



# Touchbase

## July 2013

## Welcome to the July Touchbase



Sharrion Llewellyn, Editor

There are a wide variety of issues to report on this month.

The highlights include the launch of Fulfilling Potential - Making it Happen (MiH). The MiH action plan brings together a wide range of cross-government initiatives to support disabled people to fulfil their potential and play a full part in society.

In support of Fulfilling Potential, DWP is holding a Disability Employment Conference on 18 July. This will be attended by our Secretary of State, Iain Duncan Smith, the Business Secretary, Vince Cable, the Minister for Disabled People, Esther McVey, and around 30 FTSE100 companies. The aim is to develop lasting partnerships with employers to

increase their confidence about employing disabled people.

Other important developments this month include an announcement on how renters and their landlords will be protected under Universal Credit and the expansion of the Universal Credit Pathfinder in Greater Manchester and Cheshire.

There are also reports on the Call for Evidence for the Fourth Independent Review of the Work Capability Assessment (WCA); on a further consultation on the moving around component of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP); and on a review of the benefit appeals process that is being done jointly by DWP and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service.

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# Launch of Fulfilling Potential – Making it Happen

The government has launched Fulfilling Potential - Making it Happen (MiH) which underlines the need to work more innovatively in partnership with a cross section of disabled people and their organisations.



Esther McVey, Minister for Disabled People

A Fulfilling Potential Fund of £200,000 will also be set up to support innovations that will make a real practical difference for disabled people. Details are still being

developed but some of the options could include giving innovation prizes for new aids and adaptations or ideas on new routes into work for disabled people.

MiH has been developed with disabled people and is part of the Fulfilling Potential initiative to support disabled people to achieve their individual potential and to play a full part in society.

The MiH action plan sets out clearly where progress has been made, for example, it highlights the fact that achievements for disabled people at GCSE and degree level have improved. It shows too that employment rates for disabled people have got better while the number of disabled people facing income poverty has gone down.

The plan also outlines where further work is planned across a wide range of areas including social care, education, employment, income, health and wellbeing, choice and control and inclusive communities.

As part of the latest Spending Review, the government has specifically targeted funding at supporting the needs of disabled people. This includes £350 million for employment programmes and support for disabled people moving into work.

Esther McVey, Minister for Disabled People said: “The Government wants to enable disabled people to fulfil their potential and play a full role in society. Disabled people are seeing improvements in many key outcomes and reduced inequalities with non-disabled people.

“However, significant barriers remain. Fulfilling Potential - Making it Happen emphasises the need for innovative cross sector partnerships with disabled people and their organisations and marks the beginning of a further programme of work designed to help us deliver on our ambition”



The MiH strategy and action plan, as well as the four previous Fulfilling Potential documents, are available on the [Office for Disability Issues site](#).

# Disability Employment Conference – Working together

DWP is holding a Disability Employment Conference on 18 July 2013 which will be attended by FTSE 100 Companies.

It's the first time that government and business will come together to find ways of tackling the disability employment gap. The aim is to develop lasting partnerships between employers that will support them to be more disability confident in their employment practices.

The event is by invitation and is targeted at senior employees. We have now confirmed attendance from around 30 FTSE 100 companies and 40 of the UK's largest employers and many SMEs.

The focus is on the following messages:

- Employing disabled people is good for business, the workplace and your customers you could be missing out on talented people
- Working together will make employers become disability confident and improve employment outcomes for disabled people
- It's important to bust the myths and perceptions about employing disabled people and to provide information on how to recruit disabled talent as well as how to get advice about adapted equipment.

Working with our existing partners, we have produced and released a series of short films about disability employment and have used twitter extensively to encourage employers to engage with this topic. The films feature businesses that are exemplars in employing disabled people and demonstrate the economic and social benefits of a diverse workforce. You can see these films on our [YouTube DisabilityConfident channel](#).

We will share more news about disability employment in the next edition of Touchbase.

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# Universal Credit protection for tenants and landlords

Protection for renters claiming Universal Credit and their landlords was announced recently by the Minister for Welfare Reform Lord Freud.

Speaking at the Chartered Institute of Housing's Annual Conference in Manchester, Lord Freud outlined the support for Universal Credit claimants who will receive direct housing payments, how DWP will work with social landlords to identify tenants who should be exempt and when action will be taken if tenants fall into arrears.

Lord Freud said: "Letting claimants pay their own rent is an important way of breaking down barriers to help people into work.

