

DWP Stakeholder Bulletin – September 2014

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Local councils help claimants prepare for Universal Credit

DWP has announced a series of new trials to help claimants get ready for Universal Credit, along with 11 partnerships that will deliver local support.

The trials will be run as partnerships between jobcentres and local authorities across Great Britain. These partnerships will look at the best way to prepare claimants for work, help them with online access and digital support and to equip them to manage their finances on a monthly basis.

Each trial will be tailored to local needs. Local authorities will work with third sector organisations, voluntary groups or social landlords to deliver support to claimants.

Local Authorities chosen to deliver support are: Derby City, Islington, South Staffordshire, West Lindsey, Argyll and Bute, Dundee City, Blaenau Gwent, Carmarthenshire and joint bids from Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark, Northumberland and South Tyneside and Westminster and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

For more information read [Lord Freud's speech](#) to the Local Government Association or the [initial local support services framework](#).

DWP response to the Oakley review

Matthew Oakley's independent review of sanctions was released on 22 July alongside a Government response.

The review focussed on benefit sanctions for JSA claimants who have been sanctioned after being referred to a mandatory back to work scheme.

It also made 17 recommendations around communications and processes related to the sanctions system, which Government has responded positively to.

A number of improvements have already been implemented following this review, including strengthening the processes around hardship, a review of all communications around sanctions and the publication of a sanctions leaflet on [GOV.UK](#)

Read the [review and the government response](#).

Child maintenance: Direct Pay

Significant changes to statutory child maintenance have been introduced during 2014.

The Child Support Agency (CSA) has closed to new applications. The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) now deals with all statutory child maintenance applications and there is a £20 application fee for this service. Rather than use of the service being a default option, separated parents are encouraged to make their own family based arrangements and the Government has invested around £14m in community based projects to support families in doing this.

For those families which choose to enter into the CMS, there are two levels of service available. Collect and Pay is where the CMS makes a calculation and transfers payments between parents. There is a charge for this service but parents can avoid these charges by arranging payments between themselves using Direct Pay. With this method, there is reassurance that if payments are not made, parents can return to Collect and Pay at any time. Find out more from the [Child Maintenance Toolkit](#).

Accessible Britain Challenge

The [Accessible Britain Challenge](#) calls on local communities to become more accessible and inclusive for disabled people.

The aim is to encourage individuals and organisations to work with the UK's 12.2 million disabled people to remove barriers that stop them from playing a full and active part in their communities.

Shopping is the most difficult experience according to disabled people, followed by going to the cinema, theatre and concerts. Pubs and restaurants were third on the list. There are also problems accessing libraries, art galleries, museums and sporting events.

At the end of the challenge, communities that are making a real difference will be recognised through new awards including:

- Improved mobility
- Innovative use of buildings, places and spaces
- Safer neighbourhoods
- Inclusive social activities.

The challenge follows the Government's disability strategy "[Fulfilling Potential: Making it happen](#)".

Money Advice Debt Service

The [Money Advice Service](#) has launched a new free online service to help people manage their debts.

The Money Advice Service [Debt Advice locator](#) aims to give people access to free and impartial debt advice.

The Debt Locator site provides information about partner organisations that can help such as the National Debtline and StepChange debt charity, as well as telephone services which allow people to speak directly with an expert advisor. The face to face debt advice search tool allows you to type in your location and instantly find local organisations that give free advice on managing finances and dealing with debt.

The Money Advice Service is an independent service set up by the Government to help people manage their money better.

National apprenticeships campaign launches

The Government has launched a national apprenticeships campaign featuring apprentices from some of Britain's brightest companies. The campaign aims to show young people and their parents that apprenticeships can be an equal choice to university, by showcasing the variety and quality of apprenticeships on offer.

The apprentices, many of whom are gaining degree level qualifications while working and earning, will feature in television adverts, posters and online.

[Download the toolkit](#) to find out how to get involved.