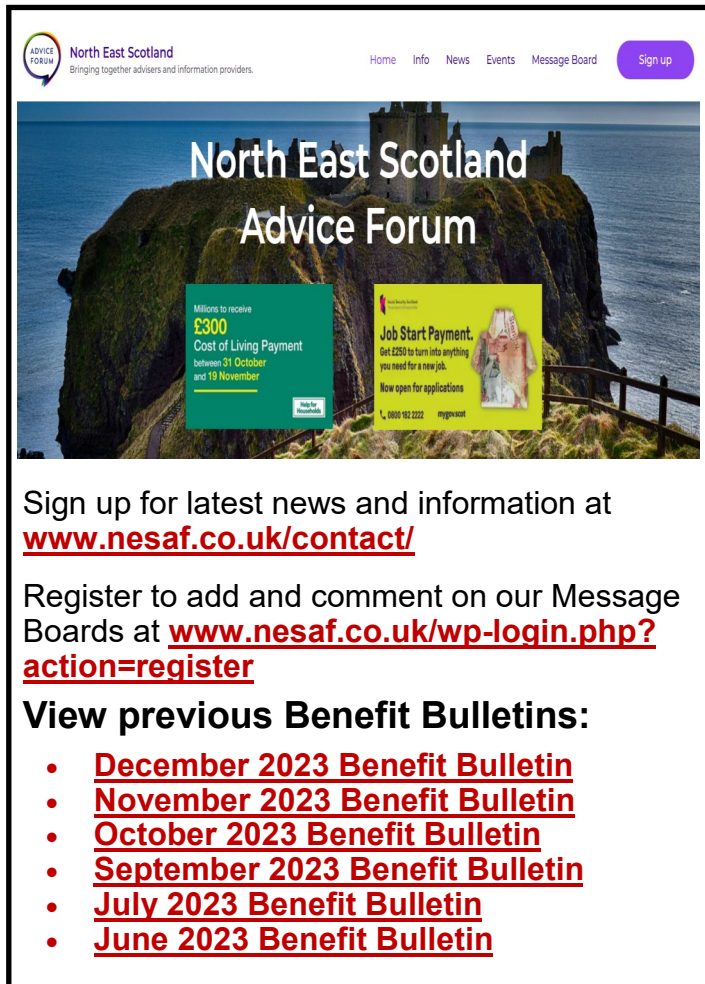


North East Scotland Advice Forum is a local network for people working in advice services to share information and experiences. The Forum meets quarterly throughout the year.

January 2024 Newsletter

If you would like an article included in the next bulletin, please contact admin@nesaf.co.uk



The screenshot shows the homepage of the North East Scotland Advice Forum. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Info, News, Events, and Message Board, along with a Sign up button. The main header features a large image of a coastal landscape with a castle. Below the header, there are two promotional boxes: one for the £300 Cost of Living Payment and another for the Job Start Payment. The footer contains contact information and a link to the website.

Sign up for latest news and information at www.nesaf.co.uk/contact/

Register to add and comment on our Message Boards at www.nesaf.co.uk/wp-login.php?action=register

View previous Benefit Bulletins:

- [December 2023 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [November 2023 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [October 2023 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [September 2023 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [July 2023 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [June 2023 Benefit Bulletin](#)

Benefit calculator

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

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 >>>](#)



Third 2023/24 Cost of Living Payment dates announced

On 13 December, the Government announced that millions of UK households will shortly get a Cost of Living Payment of £299. This payment will be made to eligible claimants on means tested benefits between Tuesday **6 February** and Thursday **22 February**.

This is the third of three payments over the financial year totalling up to £900.

Customers will receive the payments automatically. They do not need to contact DWP or do anything to receive the payment.

If a household becomes retrospectively entitled to a Cost of Living Payment or someone believes they are entitled but do not receive one, they can report this on GOV.UK from the **23 February**.

Read more information about the [Cost of Living Payments](#) on GOV.UK.

We have produced a [Cost Of Living Payment video](#), which can be shared on your social channels.

