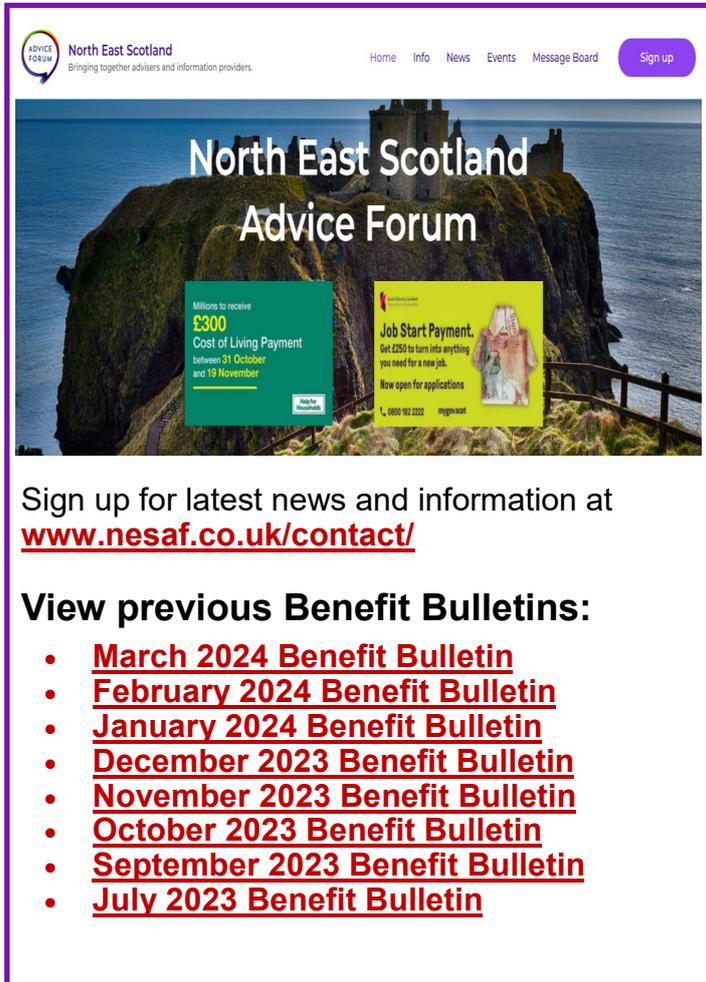


North East Scotland Advice Forum is a local network for people working in advice services to share information and experiences. The Forum meets quarterly throughout the year.

April 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 scenic image of a castle on a cliffside with the text 'North East Scotland Advice Forum'. Below this, there are two promotional boxes: one for a £300 Cost of Living Payment and another for a Job Start Payment. At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a sign-up prompt and a list of previous benefit bulletins.

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

View previous Benefit Bulletins:

- [March 2024 Benefit Bulletin](#)
- [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 >>>



Debt Advice Scotland workshops

Reminder that the first DAS workshop will be held on **Thursday 25 April** and **Wednesday 1 May 2024**.

Delivered via Microsoft Teams, this hour-long event will be covering discretionary condition variation and will include:

- when to complete a discretionary condition variation
- how to complete a discretionary condition variation
- any questions you may have on this topic

If you wish to attend one of these sessions, please reply using the registration link below.

Similarly, if you have any topics you would like covered in the future, let us know using the survey link below.

DAS workshop registration and survey

If you have any further questions that are not covered, please contact [AiB DAS team](#).

Transfer of Carer's Allowance claims to Carer Support Payment in Scotland

The transfer of existing Carer's Allowance claims to Carer Support Payment for customers who live in Scotland began on 26 February 2024. Carer Support Payment is administered and paid by Social Security Scotland.

Customers living in Scotland who currently get Carer's Allowance do not need to take any action. Their claims will be transferred to Carer Support Payment between February 2024 and spring 2025.

Carer Support Payment is available for new claims in select pilot areas and will be available across Scotland by autumn 2024.

