attend one of our online events to learn more about the case transfer process and proposed timelines. These events will focus on the client journey and how we will communicate with clients.

We have scheduled the following series of events, please click on the appropriate link to reserve a ticket for the event at a date and time that suits you.



- ◆ [Thursday 21 April, 13:30 – 14:30](#)
- ◆ [Wednesday 27 April, 10:30 – 11:30](#)
- ◆ [Wednesday 27 April, 13:30 – 14:30](#)
- ◆ [Thursday 5 May, 10:30 – 11:30](#)
- ◆ [Thursday 5 May, 13:30 – 14:30](#)
- ◆ [Tuesday 10 May, 10:30 – 11:30](#)
- ◆ [Tuesday 10 May, 13:30 – 14:30](#)

Please note that we have further events for Working Age Disability Living Allowance Case Transfers.

Details will be listed on our [website](#) in the coming weeks.

Community-based mental health services contract awarded

Following a competitive tendering process, the contract to deliver Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership's (AHSCP) community based mental health services has been awarded to Penumbra Mental Health.

The Edinburgh-based charity already operates a number of mental health services across the north-east. Already responsible for three services in Aberdeenshire, Penumbra will offer a core, person-centered, 7 day a week, service to promote better mental health and wellbeing.

<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/apps/news/release.aspx?newsid=8475>



Aberdeenshire
Health & Social Care
Partnership



<http://citizensrightsproject.org>



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UK wrongly insisted on Comprehensive Sickness Insurance for years EU court finds

Eligibility for NHS treatment does count as Comprehensive Sickness Insurance, the Court of Justice of the European Union has ruled. The case is [C-247/20 VI v Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs](#).

Background: non-working EU citizens needed health insurance

Some rights to reside under EU law always seemed little more than theoretical in the UK, even while it was a member state. If attempting to rely on either the right to reside as a self-sufficient person or as a student — Article 7(1)(b) and (c) of [Directive 2004/38](#), and Regulation 4(1)(c) and (d) of the EEA Regulations [2006](#) and [2016](#) – the EU national in question had to show they had “Comprehensive Sickness Insurance” (CSI) for themselves and any family members.

[Time](#) and [time](#) again, UK tribunals and courts declared that eligibility for NHS treatment did not discharge the CSI requirement. Private health insurance was required, or else complete coverage of health costs from [another member state](#).

As well affecting students and the self-sufficient, this created significant problems for EU nationals with punctuated work histories. Those who became unemployed were typically able to retain “worker” status so long as they met certain conditions, including registering with Jobcentre Plus. But many did not register because they did not want to claim benefits (or had been [led to believe](#) that they could not).

But if instead they relied on their own savings while seeking new work, their reward was often a finding that they had lost the chance to retain worker status, creating a status gap and restarting the clock on permanent residence. This could knock out later claims for means-tested benefits – and affect the right to naturalise as British, when such applications were dependent on first obtaining permanent residence.

Other consequences include reduced scope in the UK for reliance upon [Chen](#) rights, where non-EU citizens exercise their rights as parents of EU national children. Absence of private health insurance was “fatal” to the claims in *Liu & Ors v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [[2007](#)] [EWCA Civ 1275](#), and this finding has informed cases ever since. See, for example, *VP v Secretary for Works and Pensions (JSA)* [[2014](#)] [UKUT 32 \(AAC\)](#) and *Ahmad v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [[2014](#)] [EWCA Civ 988](#).

The judgment in *VI* upends this settled logic. It comes 16 years after the 2006 regulations took effect (and eight years after Sylvia de Mars clearly spelled out why [the UK approach was wrong](#)).

The case was decided post-Brexit because it arose before the end of the transition period. It is the [second](#) dramatic preliminary reference made by a Northern Ireland social security tribunal at the urging of Law Centre NI shortly before the transition period ended; the other was [C-709/20 CG v Department for Communities](#), on pre-settled status rights.

www.freemovement.org.uk/uk-wrongly-insisted-on-comprehensive-sickness-insurance-for-years-eu-court-finds/



<http://citizensrightsproject.org>



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Exemption from habitual residence and past presence tests for specified benefits for people arriving in Scotland from Ukraine

New statutory instrument

New emergency regulations have been issued to exempt people arriving in Scotland from Ukraine from the habitual residence and past presence tests required for specified benefits.