Read the [full press release](#).



Department
for Work &
Pensions

ADM Memo 18/23 – The Carer’s Assistance (Carer Support Payment)(Scotland) Consequential Amendments 2023

This memo gives guidance on The Carer’s Assistance (Carer Support Payment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 (Consequential Amendments) Order 2023 which came into force on 19.11.23.

This order makes changes to social security legislation to reflect the introduction of the Carer Support Payment (CSP) which replaces CA in Scotland.

Note: This guidance is applicable to UC, JSA and ESA.

[assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/
media/657873f2095987001295def9/adm-memo-
18-23.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/657873f2095987001295def9/adm-memo-18-23.pdf)

Increase in Universal Credit and Attendance Allowance appeals drive increase in social security appeals

From April 2023 the SSCS Tribunal started to list cases using a new Scheduling and Listing solution. This, alongside HMCTS migrating to a new Strategic Data Platform, has resulted in some cases heard and decided using this new listing solution not currently being included in the data above. Revised data will be published as soon as they are available.

SSCS receipts increased by 4% this quarter, to 36,000 appeals, compared to July to September 2022. This was driven by increases in Universal Credit and Attendance Allowance (by 35% and 87% respectively). PIP and UC appeals accounted for 66% and 18% respectively of all SSCS receipts in July to September 2023.

More details at:

[www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunals-
statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2023/
tribunal-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-
2023#social-security-and-child-support](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunals-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2023/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2023#social-security-and-child-support)

Universal Credit Work Capability Assessment statistics, April 2019 to September 2023

Statistics on the number of people on Universal Credit with a health condition or disability restricting their ability to work.

Quarterly statistics on the number of people on Universal Credit (UC) with a health condition or disability restricting their ability to work, by stage of process and monthly Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) decisions and outcomes.

This release of statistics covers:

- caseload – number of people on UC health by:
 - stage of process: pre-Work Capability Assessment (WCA) or post-WCA with limited capability for work (LCW) or limited capability for work and work-related activity (LCWRA)
 - monthly (from April 2019 to September 2023)
 - age at caseload date
 - gender
 - GB level and standard geographical area
- number of DWP UC WCA decisions by:
 - outcome (no limited capability for work (NLCW), LCW, LCWRA, monthly (from April 2019 to August 2023)
 - GB level and standard geographical area

[www.gov.uk/government/statistics/
universal-credit-work-capability-
assessment-statistics-april-2019-to-
september-2023](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-work-capability-assessment-statistics-april-2019-to-september-2023)



Universal Credit if you receive a Migration Notice letter

Last updated 1 December 2023

This guidance is only for people who have received a Migration Notice

You need to move to Universal Credit if you've received a Migration Notice, as one or more of your benefits will be ending soon.

Contents

1. [This guidance is only for people who have received a Migration Notice](#)
2. [Benefits that are ending](#)
3. [Who Universal Credit is for](#)
4. [How to claim Universal Credit](#)
5. [Apply for Universal Credit online](#)
6. [When you need to act](#)
7. [What you'll get](#)
8. [How you're paid](#)
9. [Your responsibilities](#)
10. [Other financial support](#)
11. [Support](#)



Independent Case Examiner

DWP complaints: Annual report by the Independent Case Examiner 2022 to 2023

Published 14 December 2023

The Independent Case Examiner's annual report on complaints about the Department for Work and Pensions from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

This report explains the Independent Case Examiner's (ICE's) work on Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) complaints received between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

The report covers the following areas of work:

- working age benefits (Jobcentre Plus)
- disability benefits
- retirement services
- Debt Management
- private sector companies that provide services on behalf of DWP
- Child Maintenance Service
- Child Support Agency

The report also includes information about the standards of service of the Independent Case Examiner's office.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-complaints-annual-report-by-the-independent-case-examiner-2022-to-2023

Tax Credits Consultation Forum

This forum is HMRC's main channel for consulting with external customer representatives on tax credits and the transition to Universal Credits.

