

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.

March 2024 Newsletter

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



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www.nesaf.co.uk/contact/

View previous Benefit Bulletins:

- [February 2024 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [January 2024 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [December 2023 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [November 2023 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [October 2023 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [September 2023 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [July 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 >>>



Advice Forum meeting

Wednesday 6th March 10-12

Speakers include:

- Justine Dunbar, Suicide Prevention Community Engagement Officer
- Emma Gration, Royal Airforce Benevolent Fund
- Megan Douglas, Nightstop Co-ordinator, Aberdeen Foyer.
- Kevin Duffy, MaPS

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

Meeting ID: 399 576 528 847
Passcode: GNZjGs



Move to Universal Credit update

You may have seen the [Written Statement](#) from Minister for Employment setting out our plans from April 2024.

The statement provides more detail of the legacy benefit combinations that we will move from April when we start with Income Support households (who may also be receiving Housing Benefit and/or Child Tax Credit) and households claiming Tax Credits with Housing Benefit. Employment and Support Allowance only and Employment and Support Allowance with Housing Benefit remain deferred until 2028.

This activity follows the small-scale discovery activity that began in September 2023 to support the migration of households from April and the learning from this discovery work is being used to inform and improve our approach. As before, we will only increase the scale of migration for these households when we are assured it is safe to do so.

We continue with the expansion for Move to Universal Credit Tax Credit migration, this has continued to progress well and remains on track to fulfil our aim to notify over 500,000 tax credit only households of the need to claim Universal Credit by the end of the 23/24 financial year.

01-24: UC - Transitional Provisions - The Additional Amount

This Memo gives guidance on The Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/1238)

The regulations add an additional amount of Universal Credit (UC) to claimants entitled (or previously entitled) to the transitional SDP amount or transitional SDP element (TSDPE). This is achieved by the introduction of a new Schedule 3 into the Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2014.

The regulations come into force on 14/02/2024. Qualifying new natural migration claimants after that date will have the benefit of these changes immediately. For claimants already in receipt of UC the time and manner of the payments will be arranged in due course in a time and manner to be decided by the Secretary of State.

assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65c504f09c5b7f000c951b87/adm-memo-01-24.pdf

HOW MUCH IS THE ADDITIONAL AMOUNT?

5. The amounts are¹:

	SINGLE CLAIMANT	JOINT CLAIMANT
ENHANCED DISABILITY PREMIUM	£84	£120
DISABILITY PREMIUM	£172	£246
DISABLED CHILD PREMIUM OR ELEMENT	£177 per disabled child	£177 per disabled child

1 UC (TP) Regs 2014, Sch 3 Para 5

Question for Department for Work and Pensions

UIN 12821, tabled on 2 February 2024

Question

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants of (a) tax credits only, (b) income-based jobseekers allowance, (c) employment support allowance and tax credits, (d) income support, (e) housing benefit only, other than people in supported accommodation or temporary accommodation and (f) housing benefit and tax credits only his Department plans to send a migration notice to in the 2024-25 financial year.

Answered on 8 February 2024

Move to UC Notifications (household) Aut-2023	24/25
JSA income based	20,000
ESA income based (and Child Tax Credits)	90,000
Income Support	110,000
Tax Credit & Housing Benefit	120,000
Tax Credit only	10,000
Housing Benefit only	100,000
Total	440,000

Notes:

- This is the number of households DWP estimated it would notify to move to UC as of Autumn-23 (where households are couples only one member of the couple is counted).
- The benefits are in a hierarchy so we do not double count households claiming multiple benefits. E.g. if a household claims JSA/ESA/IS and Tax Credits or Housing Benefit they only appear in the JSA/IS/ESA line. Households in the Tax Credit and Housing lines do not include households claiming ESA, JSA or IS.
- Numbers are rounded to the nearest 10k.
- Over 500,000 Tax Credit only households are scheduled to be notified in 2023/24

questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-02/12821

Vulnerable people encouraged to seek help with energy bills

People struggling with the cost of energy bills this winter are being encouraged to speak to their council about the financial help available from DWP's Household Support Fund.