Further information is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and Social Security Scotland's website mygov.scot.

Move to Universal Credit update

Move to Universal Credit (UC) activity for those claiming Tax Credits continues and we are on track to fulfil our aim of inviting over 500,000 households to claim UC by the end of the 23/24 financial year. Move to Universal Credit activity is also now operating in all Jobcentre Plus Districts throughout Great Britain, a month earlier than originally planned. Further information was outlined in a recent [Written Statement from the Minister for Employment](#).

As Move to Universal Credit activity is now operating in all Jobcentre Districts of Great Britain, our approach to migrating the benefit combinations outlined in the Ministerial update will be by benefit type and not by geography.

Additional Support for DWP Customers: booklet

How we provide additional support to our customers and our future plans, considering new technology and modernisation of our services.

Building on the work of DWP's Customer Experience teams, this document sets out how we are currently supporting customers who may require additional support to access our services and explains what we have planned and our future aspirations, considering new technology and service modernisation

www.gov.uk/government/publications/additional-support-for-dwp-customers-booklet

Help to Claim Support from 1 April 2024

Following a recent grant competition, we are pleased to advise that Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland will continue to deliver Help to Claim support independently across England, Scotland, and Wales with up to a further £38m investment planned for two years from April 2024.

This means that free confidential and impartial support will continue to be available to help people make a new Universal Credit claim, including those invited to move from legacy benefits (including tax credit) to Universal Credit, and manage their claim, up to receiving their first correct payment. The support will continue to be provided through telephony and digital channels.

For those individuals who are unable to access support via these channels, they will be able to go to their local jobcentre, where jobcentre staff will identify the right support to meet their needs. This support is already in place and available to those individuals who choose to seek advice from the Department directly in making a claim to Universal Credit.

[Read the Written Ministerial Statement](#)

HMRC to close self-assessment helpline from April to October each year

HMRC has announced that its self assessment phonenumber will close between April and September every year following a trial of the move in 2023, while also making permanent cuts to the VAT and PAYE helplines.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is today announcing changes to its services as it continues encouraging customers to get the information they need and carry out their transactions online wherever possible.

Changes to helpline services to encourage people to go online first have been **successfully trialled** over the last year and are being rolled out to become a permanent feature of the way HMRC supports customers from 8 April 2024.

The changes are:

- between April and September, the Self Assessment helpline will be closed and customers will be directed to self-serve through HMRC's highly-rated online services
- between October and March the Self Assessment helpline will be open to deal with priority queries – customers with queries that can be quickly and easily resolved online will be directed to HMRC's online services
- the VAT helpline will be open for 5 days every month ahead of the deadline for filing VAT returns – outside of this time, customers will be directed to use HMRC's online services
- the PAYE helpline will no longer take calls from customers relating to refunds – customers will be directed to use HMRC's online services
- HMRC advisers will continue to always be available during normal office opening hours to support customers who cannot use online services or who have health or personal circumstances that mean they need extra support
- all other helplines will continue to operate as they do currently

www.gov.uk/government/news/hmrc-encourages-customers-to-interact-online-with-changes-to-its-self-assessment-pay-and-vat-services

Support with Employee Health and Disability

Our new service, **Support with Employee Health and Disability**, is live nationally. The service supports employers through common health and disability scenarios at work. Focused on 'must-do's', the service explains legal obligations, and provides step by step guidance, prompting the right actions at the right times. This includes support with health and disability-related conversations, making reasonable adjustments, signposting to other government services such as Disability Confident, Access to Work and sources of expert advice like occupational health.

Pension Credit toolkit – share your expertise

Pension Credit gives eligible pensioners extra money to help with living costs if they're over State Pension age and on a low income. To help raise awareness of Pension Credit we developed an online toolkit to help stakeholders, like yourselves, promote it.

We are keen to hear your views on the suitability of the **Pension Credit stakeholder toolkit** content and assets, so we can make improvements.

You can share your views by completing this **short survey** (less than 10 minutes).

