



Touchbase

November 2013

Welcome to November's Touchbase



In this month's issue we have a two-page report on the Personal Independence Payment, including details of the controlled rollout of the benefit to some existing Disability Living Allowance claimants as well as to some young people who have turned 16.

There is a report on how DWP is revolutionising the benefit claims process. Eight in 10 Jobseeker's Allowance claimants now choose to apply online, more than double the figure for last year, while Carer's Allowance Online has also now been launched.

In August we reported on the launch of the Disability Confident campaign to encourage employers to be positive about the skills that disabled people bring to business. This month we write about the first of seven

regional Disability Confident events to help increase employers' confidence in recruiting and retaining disabled people as part of a diverse workforce.

In addition, we report on the new cross-government strategy to make sure that young people leaving care have all the support they need to take their first steps into their adult life, and on forthcoming legislation to make it possible for all workers to request flexible working.

You and your colleagues can [subscribe to Touchbase here](#).



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In this issue

PIP replacing DLA for existing claimants

DWP starts to reassess existing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claimants



Digital revolution for jobseekers and carers

DWP revolutionises the way people claim benefits



Universal Credit partner toolkit update

Updated guide for employers launched



Disability Confident regional events

Next phase of the Disability Confident campaign starts soon



Second Social Justice conference highlights

Highlights from the second Social Justice conference



Right to request flexible working extended

Right to request flexible working is to be extended to all workers from next year



New powers to help prevent and detect fraud

New regulations come into force to detect benefit fraud



New cross-gov strategy for care leavers

Young people leaving care able to see exactly what support is available



Other news in brief

Round up of other news



Personal Independent Payment begins to replace DLA for existing claimants

DWP has started to reassess existing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claimants in Wales, West Midlands, East Midlands and East Anglia for entitlement to Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

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This gradual rollout of reassessments started on 28 October and is consistent with how DWP is implementing other changes. It will help us to learn lessons before reassessment is introduced in other parts of the country. We will provide information about future rollout as it becomes available.

We have started to invite existing DLA claimants in the initial reassessment areas to claim PIP where:

- We have received information about a change in their care or mobility needs
- Their fixed term award is due to expire
- A young person reached 16 years old on or after 7 October 2013
- Someone chooses to claim PIP instead of their DLA.

The changes do not apply to people who have been awarded DLA under the Special Rules for terminally ill people.

A map highlighting the initial reassessment areas can be found in the [PIP toolkit for support organisations](#).

Children approaching their sixteenth birthday

In May 2013 DWP started writing to the parents, guardians and representatives of those claimants who were due to turn 16 on or after 7 October 2013. This was to tell them that the young person would soon be invited to claim PIP, based on earlier plans to begin reassessment on 7 October.

Ministers decided that we should continue to invite these young people to claim PIP as originally planned although reassessment began from 28 October rather than from 7 October. This was to avoid young people potentially being assessed twice in quick succession; for DLA and then PIP.

The 7 October 2013 is still a key date as children who live in Wales, West Midlands, East Midlands or East Anglia and are due to turn 16 on or after this date, will be invited to claim PIP. They will continue to receive DLA until a decision is made about PIP.

Children reaching the age of 16 elsewhere in Great Britain will not be invited to claim PIP yet but will have their eligibility for adult DLA checked if their award is due to expire on or around their 16th birthday.

Those children who are being paid DLA under the Special Rules for the terminally ill will be invited to claim PIP at the end of their existing DLA award.

If that date is after October 2015, they will be invited to claim PIP when DWP invites existing DLA claimants with indefinite awards to claim PIP from October 2015.

The Government response to the PIP consultation

We recently ran a consultation on the 'moving around' activity for the PIP assessment criteria. You can find out more on this by visiting the [Government response to the consultation on the PIP mobility criteria](#).

DLA claim packs

We are still getting some claims to PIP on DLA forms. If a new PIP claimant sends in a DLA form, it could delay their claim.

Please destroy any stocks of DLA claim forms that you hold and remind claimants to use the correct processes for claiming PIP. The quickest and easiest way to make a claim is to phone - 0800 917 2222 or 0800 917 7777 for Textphone.