In force from 22 March 2022, the *Social Security (Residence Requirements) (Ukraine) (Scotland) Regulations 2022* (SSI.No.108/2022) exempts individuals arriving in Scotland from Ukraine - where they were residing in Ukraine immediately before 1 January 2022 and left Ukraine in connection with the Russian invasion which took place on 24 February 2022 - from the habitual residence tests and past presence tests for -

- disability living allowance;
- personal independence payment;
- attendance allowance;
- carer's allowance;
- child disability payment;
- adult disability payment;
- best start grants;
- best start foods; and
- young carer grant.

In addition, the regulations exempt the same individuals from the need to satisfy the usual residence requirements for entitlement to reductions in council tax liability.

NB - the [policy note](#) to the regulations advises that they mirror the *Social Security (Habitual Residence and Past Presence) (Amendment) Regulations 2022* ([SI.No.344/2022](#)) that were [laid by the UK Government on 21 March 2022](#) and ensure parity of access to forms of assistance for which Scottish Ministers have responsibility.

[SSI.No.108/2022](#) is available from legislation.gov.uk

No Recourse to Public Funds NRPF

The number of people with a NRPF condition continues to rise, with thousands of children and adults living in deep and sustained poverty, unable to afford basic living supplies and finding themselves barred from accessing housing and welfare support.

www.abcorg.net/item/3832-no-recourse-to-public-funds-nrpf



Leigh Day

Severely disabled man receives permission to judicially review hospital-stay benefits rule but faces losing his Motability car lifeline

The High Court has granted permission to a severely disabled claimant to go ahead with a judicial review of the personal independence payment (PIP) hospital rules that remove entitlement after stays of more than 28 days.

Read the full article [HERE](#)

DWP admits wrongly refusing PIP to record number of Disabled people

'Flaws in the system' have led to almost 80,000 Personal Independence Payment (PIP) decisions being overturned at initial review in the past year, [reports The Independent](#).

Separate figures show the cost of these reviews has surged by 26% in the last two years, despite the number of reviews carried out by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) falling by 23% over the same period.

Claimants who wish to appeal a PIP decision must first appeal through the DWP's internal process, known as mandatory reconsideration. Reversals at this stage have increased from 22% (46,580 of 236,720) three years ago to 43% (78,390 of 182,880) last year.

Figures published by the Disability Minister Chloe Smith in response to a written parliamentary question show that the cost to taxpayers of mandatory reconsiderations for PIP was £24.8m last year, compared with £19.7m in 2018/19 and £13.7m in 2016/17.

www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2022/february/dwp-admits-wrongly-refusing-pip-record-number-disabled-people

Revision to the Common Financial Tool

Due to the current rise in domestic fuel costs, Accountant in Bankruptcy (AiB) has increased the amount of the Common Financial Tool (CFT) utility expenditure cost for gas; electricity, and others (coal, oil, Calor gas, solid fuel etc.) where AiB will require sight of supporting evidence/ estimates.

This will increase from £120 to £170 per month.

Section 6.4 of AiB's Common Financial Tool Guidance has been updated to record this change.

[Common Financial Tool Notes for Guidance \(Revised February 2022\)](#)

All Common Financial Tool (CFT) guidance, legislation and analysis can be found in the [Common Financial Tool \(CFT\) section](#).

'Put money in our pockets' to tackle child poverty

Cash-first payments to support families should be at the heart of the Scottish Government's efforts to end child poverty, according to a new report that outlines the views and experiences of grassroots organisations and people living on low incomes in Scotland.

As a contribution to the development of the Scottish Government's new Child Poverty Delivery Plan, due to be launched next week, the Poverty Alliance spoke to grassroots organisations and people with experience of poverty.

The findings set out in [Child Poverty Delivery Plan: Voices from our Communities](#), show a strong support for social security benefits like the Scottish Child Payment and grants to buy school clothing.

www.povertyalliance.org/put-money-in-our-pockets-to-tackle-child-poverty/





Nearly half of people referred to Trussell Trust food banks are in debt to the DWP

With a looming cost-of-living crisis, people who cannot afford the essentials are being pushed deeper into poverty by a rising tide of Government debt, according to new Trussell Trust research.

Government debt can take many forms, including:

- ♦ paying back Advance Payments given to people on Universal Credit to cover the five-week wait for their first benefit payment
- ♦ paying back council tax debt to local authorities,
- ♦ repaying benefit or tax credit overpayments

Many of these debts are deducted automatically from a claimant's Universal Credit or other benefit payments, often leaving them with incomes far below what is needed to afford the essentials.