"I believe that these measures strike the right balance between ensuring that both the tenant and landlord are protected, but also gives individuals some time to get to grips with direct payments."

Three levels of protection will exist:

- Decisions about whether tenants should receive direct payments will be made in collaboration with social landlords
- If arrears build up to the equivalent of one month's rent the decision to make direct payments will be reviewed
- If arrears reach the equivalent of two months rent, the claimant will have housing payments switched to the landlord, or managed payments



Lord Freud added: "The key to making direct payments work will be our on-going collaboration with landlords, but I am determined that managed rent payments should not be a permanent solution."

Once arrears have been cleared, DWP will work with landlords to return tenants to direct payments. In most cases, following the tenant being offered budgeting support, they will return to direct payments within six months of the arrears being paid off.



Further information is available at [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK)

# Universal Credit Pathfinder roll-out continues

The Universal Credit Pathfinder was expanded on 1 July when Wigan Jobcentre started to take claims. Warrington and Oldham will also begin taking claims on 29 July.

The early rollout of Universal Credit began in some areas of Greater Manchester and Cheshire on 29 April. Ashton-under-Lyne was the first Jobcentre to accept claims for Universal Credit and Wigan, Warrington and Oldham Jobcentres have also been trialling various aspects of this new system. Service Centres in Bolton and Glasgow Northgate have been providing processing and telephony support.

We will continue to roll-out Universal Credit in a careful and controlled way, starting small, testing, learning lessons over time and refining where necessary before the progressive roll-out begins from October 2013.

Full migration to Universal Credit will be complete by 2017.

The Universal Credit Partner Toolkit is available on [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK)

**UC** Universal Credit

# Work Capability Assessment

Dr Paul Litchfield is carrying out the fourth Independent review of the Work Capability Assessment (WCA).

He launched a Call for Evidence on 1 July 2013 which will run until 27 August.

The Call for Evidence is one of a number of ways that evidence will be gathered during the review. The evidence that is submitted will inform Dr Litchfield's report to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions which will be laid before Parliament by the end of 2013.

The three previous independent reviews of the WCA were led Professor Malcolm Harrington.

For this review, Dr Litchfield is particularly interested in evidence based ideas for improvement that focus on:

- How effectively the WCA identifies people who are fit for work, who have limited capability for work, or who have limited capability for work-related activity
- The impact of the earlier Independent Reviews
- The way mental health conditions are considered in the WCA
- The biological, psychological and social factors that influence capability for work.

Dr Paul Litchfield said:

"I am keen to hear from people who have constructive and evidence based ideas for improvement. The WCA touches many lives and it is in the interest of all of us to try and make it as good as we can."

Employment Minister Mark Hoban said: "Helping people who can work into a job, while giving financial support to people who need it is, one of my top priorities. That is why it is so important that the Work Capability Assessment

is as effective as possible.

"Following the previous independent reviews we have already made considerable improvements to the assessment process, so this new review is a great opportunity to build on that progress."

Please respond to the Call for Evidence if you have information on how the WCA is operating or on any further changes that may be needed to improve the process, particularly in the above areas.

To make it easier to respond, this year's Call for Evidence uses a web-based survey as the primary method for gathering evidence. [WCA - Call for Evidence survey.](#)

The Call for Evidence material will also be available in a range of formats including, Braille, large print, audio, BSL and Easy Read. Call for Evidence material and information is available here [www.dwp.gov.uk/wca-review](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/wca-review).



Mark Hoban, Employment Minister



[Professor Harrington's Year One review](#)

[Professor Harrington's Year Two review](#)

[Professor Harrington's Year Three review](#)

# New initiative on benefit appeals

DWP, Her Majesty's Courts and the Tribunal Service have launched a new initiative to gather more detailed feedback on the reasons why benefit decisions are overturned on appeal.

The findings will be used to help improve the standard of decision-making and to make sure that the appeals process is as efficient and transparent as possible.

This builds on a previous initiative, introduced in July 2012, in which tribunal judges are asked to provide the primary reason for their decision from a drop-down list.

Judges in four Social Security and Child Support tribunal sites, in Liverpool, Glasgow, Birmingham and London, have been providing feedback as part of an eight-week scheme which started on 10 June.

They are providing a summary of reasons for their decision for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) cases. These will be analysed over the summer to identify any learning that could help DWP's decision-makers.

Working progressively, initially only with ESA, will help to ensure that systems are implemented correctly, without negative impact on hearing and waiting times. Our objective, subject to satisfactory outcomes, is that we will move to national roll-out later this year.