If you have any questions or would like to share feedback directly to use, please email chiltonmannion.jobshare@dwp.gov.uk.



Teen carers urged to apply for Scottish benefit

Since being introduced in 2019 by the Scottish Government, Young Carer Grant has delivered over £3 million to over 6,600 teenage carers.

However a leading carers charity says many young people who look after others do not recognise themselves as carers, as they see the support they give as just part of family life. As a result, they do not know they're entitled to benefits.

Scottish Government figures suggest around 25% of those eligible for Young Carer Grant in 2022-23 did not apply.

The Carers Trust has joined Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice Shirley-Anne Somerville to urge teenagers who look after others to recognise their vital caring role and to apply for the support available to them.

Young Carers Grant, paid by Social Security Scotland, is available to those aged 16-18 who spend 16 or more hours a week looking after someone who gets a disability benefit.

Young carers may also be eligible for [**Carer Support Payment**](#) from Social Security Scotland or [**Carer's Allowance**](#) from the Department for Work and Pensions. [**Carer's Allowance Supplement**](#) is also available as an extra payment for people in Scotland who get Carer Support Payment or Carer's Allowance on a particular date each year. These dates are available on [**mygov.scot/carers-allowance-supplement**](https://mygov.scot/carers-allowance-supplement).

[**www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/news-events/news/teen-carers-urged-to-apply-for-scottish-benefit**](https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/news-events/news/teen-carers-urged-to-apply-for-scottish-benefit)



Carer's Allowance awards start moving to Carer Support Payment in Scotland

Work to transfer the awards of people in Scotland from Carer's Allowance to Carer Support Payment has begun.

Carer's Allowance, paid by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), is being replaced by Carer Support Payment paid by Social Security Scotland.

The transfer from Carer's Allowance to Carer Support Payment will happen gradually with all awards expected to be transferred by Spring 2025.

People do not need to do anything as their award will transfer automatically. The amount they receive will not change. Both the DWP and Social Security Scotland will write to people in advance to let them know that their award will be transferring. Carers should continue to report any changes in their circumstances to the DWP until they receive a letter from Social Security Scotland telling them their award has transferred.

Carer Support Payment provides £76.75 a week to eligible carers. The benefit is available to new applicants in Dundee City, Perth and Kinross and the Western Isles.

Carers who live outside of those areas can apply for Carer's Allowance from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Carer Support Payment will be available in more areas from later in 2024 and across Scotland by Autumn 2024. More information is available at [**mygov.scot/carers-support-payment**](https://mygov.scot/carers-support-payment)

[**www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/news-events/news/carers-allowance-awards-start-moving-to-carer-support-payment-in-scotland**](https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/news-events/news/carers-allowance-awards-start-moving-to-carer-support-payment-in-scotland)



New text and email updates for applicants

We are introducing new text and email updates to let people know how their applications for Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment are progressing.

The new updates are being introduced as part of our commitment to improve the experience for people applying for and receiving our benefits.

People get to choose if they want to receive texts, emails or both about how their application is advancing through the system.

We have already started sending text messages and emails to applicants to let them know that we have received their application.

In early March we will expand the system so that applicants will be sent further updates at two separate stages in the process:

- When we have confirmed the applicant's personal details (like their name, address and eligibility for benefits)
- When the appropriate team starts reviewing their application

Once the application has been reviewed, the applicant will be sent a letter confirming if they are entitled to benefits and how much they are due.

www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/news-events/news/new-text-and-email-updates-for-applicants

The Scottish Government has published a document named "Scottish Discretionary Housing Payment Guidance Manual"

Here is the link to the document. [Scottish Discretionary Housing Payment: guidance manual - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/news/scottish-discretionary-housing-payment-guidance-manual)

Housing Bill published

Published 27 March 2024

New legislation which aims to keep people in their homes and help prevent homelessness has been published.

The Housing (Scotland) Bill will introduce an 'ask and act' duty on social landlords and bodies, such as health boards and the police, to ask about a person's housing situation and act to avoid them becoming homeless wherever possible.