Updated PIP toolkit for support organisations

We have improved the [PIP toolkit](#). A number of products have been updated, including quick guides, presentations, editorials and the fact sheets, to provide more detailed information about the PIP reassessments.

“Children reaching the age of 16 elsewhere in Great Britain will not be invited to claim PIP yet but will have their eligibility for adult DLA checked if their award is due to expire on or around their 16th birthday.”

Digital revolution for jobseekers and carers

DWP is revolutionising the way people claim benefits with an increasing number of applications being done entirely online.

The focus on online services is part of a cultural change in how people interact with the welfare state and will be an essential part of Universal Credit.

Carer's Allowance is the latest benefit that can be claimed online, making it an easier and quicker way for customers to submit their claim.

Before launching Carer's Allowance online, DWP changed the application process to take account of comments about the service from a wide range of carers.

The changes include:

- A shorter form which is quicker to fill in, speeding up the claim process
- Replacing the disabled person's signed paper declaration with a more secure opt-in declaration, as part of the e-claim
- Ensuring the service works with all the assistive technologies in common use and can be used on desktops, laptops, tablets and smartphones
- Giving users support for the new service through carers' groups, the Government Digital Service and the Carer's Allowance Unit.

DWP used carers and their organisations to test and improve the service as it was being developed and are committed to this approach for future improvements to the service.

The new service is compliant with the Digital Service Standards that have been set across government by the Cabinet Office. We worked closely with the Government Digital Service in order to achieve the best possible digital service for customers.

Further information about Carer's Allowance is available on GOV.UK and the form can be found at Carer's Allowance online.

Meanwhile the proportion of claims for Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) being made on online has more than doubled in a year - paving the way for the introduction of Universal Credit.

In August 2011 only around 1 in 10 people claimed JSA online; claims increased to 3 in 10 in August 2012 - and a year later numbers have rocketed to 8 in 10.

Jobseekers are also increasingly finding jobs online. The government's new jobsite, Universal Jobmatch, which automatically matches people's skills to a job which suits them, is now receiving more than 5 million searches every day.

Latest updates to the Universal Credit partner toolkit



An updated guide for employers has now been launched, following feedback from employers and employer organisations including the Confederation of British Industry.

The guide now explains how employers will benefit from the introduction of Universal Credit. Universal Credit will help to create a more flexible and responsive workforce as it will make work pay.

It also sets out how the new monthly, real time PAYE earning reports from employers will be used to automatically adjust the amount of Universal Credit someone will get as their earnings change.

The guide can also help employers understand the new approach to supporting people to stay and progress in work. Universal Credit claimants will be set achievable work goals based on their personal circumstances. Once they are in work, achieving these goals will help them to eventually become financially independent.

More information is also available in the Universal Credit partner toolkit which includes a range of guides, videos and other materials to help advisers to understand how Universal Credit works and how it might affect the people they advise and support.

We will continue to develop the partner toolkit to meet the needs of partner organisations, and to help them offer the best advice. We would welcome feedback on the existing materials and suggestions for new content. You can email your views to uc.partnertoolkit@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.

Disability Confident regional events

The next phase of the [Disability Confident](#) campaign starts later this month with a series of regional events.

The events will be an opportunity to share good practice and to help increase employers' confidence in recruiting and retaining disabled people as part of a diverse workforce. They will also provide opportunities for peer-to-peer support among employers.

Each event will be attended by key supporting partners from disability employment organisations and social enterprises, who will also support the development of Disability Confident networks.

The first event is planned for 21 November and will be sponsored by the accounting firm KPMG.

Mike Mason-Williams, an Account Director at the firm, said:

"It's a business critical matter, focussing very much on what people can do and their strengths rather than on their disabilities and the issues that they face."

Six further events will take place from January 2014 in Southern, North-Eastern, North-Western and, London and Home Counties regions. There will be national events in Scotland and Wales. Details will be released as dates and venues are confirmed.