The Government has invested over £2 billion into the Fund since it launched, with new statistics now showing more than £360 million has been paid to households for support with energy and water costs between October 2021 and March 2023.

With colder temperatures in recent weeks, the Fund can be used to make homes more energy efficient, as well as help households with bills.

To find out what support you may be eligible for go to [Help for Households - Get government cost of living support](#).

[Read the full press release](#)

Home Responsibilities Protection

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has started to write to people whose national insurance records may be affected by some missing periods of home responsibilities protection, inviting them to apply to fill potential gaps and ensure that they receive the state pension entitlement they are due.

Potentially impacted customers will be invited to check their eligibility and make an application to HMRC for home responsibilities protection. To help individuals determine their eligibility, a self-identification tool is available on www.gov.uk. Where an application is successful, those with a state pension impact will have their award corrected and any arrears paid. HMRC and DWP will also trigger a wider communications campaign working with key stakeholders and representative bodies to ensure that all those who may be eligible are aware of this.

Before making an application, people can learn more about home responsibilities protection, check the eligibility criteria and find the application form online at www.gov.uk/home-responsibilities-protection-hrp/eligibility. Customers under state pension age can check their national insurance and state pension forecasts online at www.gov.uk/check-state-pension.

Eligibility

You may still be able to apply for Home Responsibilities Protection (HRP), for full tax years (6 April to 5 April) between 1978 and 2010, if any of the following were true:

- you were claiming Child Benefit for a child under 16
- you were caring for a child with your partner who claimed Child Benefit instead of you
- you were getting Income Support because you were caring for someone who was sick or disabled
- you were caring for a sick or disabled person who was claiming certain benefits

You can also apply if, for a full tax year between 2003 and 2010, you were either:

- a foster carer
- caring for a friend or family member's child ('kinship carer') in Scotland
- hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-08/debates/24020830000011/HomeResponsibilitiesProtectionCorrectiveExercise
- www.gov.uk/home-responsibilities-protection-hrp/eligibility

Loss of EDP following natural migration to Universal Credit (FL v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (UC)[2024] UKUT 6 (AAC))

FL v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (UC): [2024] UKUT 6 (AAC).

Published 1 February 2024

Read the full decision in [UA-2021-001442-UOTH](https://www.tribunals.uk/decisions/2024/02/01/UA-2021-001442-UOTH).

Judicial Summary

Universal credit (UC) – Transitional protection arrangements for managed and natural migration to UC.

Appellant naturally migrated from legacy benefits to UC on moving to a different area.

UC entitlement less than previous legacy benefit entitlement.

No compensation for loss of enhanced disability premium (EDP) in breach of ECHR art 14.

Case on all fours with R (on the application of TP) v SSWP (TP (No.3)) – Universal Credit (Transitional Protection) Regulations 2014 regs 48, 63 and Sch.2 – Whether Regulations can be disapplied – [RR v SSWP \[2019\] UKSC 52](https://www.tribunals.uk/decisions/2019/02/01/RR-v-SSWP-2019-UKSC-52) considered and applied.



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba



Supporting students over the summer

Published 19 February 2024

Year-long financial support for undergraduates.

Higher education students can apply to spread their student financial support package over a 12-month period for the first time this coming academic year.

The year-long package of support will be available for eligible undergraduate students from August 2024. The change will ensure that payments of relevant student loans and bursaries can continue through the summer months. This follows a successful two-year programme, which saw care experienced students being given the option of 12-month support.

Care-Experienced students will continue to receive additional support for their living costs under the Summer Accommodation Grant from Summer 2024. Students eligible for the grant – which will replace the Care-Experienced Accommodation Grant – will be entitled to a payment of up to £1,330 to help ensure they do not fall into rent arrears over the summer.

These changes will coincide with the £2,400 increase to the annual support package, which sees the main undergraduate funding package rise up to £11,400.

BACKGROUND

Students can continue to apply for the nine-month support package when they apply through SAAS for the 2024-25 academic year.

The overall annual payment will not change for those on the nine-month or 12-month options. The only difference will be those who take payments over the full year will see lower monthly payments than those who remain on the standard nine-month plan.