It also reforms provision for people threatened with homelessness up to six months ahead and includes provisions for tenants experiencing domestic abuse.

The Bill will outline proposals for a New Deal for Tenants, a key part of the Bute House Agreement between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party.

Proposals include long term rent controls for private tenancies, new rights to keep pets, decorate rented homes and stronger protection against eviction.

www.gov.scot/news/housing-bill-published/





Scottish Adult Disability Living Allowance planned

Like-for-like benefit to support seamless transition.

Plans for a Scottish Adult Disability Living Allowance, a new benefit to provide continued support to around 66,000 adults with a disability or long-term health condition, have been unveiled.

Under new proposals, eligible people who receive Disability Living Allowance through the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions would have their award transferred automatically to the new Scottish benefit. They would then have the opportunity to apply for Adult Disability Payment if they choose.

Legislation to create the 'closed' benefit – for existing recipients of the Disability Living Allowance that it supersedes – will be laid in the Scottish Parliament this year.

Social Justice Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville said:

"I'm pleased that we can progress plans to bring forward legislation to create a Scottish Adult Disability Living Allowance and give people the opportunity to remain on this benefit for as long as they are eligible.

"Once transferred, people can continue to be paid Scottish Adult Disability Allowance or apply for our flagship Adult Disability Payment if they prefer.

"Around 137,000 people are now receiving our Adult Disability Payment and it has provided almost £462 million to disabled people since it was launched in 2022."

Background

Scottish Adult Disability Living Allowance will be a 'closed' benefit, available only to those whose awards are transferred onto it and not open to new applicants – who should instead apply for Adult Disability Payment.

Under these proposals, eligible people who receive Disability Living Allowance through the UK Department for Work and Pensions would have their award transferred automatically to the Scottish payment.

The new Scottish benefit will be introduced on a 'like-for-like' basis, with clients' benefit components, rates and review periods being upheld by Social Security Scotland, ensuring the transfer will be straightforward for those affected. Subject to legislative approval it Scottish Adult Disability Living Allowance is expected to launch in early 2025.

People in Scotland currently receiving Personal Independence Payments will continue to have their awards moved onto Adult Disability Payment.

www.gov.scot/news/scottish-adult-disability-living-allowance-planned/

Carer Support Payment – Free Stakeholder Events

Carer Support Payment launched in the pilot areas of Dundee City, Perth & Kinross and the Western Isles on 20 November 2023.

From 24 June 2024 we are expanding the launch of the benefit to Angus, North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire

Social Security Scotland will be hosting a series of events to make sure you and the people you support have all the relevant information about Carer Support Payment before it opens for new applications in these additional areas. This will include how it will be different from Carer's Allowance and how the service will be delivered by Social Security Scotland.

- [Carer Support Payment – Stakeholder Event - 1 May](#)
- [Carer Support Payment - Stakeholder Event - 9 May](#)
- [Carer Support Payment - Stakeholder Event - 14 May](#)



New regulations have been issued in relation to national living wage (NLW) and national minimum wage (NMW) rates in the UK, in force from 1 April 2024

SI.No.432/2024

	From April 2023	From April 2024	Percentage increase
National living wage (age 21 and over)	£10.42	£11.44	9.8
National minimum wage (age 18-20)	£7.49	£8.60	14.8
National minimum wage (under 18)	£5.28	£6.40	21.2
Apprentice rate	£5.28	£6.40	21.2
Accommodation rate	£9.10	£9.99	9.8

Unpaid carers in employment forced to reduce their working hours for the fifth consecutive year as Carer Poverty Coalition publishes its demands of government

- ***Unpaid carers forced to reduce their working hours from April 2024.***
- ***Carer Poverty Coalition of 130 organisations is calling on political parties to commit to a full review of financial support for unpaid carers and rules preventing them from working alongside caring role.***

Unpaid carers who have part-time jobs alongside their caring role will have to decrease their working hours for the fifth consecutive year as the earnings threshold for receiving Carer's Allowance fails to keep pace with the National Living Wage.