The government is continuing to provide support and information to help employers become confident about

employing disabled people. As part of the Disability Confident campaign the department has published:

- A short [Conference Highlights](#) video. Please listen to the speakers explaining why it is so important for all employers to support the campaign to become disability confident.
- A new [Positive about Disability](#) poster. The poster is available to use and share with your networks. Show your support and that your organisation is positive about disability by using the campaign material and adding your organisation's name to the poster.

DWP is looking for organisations and businesses to become more involved in the campaign or to support and sponsor the events. If you would like to become a Disability Confident campaign partner, share the good practice in your organisation, or attend an event please email dwp.disabilityconfident@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Being disability confident means having the vision, reassurance and support to be confident about employing disabled people.

You can also find out more at [GOV.UK - Disability Confident](#).

Second Social Justice conference highlights successes of the past year



The second Social Justice conference, hosted by Government Knowledge in partnership with DWP was held on 30 October.

It was attended by 326 delegates made up from the voluntary charity sector, central and local government, employers and academics – all of whom have a vested interest in creating thriving local communities.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan Smith, opened the conference. His speech - [spoken, written](#) - focused on the significant progress that has been made since the [Social Justice Strategy](#) was launched in March 2012.

Progress includes:

- 429,000 fewer people out of work now than a year ago and the lowest proportion of children living in workless households since records began
- The school attainment gap for disadvantaged young people is at last narrowing with last year seeing the greatest improvement in teenagers taking GCSEs in a decade
- The continued overall fall in police-recorded violence in England and Wales
- An increasing proportion of people successfully completing treatment for addiction in England – the latest

figures show that 13,000 more people left rehab entirely drug-free last year compared to the previous three years

- Fourteen social impact bonds - which have social justice as well as financial measures for success - are up and running, making the UK a world leader with a social investment market which could be worth £1 billion by 2016.

This year DWP also ran the Social Justice awards. The winners of the three categories were:

- Social Justice Champion award - James Stratton from the CAB in Plymouth
- The Big Lottery Fund Community award - The Amber Foundation
- The Small and Medium-sized Enterprises award for delivering Social Justice -The MITIE Foundation.



A snapshot of the conference is on DWP's storify page. A recording of the Social Justice conference is on the GovKnow website. More information about the government's policies to reduce poverty and improve social justice is on the Gov. uk website: [GOV.UK Social Justice](#).

Right to request flexible working is to be extended

The right to request flexible working is to be extended to all workers from next year.

The government has worked with businesses and others in developing its flexible working policy. It also carried out the Modern Workplaces Consultation in 2011 and its response to the consultation was published in November 2012 [Modern Workplaces Consultation Government Response](#).

Forthcoming changes to the law – through the Children and Families Bill which is due to come into force in 2014 – will make it possible for all workers to request flexible working.

The government recognises that it will take more than legislation to make flexible working the norm across the whole of the labour market so DWP will also bring in a number of non-legislative measures to help bring about a culture change. These include:

- Continuing to work with the private sector to better understand the challenges employers face in promoting flexible working
- Ensuring that the Civil Service leads by example and becomes an exemplar for flexible working practices.

DWP has been working closely with a wide range of private sector representatives through the Private Sector Working Group (PSWG). This was set up in 2011 at the request of Maria Miller, a former Minister for Disabled People.

The PSWG has been looking at practical ways of encouraging more flexible working and specifically at how to promote wider awareness of the business benefits of flexible working.

The aim is to encourage employers to consider job design before they advertise and to signal their willingness to consider different ways of working. This will make applicants more confident about asking for a working pattern that suits them. As part of this work the group has developed a flexible working strapline ‘Happy to talk flexible working’ and a logo.

Jobcentre Plus will also ask employers to use the voluntary strapline when posting job adverts with Jobmatch or in the local and national press.

In order to promote the strapline, a short piece of research is being carried out to pilot it with a number of national employers.



More information can be found at: [Modern Workplaces Consultation Government Response](#).

New powers to help prevent and detect fraud

New regulations have come into force to help with the prevention and detection of benefit fraud.

It means that authorised DWP officers will now be able to ask for evidence from landlords, rent officers, childcare providers and local authorities when investigating benefit claims. For example, they will be able to ask local authorities for information about someone’s Council Tax payments.