The group works to improve our engagement with customers and provides a sounding board for ministers for new HMRC initiatives. It is also a channel for information and comment about operational developments or problems, and their impact on customers.

www.gov.uk/government/groups/tax-credits-consultation-forum#minutes

Managed migration to UC

From February 2024: Northern Scotland, Northeast Scotland

You need to move to Universal Credit if you've received a Migration Notice, as one or more of your benefits will be ending soon.

www.gov.uk/guidance/tax-credits-and-some-benefits-are-ending-move-to-universal-credit





Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba



Scottish Government commits to increasing devolved benefits by 6.7 per cent in April 2024

Published 19 December

The 2024-25 Scottish Budget includes:

- £6.3 billion for social security benefits, which will all be increased in line with inflation. This is £1.1 billion more than the funding received from the UK Government for devolved benefits in 2024-25
- £13.2 billion for frontline NHS boards, with additional investment of more than half a billion – an uplift of over 4%
- record funding of more than £14 billion for local government, including £144 million to enable local authorities to freeze Council Tax rates at their current levels
- more than £1.5 billion for policing to support frontline services and key priorities such as body-worn cameras
- almost £400 million to support the fire service
- £200 million to help tackle the poverty-related attainment gap, almost £390 million to protect teacher numbers and fund the teacher pay deal, and up to £1.5 million to cancel school meal debt
- almost £2.5 billion for public transport to provide viable alternatives to car use, and increased investment of £220 million in active travel to promote walking, wheeling and cycling



www.gov.scot/news/2024-25-scottish-budget-unveiled/
www.gov.scot/budget/

Independent Living Fund reopens for new applicants

Published 20 December

The Independent Living Fund, which supports disabled people, is to reopen to new applicants after receiving £9 million investment as part of the 2024-25 Scottish Budget.

The funding forms part of the £19.5 billion budget for NHS recovery, health and social care and will support around 1,000 new applicants.

The initiative was closed to new applicants by the UK Government in 2010, with payments to the 3,000 existing recipients taken over by the Scottish Government in 2015. Scottish Ministers committed to reopening the fund in September as part of the Programme for Government.

The health and social care budget also includes £13.2 billion for frontline NHS Boards – a real terms uplift, with additional investment of more than half a billion pounds. Funding for social care next year will be over £1 billion higher than in 2021-22. The health increase is more than the total block grant consequential announced in the autumn statement which means that resource funding for health and social care has more than doubled since 2006-07.

<https://www.gov.scot/news/independent-living-fund-reopens-for-new-applicants/>





Articles

Fuel and food vouchers to help older people stay warm and well through winter

Published on 18 December

A new emergency energy and food voucher initiative to support Scotland's most vulnerable older people this winter has been launched by Age Scotland in partnership with SGN.

Through the charity's free national helpline, expert advisers will identify those most in need in order to provide crisis support.

This new initiative, supported by SGN through an ongoing partnership with the charity, will enable Age Scotland energy specialists to offer older people struggling a £30 credit towards their fuel costs, or food costs. They will also provide access to the charity's support services, including energy advice and income maximisation to help older people use energy safely, affordably and efficiently.

The initiative is open to those aged 50 and over who are registered to a Scottish postal address and eligibility will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/latest-news/2023/december/fuel-and-food-vouchers-to-help-older-people-stay-warm-and-well-through-winter/

The Age Scotland helpline is available Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm on **0800 12 44 222**.



A Universal Credit Carol

by Erica Young, CAS Social Justice team.

Dickensian world concepts like the deserving and undeserving poor, and the working hungry, should be as remote from our era as Victorian images on a Christmas card. But sadly, they haunt our social security system.

www.cas.org.uk/news/universal-credit-carol



Tax credits, Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance — rates and allowances

These tables show rates and allowances for tax credits, Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance by tax year (6 April to 5 April).

www.gov.uk/government/publications/rates-and-allowances-tax-credits-child-benefit-and-guardians-allowance/tax-credits-child-benefit-and-guardians-allowance

No Recourse NE full Partnership meeting

The next Teams meeting will be on **Tuesday the 27th February at 2pm** – contact sbains@grec.co.uk for details.

