



# Touchbase

## January 2014

### Welcome to January's Touchbase



Sharrion Llewellyn, Editor

Happy New Year!

Although it is only the first full week of 2014, this edition is packed with updates and information about working with DWP.

There are updates on the rollouts of both Universal Credit and the Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The Universal Credit report looks at DWP's plans to work with local authorities and other service providers to support claimants in a more joined-up way, while the PIP story outlines the areas where it will be rolled out next.

There are also reports on the increasing number of aspiring jobseekers who are setting up their own businesses with the support of the National Enterprise Allowance and on the fact that more than two million

workers are now saving into workplace pensions as a result of automatic enrolment.

Other reports include the launch of the Disability and Health Employment strategy, the recommendations from the Fourth Review of the Work Capability Assessment and the cross-government Family Stability Review that is being led by DWP.

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# More than two million people enrolled in workplace pensions

More than two million workers have begun saving into a workplace pensions scheme as a result of automatic enrolment, according to the latest figures.



Automatic enrolment began in October 2012 and is rolling out from the largest to the smallest employers across the UK. All employers, including charities and the public sector, will eventually need to assess their workforce and automatically enrol eligible workers into a pension scheme.

December's automatic enrolment registration report shows that more than 3,500 employers have now joined the workplace pensions revolution.

Hundreds of staff at the charity the British Heart Foundation have been automatically enrolled, helping to push the figure past the two million landmark.

Pensions Minister Steve Webb said:

“It is great news two million people are making a positive difference to their retirement prospects through automatic enrolment. The changes to workplace pensions will help millions more people to achieve many happy new years in the future.

“Over 3,500 employers so far are helping us to create a fairer society by ensuring that pensions are no longer the preserve of the few. And the message to employers is: make sure you're ready for the date your workforce joins those already in.”

Simon Gillespie, Chief Executive of the British Heart Foundation said:

“Looking after our hardworking staff is important to us. They help power our search for the scientific breakthroughs to stop people's lives being permanently scarred by heart disease. The rollout of automatic enrolment has helped many of them begin saving for the future.”



More information is available from [The Pensions Regulator](#).

# Aspiring entrepreneurs helped to kick-start more than 32,000 new businesses

## The New Enterprise Allowance has helped enterprising jobseekers to set up 32,520 new businesses.

From ‘Tasty Pastry’ to ‘Gadget Cabin’, the Government's [New Enterprise Allowance \(NEA\)](#) has helped enterprising jobseekers to set up 32,520 new businesses.

Latest figures on the NEA, which helps unemployed people to turn their dreams of becoming their own boss into a reality, shows that around 2000 new businesses are being set up every month as a result of the scheme.

The news of these successes follows the recent announcement that the popular scheme will be extended until 2016. This means that thousands more people will get support to move off benefits, start their own business and support themselves and their families.

The NEA offers expert mentoring and financial support to claimants who want to start up their own business and helps people to come off benefits and to turn their business ideas into successful enterprises.

Official statistics published in December also show that beneficiaries of the scheme come from all age groups, with 7,500

businesses started by people aged 50 or over. The scheme also helped almost 6,000 disabled to become their own boss.

Minister for Employment Esther McVey said:

“Starting your own business takes guts and passion. We're seeing tens of thousands of people coming off benefits to set up their own company and creating a new enterprise generation. Budding entrepreneurs also need support and advice if they are to turn their ideas into a successful business, which is what New Enterprise Allowance helps to provide.

“With the economy growing, small businesses are vital to the continuing success of the country, so it's great that we have been able to extend the New Enterprise Allowance until 2016 in order to help even more people achieve their dream of being their own boss.”



You can read the full breakdown at [NEA statistics – April 2011 to August 2013](#).

# Fourth Independent Review of the Work Capability Assessment published

The Fourth Independent Review of the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) was published in December 2013.

The review, carried out by Dr Paul Litchfield, found that progress has been made in implementing recommendations from earlier reviews and that some notable improvements have been made to the WCA process. But Dr Litchfield recommends that DWP should:

- Simplify the WCA process and improve the way people having an assessment feel they are treated;
- Improve knowledge of mental health among decision makers and healthcare professionals;
- Continue to streamline the decision-making process.

Minister of State for Disabled People, Mike Penning, said:

“We welcome the valuable recommendations Dr Litchfield provides in the fourth review to make the WCA fairer, more accurate and more transparent.