Nearly half of people referred to food banks in the Trussell Trust network are in debt to the DWP.

People who have experience of being in debt to government have been working closely with the

Trussell Trust and Humankind Research, to develop ideas for what a fairer repayment system might look like.

The participants drew out the following four recommendations:

- ♦ Government must tackle the design features in the social security system which create debt, such as the necessity of taking on Advance Payment debts to cover the five-week wait for Universal Credit.
- ♦ Government debt collection practices should embed the principles of clarity, flexibility and respect at their core – learning from best practice in the private sector.
- ♦ Wider efforts are needed to increase resilience and protect people from destitution, by urgently strengthening the social security system, uprating payments in line with the actual rate of inflation this spring rather than the planned 3.1%.
- ♦ Policymaking with and alongside people with lived experience, is needed to harness the insight and expertise others do not have.

DR UK's Welfare Rights and Policy Adviser Ken Butler said: "Last month, The Food Foundation published [new research](#) highlighting that Disabled people are five times more likely to be at risk from food insecurity (lack of access to adequate food) compared to non-disabled people.

"The level of benefits paid to Disabled people is already inadequate. Deducting money from these makes a bad situation even worse. The five-week wait time for Universal Credit (UC) means many have no choice other than to take on an Advance Payment in order to be able to survive until UC. This in itself can trigger a spiral of debt"

The full report [Debt to Government, Deductions and Destitution](#) is available from trusselltrust.org.



Age Scotland uncovers half a million pounds in unclaimed benefits for older people

Age Scotland identified £564,494 in benefits that were not claimed by older people who called the charity's helpline last year.

The figure was revealed in Age Scotland's annual Impact Report for 2021 from data collected by the organisation's helpline.

Scotland's national charity for older people said the amount was the 'tip of the iceberg' and estimated that millions of pounds are still going unclaimed by older people across the country.

The money identified was driven, in part, by Age Scotland's Check In, Cash Out campaign which launched in 2021 to raise awareness of what benefits are available and ensure that older people don't miss out on vital financial support.

For more detailed information on the impact of Age Scotland's work, our 2021 Impact Report is available at www.age.scot/Impact2021.

www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/latest-news/2022/march/age-scotland-uncovers-half-a-million-pounds-in-unclaimed-benefits-for-older-people/



Dealing with gas and electricity debt

Ofgem [announced](#) on 3 February 2022 that the energy price cap for the period 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022 will see an unprecedented rise. This will result in huge increases in gas and electricity bills for many thousands of households.

Now more than ever, clients will need advice on how to cope with energy debt. This series of three articles looks at liability for energy debt, protection for vulnerable clients, negotiating an arrears repayment and complaints. The second article looks at what happens when an energy supplier goes out of business. The third covers help available to clients who are struggling to pay.

citizens
advice

- ◆ [Dealing with gas and electricity debt: Part 1 — liability, protection for vulnerable clients, negotiating an arrears repayment and complaints](#)
- ◆ [Dealing with gas and electricity debt: Part 2 — what happens if an energy supplier goes out of business](#)
- ◆ [Dealing with gas and electricity debt: Part 3 — help for clients who are struggling to pay](#)

New app to help young people access free bus travel

Did you know all children and young people aged under 22 can now access free bus travel across Scotland? Find out more at: [Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme | Overview | Transport Scotland](#)

A new Transport Scot Pass Collect app lets people aged 16 – 21, who already have a Young Scot National Entitlement Card (NEC) (or non-Young Scot branded NEC), to download free bus travel onto their existing card. This means they may not need to apply for a replacement.

The app guides them through the process of downloading free bus travel onto their card, with simple step-by-step instructions. It will tell them when free bus travel has been successfully downloaded onto the card, and then they are ready to jump on the bus for free straight away.

<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/apps/news/release.aspx?newsid=8469>



DWP failing to make reasonable adjustments for UC claimants with mental health problems

A new research report has been published that considers whether the DWP is meeting the needs of people with mental health problems and making adjustments to their service as required by the Equality Act 2010.

The report, by the [Child Poverty Action Group](#) (CPAG), centres on Universal Credit (UC) which was promoted in its early stages as a personalised service, providing support to meet people's needs.