FYI: A news post added today to our website concerns the recently published [**COSLA Elected #member briefing note: Ending Destitution for People with No Recourse to Public Funds**](#)

nrnepartnership.org



No Recourse
North East



Free Will-writing service available to older people

Age Scotland's Big Survey has revealed that 39% of over 50s either do not have a Will or have one which does not reflect their up-to-date wishes, with 5% saying they cannot afford to make one at all.

If someone dies without a Will, there can be uncertainty, disputes and legal expenses. The charity is therefore urging older people not to put off planning for future legal matters, as having an accurate Will is essential not only in ensuring that your money and possessions are distributed in the way you prefer but also in helping alleviate stress for next of kin and loved ones at what will be a difficult time.

In order to support an increasing number of older people to get a Will in place, Age Scotland is also encouraging over 50s in Scotland to take advantage of their partnership with Solicitors for Older People Scotland, which enables this age group to write or amend their Will free of charge.

www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/latest-news/2023/december/free-will-writing-service-available-to-older-people/



Minimum income floor change

A correction to the Autumn Statement has been issued, bringing forward the change to the minimum income floor for lead carers of children aged 3 to 12. Additionally, it removes the cap of £1,250 a month.

Table 5.1, page 83. The title of line 33 previously read:

33. Universal Credit: increase the minimum income floor by up to a max. of £1,250 a month for lead carers from April 2024

This has been corrected so the title now reads:

33. Universal Credit: increase the maximum level of the minimum income floor for lead carers from January 2024

For more information, visit: [as-sets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/656895705936bb00133167d8/Autumn_Statement_correction_slip.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/656895705936bb00133167d8/Autumn_Statement_correction_slip.pdf)



Low Incomes Tax Reform Group
A voice for the unrepresented

New rules for gig economy workers – your questions answered

Many people make a living from doing things in the gig economy like driving, delivering, or freelancing – often via online platforms such as Uber, Deliveroo and TaskRabbit.

Some new HMRC rules are coming into force in January 2024. This news has caused people making money from the gig economy, either as a full-time job or as a 'side hustle', to ask questions about their tax position.

Here we explain the new rules from January 2024 and answer the most common questions.

www.litr.org.uk/latest-news/news/231213-new-rules-gig-economy-workers-your-questions-answered





Disability premiums and Universal Credit

If you were in receipt of the severe disability premium and you migrate naturally to Universal Credit, you may be entitled to an extra amount in your Universal Credit award (the transitional severe disability premium element). However, this amount didn't factor in other disability premiums that claimants could have been entitled to in their legacy benefit awards.



Following a long running legal challenge, from 14 February 2024, there will now be an additional amount payable on top of the existing TSDPE for those who entitled to the transitional severe disability premium element and were also entitled to another disability premium in the month before their Universal Credit claim. This includes the enhanced disability premium, disability premium and disabled child premium/tax credit element.

The additional amount can be included for new and existing Universal Credit claimants, including those whose transitional severe disability premium element has eroded away to nil, but not including those who have lost the element in other circumstances.

The amount payable works in the same way as the TSDPE element: any additional amount that you are entitled to is paid at the maximum rate in your first monthly assessment period. After this, it is treated as a transitional element and can erode – including by the annual uprating, which will occur shortly after these amounts are first awarded.

Note: although eligibility for these disability premiums does not depend on entitlement to the severe disability premium, the additional amounts in Universal Credit are only available to those who would come under the severe disability premium protection rules.