“We spend more than £13 billion on sickness and incapacity benefits for almost 2.5 million people of working age and we need to make sure that support goes to those who need it most.”

During the review, organisations and individuals gave their views on how

the WCA is working and what further improvements they would like to see.

DWP will carefully consider Dr Litchfield’s recommendations before publishing a formal response in early 2014. DWP also intends to secure additional providers, on a regional basis, to carry out Work Capability Assessments from next summer.

As reported in the [June Touchbase](#), DWP is already delivering the recommendations made by Professor Malcolm Harrington after the first three reviews. These include:

- Improving how we communicate with and explain the WCA process to claimants;
- Introducing the Quality Assessment Framework to improve WCA decisions;
- Improving the way in which people who are awaiting/receiving treatment for or recovering from cancer are assessed.



**Details about the current and past WCA independent reviews are on GOV.UK.**

# DWP sets out plans for joined up local support for claimants

DWP has set out how it will work in partnership with local authorities and other service providers, like housing associations and charities, to support Universal Credit claimants.

DWP’s Ministers published the new approach in the [Universal Credit Local Support Services \(LSS\) Update and Trialling Plan in December 2013](#).

The aim is to ensure that if a claimant needs extra help getting online or advice and support to budget monthly or to pay their rent, the right local services will be in place to support them.

The LSS Update and Trialling Plan sets out how DWP plans to trial elements of the [Local Support Services Framework \(LSSF\)](#) and gives an update on its progress since it was published in February 2013. It also includes lessons learned from the Pathfinder, Local Authority-led Pilots and the Direct Payment Demonstration Projects, as well as feedback from DWP and local authority staff.

Lord Freud, Minister for Welfare Reform, said:

“The Local Support Services Update and Trialling Plan sets out how we’ll work together over the course of the next year to test different arrangements for partnership working, financial management and the effective delivery of front line services. Timing of the update is especially important as it follows our

announcement of the next stages for the rollout of Universal Credit.

“It shows what local authorities and Jobcentre Plus district managers can do to prepare, including strengthening existing partnerships and building new ones, identifying resource opportunities and sharing good practice.”

The Universal Credit rollout will expand to cover ten sites across the country by spring 2014. From next summer these sites will also progressively start to take new Universal Credit claims for couples and, in the autumn, from families. Once it is fully tested, the rollout will also expand to cover more of the North West of England.



**More information on Universal Credit is available in the [Partner Toolkit](#).**

# PIP reassessments extended to new areas

From 13 January 2014 DWP will extend the areas in which existing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claimants will start to be reassessed for the Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

As reported in [November's Touchbase](#), DWP has started to reassess some existing DLA claimants in Wales, West Midlands, East Midlands and East Anglia for entitlement to PIP.

In January, DWP will extend the rollout to areas in Scotland, Dumfries and Galloway, Edinburgh, Galashiels and Motherwell with the postcodes beginning DG, EH, TD and ML. Then from 3 February 2014, the areas will be extended further to include parts of Carlisle, Darlington, Harrogate, Lancaster and York where postcodes start with CA, DL, HG, LA and YO.

The invitation to claim PIP will apply where an existing fixed term DLA award is coming to an end, a young person reaches 16-years-old or where someone has reported a change in their care or mobility needs or we have received information that someone's care or mobility needs have changed.

“We will let people know when reassessments are due to be extended to other parts of the country.”

We will let people know when reassessments are due to be extended to other parts of the country.

Existing DLA claimants who have a lifetime or indefinite DLA award will not be affected until at least October 2015, unless we receive information about a change in their condition that would affect their rate of payment or if they reach the age of 16.

Existing DLA claimants in the areas affected by the changes do not have to do anything because DWP will write to invite them to claim PIP. They will be told what they need to do at that point.

More information about PIP and the reassessments can be found at [GOV.UK](#).

A map highlighting the postcodes for reassessment areas can also be found in the [PIP toolkit](#).

Please note that people who are awarded Standard Rate PIP can apply for a 50 percent reduction on their vehicle tax. The details are available at [Financial help for disabled people](#).

# New rules have been introduced to restrict migrants' access to benefits

As part of the Government's long term economic plan to get people off benefits and into work, a series of reforms have been put in place to make sure migrants entering the UK do everything they can to find a job.

From 1 January 2014 migrants from the European Economic Area (EEA) will need to have lived in Britain, or the Common Travel Area, for three months before they can make a claim for income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA).