[Increasing financial support for Scottish students – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

The eligibility of the Summer Accommodation Grant will continue to be the same as the previous Care-Experienced Accommodation Grant. The amounts of grant that students can receive has changed, and from Summer 2024, eligible students in a tenancy agreement will be entitled to receive a grant of £1,330. Eligible students living with family members or friends will be entitled to a grant of £665.

Further information on eligibility for summer support can be found at www.saas.gov.uk.

One million payments for Scotland's carers

Published 23 February 2024

£280 million paid to carers since launch of Carer's Allowance Supplement

A benefit only available in Scotland has delivered over one million payments to unpaid carers, new [figures](#) show.

Almost £280 million has been paid to over 150,000 carers since [Carer's Allowance Supplement](#) was introduced in September 2018.

The benefit, one of seven available only in Scotland, was created to recognise the vital role of unpaid carers.

Eligible carers *get payments twice a year, normally in June and December. In the 2023-2024 financial year each payment was £270.50.*

Carer's Allowance Supplement is paid automatically to people who are getting Carer's Allowance or Carer Support Payment on a particular date.

Carer Support Payment, paid by Social Security Scotland, was introduced in three local authority areas in November last year.

It is replacing Carer's Allowance from the Department for Work and Pensions in Scotland and will be rolled out across the country in Autumn 2024.

To find out about eligibility for Carer's Allowance Supplement visit mygov.scot/carers-allowance-supplement or call Social Security Scotland free on 0800 182 2222.

Information on other support for carers is available at mygov.scot/help-if-youre-a-carer



DWP benefit sanctions have gotten tougher amid cost of living crisis, data shows

Benefit sanctions have become harsher amid the cost of living crisis according to newly released government data

Benefit sanctions imposed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have become harsher amid the cost of living crisis, according to newly released government data – with the average penalty lasting a week longer in 2023 than in 2019.

According to data on the 'duration' of sanctions published last week, the average – or mean – length of a **universal credit** sanction rose from 38 days in 2019 to 45 days between January and November 2023, the most recent figures available.

The sanctions duration data is measured by the month in which the sanction ended. Just under 6% of sanctions that ended in 2019 lasted more than six months – but that rose to 10% of sanctions that ended in 2023.

Read the full article on the Big Issue website – www.bigissue.com/news/social-justice/dwp-benefit-sanctions-tougher-cost-of-living-crisis/

One in five claimants have benefits stopped by not switching to universal credit, study finds

This is despite the DWP admitting that up to 900,000 people on legacy benefits would be worse off under universal credit

One in five people on legacy benefits who are invited to move to universal credit do not claim and ultimately have their benefits stopped, a new report has found. Almost all of these people are receiving tax credits.

By the end of 2024, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) plans to move **900,000 people** receiving means-tested 'legacy benefits' onto the newer **universal credit** (UC) payment.

But the shift seems to be leaving some people behind.

By the end of December 2023, DWP had sent 346,550 migration notices. Of the 148,700 closed cases, 31,500 (21%) resulted in households having their legacy benefit stopped without moving to universal credit.

Read the full article on the Big Issue's website – www.bigissue.com/news/social-justice/universal-credit-benefits-stopped-tax-credits-dwp/

Destitute EU nationals with Pre-Settled Status can rely on EU Charter of Fundamental Rights to obtain Universal Credit

Case update – 7 and 8 February 2024

The Supreme Court refused the Secretary of State's application for permission to appeal on 7 February 2024 on the basis the application did not raise an arguable point of law. The Court of Appeal's judgment is now final and the DWP must implement the judgment in relation to previously stayed cases and new claims.

The materials on this page for advisers were updated on 08 February 2024.

Read the Court of Appeal judgment

Read the full article on CPAG's website – cpag.org.uk/welfare-rights/test-cases/test-case-updates/destitute-eu-nationals-pss-can-rely-eu-charter-fundamental-rights-obtain





David Webster (University of Glasgow) briefings and publications on benefit sanctions



Dr David Webster is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow (Urban Studies) at the University of Glasgow. His continuing research on the labour market and social impacts of deindustrialisation is currently mainly on benefit conditionality. It also includes work on sickness/disability claims and their relationship to other aspects of worklessness and to population health; wider aspects of Universal Credit; and the changing pattern of lone parenthood.

