

## **DWP Stakeholder Bulletin – March 2014**

Welcome to the March 2014 issue of the DWP Stakeholder Bulletin.

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### **The Budget 2014**

On 19 March the Chancellor set out two key changes to the welfare system, to promote work and personal responsibility and ensure welfare expenditure is more sustainable in the future. These will:

- Put expenditure on a long-term sustainable footing by capping welfare spending, and ensure that increases in spending do not go unchecked.
- Support hardworking families by providing tax-free childcare for working families not already receiving support through tax credits, with support for 20% of costs up to £10,000 for each child under 12.

The full [Budget](#) and supporting documents, including other DWP measures, can be found on GOV.UK.

### **Universal Credit gets animated with the Money Advice Service**

Five new animated videos to help claimants understand Universal Credit are now available on the Money Advice Service website.

Four videos cover the steps involved in [choosing](#), [opening](#), [setting up](#) and [managing](#) a bank account.

The fifth video, called '[Worried about paying your rent](#)', provides easy to follow information and guidance for those who need advice about managing and paying their rent.

A new landlord's section will be available later this spring to provide information on changes to Housing Benefit. It will also contain information on Universal Credit and how it affects landlords and tenants, including support and practical help available.

### **Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim process time**

The recent NAO report 'PIP Early Findings' acknowledges that we have delivered the core elements of PIP on time and within budget. The report also highlights the delays that some claimants are experiencing in receiving decision on their claims.

Claims for PIP are currently taking longer than expected. This is because the time to get a decision depends on individual circumstances and in some cases is taking 21-26 weeks.

DWP is taking steps to speed up the claims process, including improving the process for claims made under the [special rules for terminal illness](#). People won't miss out as payments are back-dated.

Visit [gov.uk/dwp/pip-toolkit](http://gov.uk/dwp/pip-toolkit) for more information about PIP for support organisations.

### **Fifth Independent Review of the Work Capability Assessment**

Dr Paul Litchfield, Chief Medical Officer and Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing for BT Group, will continue in his role as Independent Reviewer for the fifth, and final, statutory independent review of the Work Capability Assessment (WCA). The report will be published before the end of 2014.

- In the [fourth review](#) of the WCA, Dr Litchfield concluded that good progress had been made in implementing recommendations from previous years and made 37 further recommendations for improvements.
- A formal government response to the fourth review will be published by the end of March 2014.

### **Replacement of the Benefits Adviser**

DWP is improving its support for self service customers who want to determine their potential eligibility to benefits and tax credits.

The existing service, the Benefits Adviser will go off-line from 31 March 2014. From this date, visitors to GOV.UK will be signposted towards independent, online benefit calculators offered by other organisations. Links to calculators will be placed on GOV.UK.

Any organisation can publish a calculator on GOV.UK provided it meets the [digital standards](#).

Any links associated with Benefits Adviser on your organisation's website should be redirected to <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-adviser>

## **Removal of 16 Hour Rule for Traineeships**

DWP has removed the 16 hour rule on training for all Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants participating in a Traineeship in England.

Traineeships focus on young people aged 16-23 years old, who:

- Are living in England
- Are interested in work
- Need extra help to get and sustain an Apprenticeship or other job.

From 3 March, all JSA claimants, aged 18-23 (some 18 year olds remain subject to Qualifying Young People regulations), can participate in the training elements of a Traineeship for up to 30 hours per week without it affecting entitlement to JSA.

This will give providers and employers greater flexibility to design traineeships that meet individual learners' needs. The removal of the 16 hour rule applies only to the Traineeship programme and remains in place for all other relevant training.

## **Tax credits renewals – 31 July deadline**

HMRC and Jobcentre Plus are encouraging people to renew their tax credits before the 31 July deadline.

Call centres become especially busy the week before the deadline, so if claimants call to renew their award during the final week, it may take longer to get through.

This year, HMRC are providing some claimants with the income information their employer(s) or occupational pension provider(s) has provided. Claimants should check this information and let HMRC know if anything needs to be changed or is missing. HMRC also need to know if claimants' circumstances have changed.

For more information visit the [HMRC website](#)

## **Volunteering to be a business mentor reaps rewards**

Levi Roots has teamed up with DWP again to produce a video to talk about the exciting opportunity he's had by becoming a New Enterprise Allowance business mentor.

In the [new video](#), Dean, who is being mentored by Levi, explains how the advice and support he's received has given him more confidence and helped him develop his skateboard culture business.

Levi says: "I've found being a business mentor to Dean very rewarding and it's given me the opportunity to share my own experiences of starting up in business. I didn't realise how much I would gain from being a mentor too. "

New Enterprise Allowance can provide money and support to help people start their own business, if they get certain benefits and have a viable business idea.

For more information about how you could help someone like Dean go to [dwp.gov.uk/nea](http://dwp.gov.uk/nea)

## **Constant improvement in a competitive market**

Work Programme performance has dramatically improved and by December 2013 had helped more than 498,000 people into long-term work.

To continue this improvement, the contract in North East Yorkshire and the Humber, currently run by the Newcastle College Group, will be terminated with 12 months' notice, as it was the lowest performing contract when assessed against a range of measures. The notice of termination has been issued under the voluntary break clause in the contract and not for any breach of contract by Newcastle College Group.

Over the next few months Department for Work and Pensions will be conducting a procurement competition to identify a replacement provider.

To ensure participants are not disadvantaged, DWP will seek to support the provider's supply chain during this transition.

Read more about the Work Programme [here](#).

## **DWP consultations**

All current live DWP consultations and the latest published consultation responses are available on the [consultation pages](#) of GOV.UK.

If you have a comment or feedback about this bulletin, please email the [Strategic Engagement and Partnerships team](#).

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