In April, the earnings threshold for claiming Carer's Allowance will increase by 8.6% to £151 per week. However, the National Living Wage is once again due to rise at a higher rate, by 9.8% to £11.44 per hour.

Over the last five years, the number of hours carers have been able to work earning the National Living Wage, while also receiving Carer's Allowance, has shrunk from just under 15 hours a week in 2019 to just over 13 hours and 12 minutes from April.

This represents a loss of nearly 2 hours a week, totaling 13 days over a year – a substantial loss for those, whose caring responsibilities already make them vulnerable to poverty.

The Carer Poverty Coalition, a group of 130 national and local organisations campaigning to end poverty amongst unpaid carers, has today published a manifesto calling on all political parties to commit to a full review of Carer's Allowance and other means tested benefits available to carers. This review should include the level of financial support offered to unpaid carers and an increase of the earnings limit to 21 hours per week, pegged at National Living Wage. This will help to ensure unpaid carers are more financially resilient and help those able to work part-time to do so.

The Carer Poverty Coalition is also urging political parties to announce policies to prevent unpaid carers from falling into poverty in the first place, to provide specific support to stay in and return to work as well as targeted policies to support younger and older carers.

A recent survey by Carers UK found that over a third of carers (34%) had cut back on essentials like food or heating, whilst 45% of those receiving Carer's Allowance were struggling to make ends meet.

www.carersuk.org/press-releases/unpaid-carers-in-employment-forced-to-reduce-their-working-hours-for-the-fifth-consecutive-year-as-carer-poverty-coalition-publishes-its-demands-of-government/



The new edition of CPAG's Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook is available to pre-order

The new edition of [CPAG's Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook](#) is available to pre-order.

Fully updated for 2024/25, this edition includes:

- managed migration
- new information on universal credit work-related requirements for parents and part-time workers
- new caselaw relating to personal independence payment descriptors
- comprehensive information about entitlement to all benefits including statutory payments such as sick pay and paternity leave
- fully updated benefit and tax credit rates

[Pre-order the print edition](#)

Please contact bookorders@cpag.org.uk with any questions.

Shelter win protects disability benefits for people moving home

An important ruling at the Upper Tribunal held that people with severe disabilities should not face losing benefits just because they move from one type of home to another. Shelter legal adviser Elliot Kent explains what this means for our client and other people in her situation.

Read the full article blog.shelter.org.uk/2024/03/shelter-legal-win-protects-disability-benefits-for-people-moving-home/

[SSWP v JA \(UC\): \[2024\] UKUT 52 \(AAC\)](#)

Council Tax – A type of debt that you particularly need to avoid

Myles Fitt: the harshness and immediacy of the Council Tax collection process is not well known. It's March, so of course Council Tax (CT) is dominating the news again.

As the talking heads ponder the big political issue – to freeze or not to freeze – we've just published research showing that 170,000 people per month in Scotland missed a CT payment last year, and so got into arrears.

You may think everybody falls behind sometimes, don't they? What's so special about CT debt? Well, the answer lies in what happens to those people: what's the consequence of missing a CT payment? You'd be surprised how fast and drastic the consequences are.

Read the full article at tfn.scot/opinion/a-type-of-debt-that-you-particularly-need-to-avoid

Briefing note: Managed migration to universal credit

At least 340,000 people who currently claim legacy housing benefit (HB) will be issued with [migration notices](#) in 2024 telling them to apply for universal credit (UC) within a 3 month period. People who do not apply before the deadline risk having their benefits payments ended.

Shelter is concerned that due to the significant differences between housing benefit and universal credit, there will be claimants who struggle to make a new claim on time. If their housing benefit is cut off as a result, this puts them at risk of rent arrears and homelessness. We are calling for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to slow the rollout to people who only claim housing benefit and make sure there are adequate safeguards in place to identify and support people who may find the move to UC difficult.

england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/briefing_note_managed_migration_to_universal_credit