[Dr David Webster's page on the University of Glasgow School of Social and Political Sciences website](#)

View the full article on CPAG's website – cpag.org.uk/policy-and-research/latest-policy-briefings-and-reports/david-webster-briefings

Child Maintenance Service reform

The Government is reforming the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) to crack down on parents who refuse to pay and ensure children get the support they deserve more quickly.

The Government is also removing the £20 application fee for child maintenance service and making all applications free from 26 February 2024, to ensure no child misses out on vital support.

Also announced are new powers for the CMS to write off debt worth less than £7 in a small number of inactive cases that would have been closed were it not for small outstanding balances.

[Read the full press release](#)

Information for parents on how to make arrangements for maintenance payments can be found on the [Get Help Arranging Child Maintenance](#) webpage.

Millions on universal credit left cold, hungry and in debt – because the system is failing us



The Trussell Trust is calling for universal credit to be increased to ensure that people don't go hungry and cold because they cannot afford the essentials

Universal credit should protect people from tough times and provide a strong foundation for people to recover from setbacks and grasp new opportunities, but it's clearly failing to do either.

Our new research has this week revealed the devastating consequences of the inadequacy of universal credit across the UK. More than half of those claiming [universal credit](#) aren't even able to afford enough food, with 780,000 forced to access a food bank in the last month. Many people are unable to afford to use their oven or keep their house warm and 2.4 million have fallen into debt because they couldn't keep up with essential bills.

When record numbers of people are being left with no option but to use a food bank, it's clear that the systems that are supposed to be there to support us are not fit for purpose. [Food banks](#) do all they can to support people, but charities can't pick up the slack of a broken security system.

Read the full article at – www.bigissue.com/opinion/universal-credit-debt-hungry-trussell-trust/

See also – www.bigissue.com/news/social-justice/universal-credit-benefits-food-banks-uk/



Money Guiders Scotland network events

There are two Money Guiders Scotland network events coming up in March that you might be interested in. These are the two remaining workshops in the current series of 'Wellbeing for Money Guiders' sessions with Money Advice Scotland, based on their wellbeing training programme.



Talking about wellbeing

Wednesday, 6 March (2-4pm)

This workshop will discuss why and how to open conversations about your own or others' wellbeing. By the end of the session, you should:

- Understand the purpose and benefits of discussing wellbeing in the workplace
- Have strategies for opening conversations about their own wellbeing and that of others
- Understand some things to avoid when it comes to talking about wellbeing

Register for Talking about wellbeing

Manager wellbeing training

Tuesday, 19 March (2-4pm)

This workshop is aimed at managers and explores how to create a well workplace culture. By the end of the session, you should:

- Understand various types of wellbeing and why workplace wellbeing matters
- Have strategies and ways to implement a wellbeing-friendly workplace culture
- Have an improved understanding on how to approach and support staff wellbeing

Register for Manager wellbeing training

Want to catch up with other events?

Check out the network's previous events in the [Money Guiders Scotland](#) group, part of the [Money Guiders Community Hub](#). Sign-up today for this online community and catch up in your own time.

50,000 benefit decisions overturned without any new evidence

New figures reveal that 50,000 disability benefit decisions have been overturned without requiring any new evidence.

Tribunals hearing Personal Independence Payment (PIP) appeals have overturned decisions in 50,000 cases without needing to see any evidence unavailable to the DWP. A further [30,000 claimants won their appeal](#) based on oral evidence that could have been obtained by the DWP. Less than 1,000 successful appeals were based on new written evidence given to the Government.

This is despite the fact that all tribunal appeals have already gone through a two-stage examination process. In total, approximately three-quarters of all PIP tribunal cases end in the claimant's favour. The DWP is facing public backlash following the unveiling of the figures, for forcing disabled people into court to obtain the support that they should be receiving regardless.