Examples of a [reasonable adjustment](#) might be offering a telephone appointment rather than a face-to-face meeting, or offering a private interview room within a busy job centre so sensitive information is kept private.

www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2022/march/dwp-failing-make-reasonable-adjustments-uc-claimants-mental-health-problems



94% of older people worried about soaring energy bills

Age Scotland is calling for urgent action to support older people on low incomes after a survey conducted by the charity found 94% of respondents were worried about paying their energy bills from next month.

A new report on the impact of rising energy costs, published today by Age Scotland, highlights the experience and concerns of hundreds of older people who face financial insecurity, poorer health and being plunged into fuel poverty as a result of soaring energy bills.

The survey of over 50s conducted by the charity, which underpinned the report, found that a staggering 94% of older people were worried about their energy bills and more than 200 said they believed the rising costs would adversely affect their daily lives and made them fear for the future.

www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/latest-news/2022/march/94-of-older-people-worried-about-soaring-energy-bills/



PIP backlog has more than trebled in five years

New figures have shown how the backlog of disabled people waiting for a personal independence payment (PIP) assessment has more than trebled in the last five years.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) figures, secured by Disability News Service (DNS) through a freedom of information (FOI) request, shows there are now more than 310,000 people waiting for an assessment.

The size of the queue was 88,500 in October 2016 but this had risen to nearly 312,000 by December 2021.

The unpublished figures, which DWP stressed had not been “quality assured” to official statistics publication standards, confirmed that the backlog had begun rising steeply far before the pandemic began in early 2020.

The number of cases held with PIP assessment providers Capita and Atos was about 89,000 in October 2017 but by October 2018 it had risen to nearly 134,000, before rising again to about 143,000 in October 2019.

After about six months of the pandemic, it had risen to 189,000, and by November 2021 it had reached 295,000.

Just a month later, the backlog had risen again, to 311,870.

www.disabilitynewsservice.com/pip-backlog-has-more-than-trebled-in-five-years/





HM Courts &
Tribunals Service

HM Courts & Tribunals Service
Social Security & Child Support Appeals
The Glasgow Tribunals Centre
20 York Street
GLASGOW. G2 8GT
Phone: 0300 790 6234

<http://www.tribunals.gov.uk/>

11 March 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

As the Scottish Government is starting to relax Covid19 restrictions we will be resuming face to face hearings, where requested from appellants, from 4 April. The tribunal panel members will be returning to our permanent venues in Aberdeen, Ayr, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hamilton, Inverness & Stirling to conduct these hearings.

Hybrid Hearings, Video Hearings and Telephone hearings will still be possible but primarily we will be focusing on in person hearings.

Face to face hearings will take place in our permanent venues as these have the space required to maintain a safe environment and are risk assessed by our Health and Safety Team. We can review this further down the line.

We are listing in to April and you will start to receive invites to your tribunal hearings.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at

Jacqui.mcgarvie@justice.gov.uk

Yours faithfully

Jacqui McGarvie

SSCS Delivery Manager

Pushed to the Edge: Poverty, food banks and mental health

Last month, the Food Foundation [highlighted a sharp increase](#) in the number of people experiencing food insecurity, up from 7.3% of households to 8.8% or 4.7 million adults in the UK.

Disabled people were highlighted as one of the groups most affected, being five times more likely to be at risk from food insecurity compared to non-Disabled people.

Now new research, co-produced by the [Independent Food Aid Network](#) (IFAN) and the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) (JRF), explores the impact of poverty and food bank use on people's mental health.

The report, Pushed to the Edge, is based on in-depth interviews conducted with people needing to use food banks in November and December 2021. The interviewees' history, views, and concerns form the bulk of the report's narrative.

www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2022/march/pushed-edge-poverty-food-banks-and-mental-health



Free online benefits workshops

Thanks to funding from the Yorkshire Building Society, Age Scotland is providing new online workshops about benefits and social security for people over State Pension age.



Many older people don't claim the income they are entitled to, so we want to raise awareness of the benefits that exist to support them, and why older people don't take steps to unlock their entitlements.

They are free to attend, and provide useful information for older people and the people who support them.

Benefits for people over State Pension Age

Our 2-hour basic workshop looks at:

- Setting the scene about older people and benefits
- Non means tested benefits
- Means tested benefits
- What's changing?