Single claimants (maximum amount):

£84 – if you received the enhanced disability premium

£172 – if you received the disability premium

£177 (per child) – if you received the disabled child premium or disabled child element in Child Tax Credit

Joint claimants (maximum amount):

£120 – if you received the enhanced disability premium

£246 – if you received the disability premium

£177 (per child) – if you received the disabled child premium or disabled child element in Child Tax Credit

For more information, visit: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2023/1238/memorandum/contents

Local Housing Allowance uprating provides a major, if temporary, boost to low-income renters amid a housing cost crisis across Britain's major cities

Resolution
Foundation

The Chancellor's announcement in the recent Autumn Statement that the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) will be re-pegged to local rents in April 2024 will bring welcome relief to many of Britain's poorest households, with those in cities set to see some of the largest financial gains, according to new Resolution Foundation research published

www.resolutionfoundation.org/press-releases/local-housing-allowance-uprating-provides-a-major-if-temporary-boost-to-low-income-renters-amid-a-housing-cost-crisis-across-britains-major-cities/

The DWP have issued an update regarding the managed migration or 'move to UC' process. Neil Couling, Senior Responsible Owner for Universal Credit, has written to all local authorities, outlining the plan for 2024:



UNIVERSAL CREDIT – PREPARING FOR THE COMMENCEMENT OF MANAGED MIGRATION FOR HOUSING BENEFIT CLAIMANTS

4 December 2023

In what continues to be a busy period for the Universal Credit (UC) Programme I thought it might be helpful if I updated Local Authority Chief Executives as we get closer to the point where cases in receipt of Housing Benefit will be migrated. As you may recall, our aim was to issue Migration Notices (the letter that prompts someone to make the move from a legacy benefit to UC) to all tax credit only customers by the end of March 2024. Work is well underway in this regard, and we are on track to issue 500,000 Migration Notices by the end of the Financial Year as planned.

In my last note to you in July, I mentioned that from September we are planning to continue our small-scale Discovery work with other legacy benefit combinations to support our preparations for moving these households at scale in 2024/25.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Local Authority (LA) colleagues in Manchester, Harrow and Northumberland for agreeing to support this work and help us consolidate our learning and ensure preparations are in place to operate at a scale that works for DWP and LAs and most importantly for our shared customers.

I'm pleased to say that my Programme Board Colleagues have now approved our migration plans for 2024/25. We will therefore be notifying the remaining applicable households of the need to move to UC during this period, which includes residual tax credits cases (including those on both Employment Support Allowance and tax credits and Housing Benefit), all cases on Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) and those combined with Housing Benefit and Housing Benefit only cases (except those Housing Benefit only customers living in Supported or Temporary Accommodation).

We plan to undertake the issuing of Migration Notices to Working Age benefit claimants sequentially starting with Income Support (April–June), Employment Support Allowance with Child tax credits (July – September) and Jobseekers Allowance (September). If a Housing Benefit customer is receiving one of these benefits, they will receive a Migration Notice.

From April we will also invite tax credits with Housing Benefit and then Housing Benefit (only) customers to move. My team are working closely with Local Authority Partnership Engagement and Delivery Division (LA-PED) colleagues on what these plans mean for LAs and how we will support the LA role in the Housing Benefit to UC Customer Journey.

LA-PED colleagues will be writing to you separately in the New Year with more detail on the national roll out plan and the volumes of Housing Benefit customers involved and what this means for individual LA caseloads so you can understand how and when the work is moving.

They will also be producing detailed guidance for all LAs on the Housing Benefit to UC customer journey and before the end of March they plan to hold an all LA conference call to walk through the plan and guidance in readiness for scaling in April 2024.

We are also working together to determine new burdens funding to ensure LAs are supported in our requirement for Housing Benefit claims to be closed. We will also ensure that support is available for LAs so that issues arising from moving Housing Benefit customers to UC can be quickly resolved.

We will continue to engage and update our stakeholder groups which includes the Move to UC monthly forums, the Local Authority Welfare Steering Group, Local Authority Practitioners Operational Group and our Operational Stakeholder Engagement Forum.

I look forward to continuing working with you all to deliver the safe implementation of Move to UC. If anyone has any further questions or comments in the meantime, please don't hesitate to get in contact with the team at the email address below: universalcredit.engagementteam@dwp.gov.uk or LA-PED colleagues lawelfare.lalialaisonteam@dwp.gov.uk.

I will seek to regularly update you on progress to inform your local planning.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Couling

Letter available [HERE](#)



**Department
for Work &
Pensions**