This measure also applies to British nationals returning from a period abroad.

In addition, from 1 January 2014, EEA job seekers who make a new claim for JSA will receive it for a maximum of six months. After six months, only those who have compelling evidence that they still have a genuine prospect of work (GPoW), will be able to continue claiming JSA.

Those EEA jobseekers affected by the change will be given a fact sheet at the outset of their claim to JSA, clearly setting out the terms of the GPoW assessment.

The first GPoW assessments will take place from July 2014. Jobseekers will be

given regular reminders of the new rules at interviews with Jobcentre Plus advisers.

The assessments will check whether the claimant still has a genuine prospect of work, or if there is compelling evidence of exceptional circumstances for them to be granted a limited extension to JSA.

Compelling evidence will vary from person to person, but a written job offer with a definite start date, for example, could be considered compelling evidence. Where there is no compelling evidence, JSA payment will stop.

The measures only apply to new claims to JSA from 1 January 2014. Claims made prior to 1 January 2014 are not affected. However, existing claimants will be subject to the new measures if they make a new JSA claim in future.



More information can be found at [GOV.UK](#).

# Disability and Health Employment strategy is launched

DWP has issued a paper to Parliament on how the employment rates for disabled people and people with health conditions can be further improved.

The [Disability and Health Employment strategy: the discussion so far](#) command paper, which was published in December, sets out some high-level proposals about:

- Supporting employers to recruit, retain and develop disabled people and people with health conditions, through a new offer including a 'One Stop Shop' and a revamped Disability Symbol;
- Enabling more young disabled people and people with health conditions to make a successful transition from education to work and encouraging higher aspirations through initiatives such as role models and knowledge packs;
- Developing a new gateway to DWP's employment services, to ensure that disabled people and people with health conditions get the right support at the right time to enable them to get into or back to work;
- Improving DWP's specialist employment support offer for disabled people and people with health conditions by ensuring that it includes a number of key features,

such as greater personalisation, better integration of local services, better use of local providers and a greater focus on supported employment;

- Improving our mainstream employment support offer for disabled people and people with health conditions by looking into the most effective ways of supporting them into work;
- Developing more effective ways of supporting people with mental health problems to get into work, focusing particularly on better alignment between employment and health services and building on the proposals outlined by the Task and Finish Group and the Psychological Wellbeing and Work project.

This command paper will be followed by another on delivery later this year. The second paper will build on the feedback to the strategy. Any thoughts or feedback about the paper can be emailed to [dhes.comment@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:dhes.comment@dwpgsi.gov.uk).



## Dates for Winter Fuel Payment announced

The deadline for Winter Fuel Payment applications for winter 2013/2014 will be **31 March 2014**.

For winter 2013/14, the payment will apply to those people who were born on or before 5 January 1952 who normally live in the UK throughout the week of 16 to 22 September.

Those who are eligible could get between £100 and £300 tax-free to help pay their heating bills. Most people should receive their money by Christmas but if someone qualifies but does not get paid automatically, they will need to make a claim.

The Winter Fuel Payment does not affect other benefits.

Those who are eligible for the allowance can also claim for past winters; 1997 to 1998, 1998 to 1999 and 1999 to 2000.

Claims cannot be backdated for winters after 2000. The application deadline for backdated claims is also 31 March 2014.

People can find out more and check if they are eligible by visiting [GOV.UK Winter Fuel Payment](#).

If the temperatures drops this winter people claiming certain benefits could also get a Cold Weather Payment of £25. Payments will be made if the local temperature is either recorded as, or forecast to be, an average of zero degrees Celsius or below over seven consecutive days between 1 November 2013 and 31 March 2014.

People can find out more or check their eligibility for the allowance at [GOV.UK Cold Weather Payment postcode checker](#).

# DWP heads up a cross-government review of family stability

DWP is leading a cross-government review of family stability and is currently gathering evidence from a wide range of professionals and organisations in order to assess and recommend the best ways of supporting families.

An invitation has been issued to academics and organisations involved in family-related research asking for their help to gather evidence on family stability and breakdown and the impact on children and young people.

The review follows on from the strategy paper Social Justice: Transforming Lives strategy, published in March 2012, which sets out the Government's vision for supporting the most disadvantaged families and individuals across the UK.