Esther McVey, Minister for Disabled People, who leads on appeals reform said:

"With recent changes to disability benefits we need to make sure that the appeals process is as efficient and transparent as possible.

"We will use this information to learn lessons and improve the standard of decision-making and appeals processes. It will also be helpful for claimants to understand why an appeal has been allowed or dismissed".

"With recent changes to disability benefits we need to make sure that the appeals process is as efficient and transparent as possible. "

# Consultation on the PIP assessment

DWP is currently holding a further consultation on the moving around activity for the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment, which will run until Monday 05 August.

It will give everyone the opportunity to comment on the PIP assessment criteria rules for the mobility part of the new benefit.

Claims for PIP will continue to be processed under the current benefit rules until the outcomes of the consultation are decided, so people should claim PIP as normal.

New PIP claims can be made by phoning 0800 917 2222 or textphone 0800 917 7777. Full details of how to claim can be found at [gov.uk/pip](http://gov.uk/pip) or on the DWP041 PIP leaflet available to order from our website.

The initial call to claim PIP is quick and easy for the majority of people. We then send claimants a 'How your disability affects you' form and guidance on how to fill it in.

We are working through claims in date order, so claimants will receive their questionnaires soon or will be contacted if more information is needed. This will not

affect the start of their claim as awards are calculated from the day someone first calls to make a claim.

For PIP enquiries, claimants and advisors should visit [gov.uk/pip](http://gov.uk/pip) or phone the PIP enquiry line 0845 850 3322 or textphone 0845 601 6677. Our recently updated frequently asked questions and myth buster may also help.

Visit the PIP toolkit to find updated information for support organisations, including alternative formats. The tailored communications and guidance page contains ready-made editorial for you to use, including materials for carers organisations, the health professions and local authorities. Please send any questions about the toolkit to [pip.feedback@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:feedback@dwp.gsi.gov.uk).

# Other news in brief...

## Closure of the Benefit Enquiry Line Service

The Benefit Enquiry Line Service – telephone number 0800 88 22 00 and textphone 0800 24 33 55 - has closed.

The decision to close the service was taken after a careful review of the data showed that a lot of the callers had to be redirected to other benefit enquiry lines and some calls were not about disability benefits.

The benefits pages at [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) explain the financial support that is available as well as how to claim. They also give the right contact numbers for more detailed queries. Our range of DWP leaflets can also help people make informed decisions about benefits DWP leaflets and forms.

A new message on the Benefit Enquiry Line will make callers aware of the help and support available at [gov.uk](http://gov.uk), and will also give benefit specific contact numbers so that callers can get straight through to someone who can answer detailed queries.

The enquiry line number will still appear on some claim forms and notification letters but numbers will be changed when these documents are updated.

Claimants will still have full access to DWP's services as before but they will be helped in several ways including online or over the phone where they can make a new claim or get specific information they need.

## Tell Us Once success

More than half a million people have been helped by the Tell Us Once service since its national roll-out began in 2011.

Tell Us Once is led by DWP but is delivered in partnership with local and central government. It allows people to report a birth or death just once and up to 28 government services will be notified automatically about the change.

The service is currently offered by 89 per cent of

## Early Learning for Two-Year-Olds

From September 2013 around 130 000 of the least advantaged two-year-olds will be eligible for 15 hours of free early learning each week. The initiative is also expected to create thousands of new childcare jobs to support the increase in the number of children requiring care.

All three and four-year-olds currently qualify for 15 hours per week of free early learning. Last year the Government confirmed that this would be extended to two-year-olds in households that are eligible for free school meals. Children who are looked after by the state will also qualify for free places from the age of two.

Twenty percent of the least advantaged two-year-olds become eligible this September with entitlement extended further from September 2014 to reach around 260,000 two year olds from low income families.

The aim is to:

- Improve education for young children
- Improve employment prospects for parents by providing free childcare
- Provide more jobs in childcare.

Over the next few weeks local authorities will be sending letters out to eligible parents, inviting them to take up a free early learning place for their child.

To find out more about early learning for two-year-olds, please visit the Department for Education website.

local authorities in the UK and is available to 51 million people. We expect more local authorities to come on board in 2013.

Births and deaths can be reported face to face and deaths can also be reported by phone or online.

The Tell Us Once Delivery Partnerships Team won the prestigious 2012 'Innovation Nation Award' which is sponsored by Virgin Media and the Guardian.

Further information is available at Tell Us Once.