Attendance Allowance: completing the form

Our 1-hour Attendance Allowance application form workshop aims to help anyone who intends to complete an Attendance Allowance form, for themselves or for someone else. It will give you information, strategies and tips to make the process more simple and less daunting.

You can take part in our workshops by video using the free Zoom app. All that's needed is a laptop / computer / tablet / smartphone and an internet connection. We do the rest!

How to sign up

If you would like a bespoke workshop for a group of 6 or more people we may be able to arrange a workshop specifically for you. Please contact rightstraining@agescotland.org.uk

To join one of our workshops, click on your chosen date below to sign up on Eventbrite. Please note that joining instructions will be sent 24 hours before the session.

Benefits for people over State Pension age

- [Tuesday 29 March 10am - 12pm](#)
- [Wednesday 13 April 10am - 12pm](#)
- [Tuesday 26 April 10am - 12pm](#)
- [Wednesday 11 May 10am - 12pm](#)
- [Tuesday 24 May 10am - 12pm](#)

Attendance Allowance: completing the form

- [Wednesday 27 April 10am - 11am](#)
- [Wednesday 25 May 10am - 11am](#)

For full details visit - www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/information-advice/benefits/free-online-benefits-workshop/



Ukrainians' Access to Benefits

Please note this information is subject to change.

There are now different government schemes to allow Ukrainians fleeing the war to come to stay in the UK temporarily:

The Ukraine Family Scheme allows Ukrainians to stay in the UK for up to three years if they are family members of a British Citizen or another national settled in the UK. They can apply free online for a visa. More details from gov.uk [here](#).

The **Homes for Ukraine Scheme** allows people to nominate a named individual or a family to stay with them rent-free, or in another property, for at least six months. The scheme will be extended to include people without a personal link in the near future. Details and website to register to help on gov.uk [here](#).

Which Ukrainians in the UK can claim Universal Credit?

It depends on their immigration status. Ukrainians are visa nationals, meaning they require leave to enter and remain in the UK, in the form of a visa. Not all visas allow a right to claim benefits.

Arrived under the Ukraine Family Scheme / Homes for Ukraine Scheme

Ukrainians who have come to the UK under these schemes will be able to work, study and access public funds in the UK for 3 years. This means they will be able to claim UC and other benefits.

The Ukraine Family Visa lasts for 3 years. Those who come under the Home for Ukraine Scheme will be granted leave to remain for 3 years. There is as yet no information on whether they would be able to extend this or apply for indefinite leave to remain.

Those arriving in the UK under one of these schemes are exempt from the Habitual Residence Test, under regulations from 21st March 2022. This means they will not need to wait up to 3 months to be eligible for means tested benefits.

DWP staff in JobCentres will be available to help claimants claim online, and for face to face help where needed. Translation services will also be available for online applications.

Arrived in the UK on a visitor visa.

Those who cannot apply under the above schemes but need to come to the UK urgently can apply for a visa for compelling and compassionate reasons. This appears to be a visitor visa, in which case it would last 6 months, and would not give the right to work or access public funds.

The government has announced that regulation changes will exempt those arriving from Ukraine from the Habitual Residence Test as otherwise they would have to wait 3 months for means-tested benefits.

Translation services are available to help new arrivals with phone applications, and Work Coaches in Jobcentres are on hand to support people making claims online and offer face to face support where needed.

Already living in the UK with a visa

Most visas do not allow access to public funds but it would be advisable to check the details of the particular visa. The government website states that some Ukrainians may apply to change to a different visa, or extend their visa, or apply for indefinite leave to remain. For advice and assistance they can call UK Visas and Immigration on 0808 164 8810.

Already living in the UK with indefinite leave to remain

They should be able to claim Universal Credit and other benefits.

Family member of an EEA National

They may be able to claim UC if they have applied to the EU Settlement Scheme. If they have Settled Status they will be eligible for UC (as long as accepted as habitually resident); if they have Pre-Settled Status or have applied and received a Certificate of Application then they will also need a "Right to Reside".

How will taking a Ukrainian into a person's home affect their benefits?

The government has announced that they will pay £350 a month to anyone who takes a Ukrainian individual or family into their home under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

In his announcement, Michael Gove said *'these payments will be tax free, and they will not affect benefit entitlement nor council tax status'*.

However, there have not been any further announcements so there could potentially be an impact on:

- ◆ Housing Costs Contributions (Non dependant deductions)
- ◆ Under-occupancy charge