It highlighted the crucial role the family plays in providing a foundation for a child's development and success in later life. This was followed by the Social Justice Outcomes Framework which outlined how the strategy would be put into practice.

The framework includes a family stability indicator which breaks down the proportion of children who still live with their birth parents according to the age of the child and household income.

The current indicator reveals that, by the age of 16, nearly half of all children are no longer living with both of their birth parents and this trend is predicted to increase unless new measures are taken.

The review will:

- Analyse the evidence about the drivers and levers around family formation, stability and breakdown;
- Assess existing interventions;
- Make recommendations on further policy measures.

In order to ensure the evidence analysis is as comprehensive as possible we are inviting a wide range of stakeholders to contribute to the evidence gathering which ends on 17 January 2014.



**More information is at [GOV.UK](#) and contributions should be emailed [family stability review](#).**

## Other news in brief...

### New guide on Back to Work schemes for jobseekers

DWP has published a guide on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) Back to Work schemes.

It gives JSA claimants information about: Skills Conditionality, sector-based work academies, work experience, New Enterprise Allowance, Mandatory Work Activity and the Work Programme.

The guide also tells claimants what these schemes involve, the eligibility criteria, when they might be referred to them and as well as the sanctions regime. Jobcentre Plus advisers are informing existing claimants and all new claimants about the [guide on back to work schemes](#) and are encouraging them to read it.

### Help us to make the State Pension online even better

DWP is looking for volunteers to help test its successful State Pension online service.

Customer satisfaction with the service is high and we have a programme of continuous improvement, based on customer feedback and insight. The Government Gateway registration has been improved as well as the State Pension online system itself but we want to find out whether customers have any problems with the claims process.

The State Pension online service is available to those who are eligible to claim the State Pension and also allows people who are within four months and four days of their State Pension age to make their claim online. The service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and can be accessed at [GOV.UK State Pension Online claims](#).

Anyone who would like to take part in the customer testing should email [digitalservicesdivision.communicationsgateway@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:digitalservicesdivision.communicationsgateway@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) and we will contact them.

# Other news in brief...

## New Attendance Allowance lines

DWP is to launch new telephone and text phone helpline numbers for Attendance Allowance (AA) to improve access for claimants by making it easier for them to contact us.

From 29 January 2014 AA claimants will be able to contact the Attendance Allowance Service Centre on 0345 or 0845 605 6055 while the text phone number will change to 0845 604 5312.

The current Disability Living Allowance (DLA)/AA Helpline number of 0845 712 34 56 will become a dedicated line for DLA only. The DLA Text phone will also remain on the same number, 08457 224433

The introduction of both an 0345 and an 0845 number underlines our commitment to making sure that all DWP's helplines use both numbers so claimants can make an informed choice in order to minimise the cost of calls to us.

The 0345 number will generally be cheaper for mobile phone calls whilst the 0845 number will ensure those using landlines can also benefit from the low rates offered by 0845 numbers.

## Same sex couples will be able to marry from March 2014

Same sex couples will be able to marry in England and Wales from Saturday 29 March 2014.

The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 was passed in July 2013 and the Government has been working to ensure that all the arrangements are in place to enable same sex couples to marry as soon as possible.

As a result of this work, the first weddings will now be able to happen several months earlier than anticipated.

Those couples wishing to be among the first to marry will need to give formal notice of their intention to marry on 13 March 2014.

More details are available at [The Marriage \(Same Sex Couples\) Act](#).

## Older People's Day

The 7th UK Older People's Day – Full of Life – was celebrated on 1 October with activities by a wide range of organisations.

The Pensions Minister Steve Webb promoted the day on Nick Ferrari's London Breakfast Show, on LBC Radio which has a weekly audience of over one million listeners.

The Minister also launched the South Gloucestershire Older People's Campaign to help raise awareness of the support available from the public and voluntary sectors for older people in that area.

Other activities include:

- The biggest co-ordinated home fire safety drive ever by the Fire and Rescue Service with 27 fire and rescue services holding open days, electric blanket swaps, tea dances and targeted home safety checks;
- DWP's National Partnership Team attending 26 celebrations across the UK including, the north of England, Scotland, Central England, London and the Home Counties, southern England and Wales;
- A Young at Heart show at Alexandra Palace, London to promote the day and the Age Action Alliance and its partners.

To find out more email [dwp.fulloflife@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:dwp.fulloflife@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) or visit [Age Acton Alliance](#), if you want to join the organisation.