50,000 benefit decisions overturned without any new evidence

**The
Justice
Gap.**



Poor data-sharing at DWP short-changing universal credit claimants

Universal credit (UC) claimants are not always getting extra amounts of UC they're entitled to when they become eligible for some other benefits because of poor data-sharing within the DWP, Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) warns.

When people on UC become entitled to Child Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Carer's Allowance this usually means they can have a disabled child element or a carer's element added to their UC.

The disabled child element of UC is worth £456.89 per month (higher rate) or £146.31 (lower rate), the carer's element £185.86.

But claimants don't necessarily know they're entitled to the extra UC, and yet the DWP relies on them to notify it of their new entitlement. As a result, parents of disabled children and carers are too often underpaid benefits.

Read the full article on CPAG's site – cpag.org.uk/news/poor-data-sharing-dwp-short-changing-universal-credit-claimants

Contracts reveal how companies should carry out benefit assessments over the next five years

Key details reveal how four private sector providers have been told to carry out health and disability benefit assessments over the next five years, after being awarded £2.8 billion-worth of contracts by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

- **The contracts** were awarded last year to outsourcing giants Capita, Serco, Ingeus UK and Maximus to provide "functional health assessments" from September this year across the UK.
- In each of five UK areas, each contractor will be responsible for providing assessments for personal independence payment (PIP), employment and support allowance, universal credit, and 15 other "specialist" benefits.
- face-to-face assessments will have to take place within a 90-minute public transport journey from the claimant's home, which the contracts say should be regarded as "an absolute maximum". Only "a small minority" of claimants should face such a journey, the contracts say.
- All assessments will have to take place in ground-floor locations, which "must be easy for all customers to reach", unless otherwise agreed in advance with DWP.
- Claimants will only be allowed to "fail to attend" a work capability assessment once – including those carried out by telephone or at home – with their benefit application returned by the contractor to DWP after a second failure.
- Claimants can be accompanied to their assessment by a "companion", who will be allowed to contribute evidence.
- Every claimant who gives at least one day's notice will be entitled to have their assessment audio-recorded.
- The contracts also state that only occupational therapists, nurses, physiotherapists and doctors will be able to carry out assessments, while paramedics will only be allowed to carry out PIP assessments, and only "doctors or physiotherapists" who have been "trained to write clerical reports" will be able to carry out WCAs in a claimant's home.
- In every year of their contracts, the companies will have to increase the number of disabled people they employ on those contracts, and increase the proportion of disabled people working on the contracts.

The successful bidder in Scotland for WCA's was Maximus. *The Scottish government will continue to take responsibility for adult disability payment and child disability payment, its replacements for PIP and disability living allowance*



Ending Destitution for People with No Recourse to Public Funds

ELECTED MEMBER BRIEFING NOTE

We will use the IS website and elected member e-bulletin to publicise and provide access to the briefing notes. [All briefing notes](#) in the series can be accessed on the IS website.

The Improvement Service (IS) has developed an Elected Members Briefing Series to help elected members keep pace with key issues affecting local government.

This briefing provides elected members with information on the impact of No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) conditions upon people and communities and highlights the critical role members can play in raising awareness and supporting people at risk of destitution.

www.improvementservice.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0028/46099/EM-Briefing-Ending-destitution-for-people-with-NRPF.pdf

Campaigners “bitterly disappointed” as Budget vote “stalls progress on child poverty”

Along with other members of the End Child Poverty coalition, CPAG in Scotland sent a [Budget Scorecard](#) to all MSPs ahead of the vote. Their scorecard concludes that there is a lack of concerted further investment in the social security, childcare, housing and employment infrastructure needed.



They say that Budget choices – such as funding a Council Tax freeze that [will disproportionately benefit better off households whilst providing little if any support for low-income families](#) – do not align with the Government’s stated priority of tackling poverty. They welcome the progressive changes to income tax but say that when set against the resources spent on the council tax freeze, they do not raise the significant new revenue needed to invest in meeting Scotland’s child poverty targets.

Read CPAG’s full article at - cpag.org.uk/news/campaigners-bitterly-disappointed-budget-vote-stalls-progress-child-poverty