However, officers will only be able to gather this information if they are investigating someone’s benefit claim.

The Social Security (Persons Required to Provide Information) Regulations 2013, which came into force in October, are part of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 and will apply throughout Great Britain.

“It is also an offence to intentionally delay or obstruct an authorised officer when they are carrying out an investigation.”

The changes are mainly to take account of the elements of Universal Credit that relate to housing costs and childcare. They will ensure that DWP has the same powers to gather information about Universal Credit as those already available for Tax Credits and Housing Benefit investigations.

People can be asked to provide written information by letter or during a visit by an authorised officer. A visiting investigator might also bring someone else with them, usually someone from DWP, a local authority or another government department. All authorised officers will show their identity card.

Providing this type of information is permitted under the Data Protection Act 1998 as there is provision under the Act for the disclosure of personal information if it is required by law or by a court order.

If someone is asked to supply information to an officer, they might want to get advice first but they must provide it or they will be committing an offence. It is also an offence to intentionally delay or obstruct an authorised officer when they are carrying out an investigation.

For further information please email [Robert Towers](#).

New cross-government support strategy for care leavers

Young people leaving care will be able to see exactly what support is available to them as they take the first steps into adult life with the new Care Leaver Strategy.



The strategy sets out in one place the steps the government is taking to support care leavers to live independently once they have left care.

Employment Minister, Esther McVey, said:

“Young people leaving care don’t always have the same support structures in place as other young people, which can mean they miss out on help to move into the world of work.

“Everyone deserves the chance to get on in life - that’s why this cross-Government approach is so vital as it will enable us to ensure care-leavers get the help and support they need to find a job, build a career and fulfil their potential.”

The new strategy includes a wide range of commitments from the government on:

- Employment - DWP has introduced a care leaver ‘marker’ so that employment support for care leavers is better tracked and improved while the Department for Education (DfE) will continue to fund the Care to Work

programme which provides work experience, apprenticeships and other vital training

- Health - the Department of Health and DfE will improve guidance for health organisations and local authorities on promoting the health and well-being of looked after children
- Housing - DfE will work with the National Care Advisory Service to improve the training for children’s home staff so that young people have better support as they leave care. The Department for Communities and Local Government will consult on new social housing guidance that will prioritise the most vulnerable, including care leavers
- Financial support - the DfE will continue to encourage all local authorities to pay care leavers at least £2,000 towards essential things such as the deposit on a flat or train fares to a job interview and as part of Universal Credit, DWP will ensure that care leavers who need help to manage their money will get it.



More details are available [here](#).

Other news in brief...

Support trials for Employment and Support Allowance claimants

DWP has announced the details of three pilots for claimants who have been awarded Employment and Support (ESA) for between 18 and 24 months.

The pilots will take three different approaches to support but they will all be tailored to help claimants to move closer to employment or to return to work.

They will run in the following areas:

- North east of England - support will be given through the Work Programme by a number of providers. Claimants will be mandated to participate in the pilot and providers will work with them to decide the number and frequency of interviews based on individual need
- Central England – health care professionals from healthcare provider Ingeus UK Limited will offer claimants a series of health related work-focused interviews/ which they will be required to attend although participation in suggested activities will be voluntary.
- Southern England – claimants will receive enhanced Jobcentre support including more time with an adviser. They will attend regular mandatory interviews to plan activities to help them move towards the labour market.

The pilots will begin on 25 November 2013 and will run for two years and nine months.

Invitation to Tender launched for Community Work Placements contracts

DWP has issued an invitation to tender for the commercial contracts for the new mandatory Community Work Placements which is part of the government’s Help to Work programme for the long-term jobless.

As reported in the [October Touchbase](#), from April 2014 Community Work Placements will be one of three intensive options that Jobcentre Plus advisers will consider for Jobseeker’s Allowance claimants who return from the Work Programme. It will apply to those claimants whose key barrier to employment is either lack of recent work experience and/or motivation.

More information is available in the ‘[Community Work Placements Information Pack for Delivery Partners](#)’, published on the [supplying DWP](#) site until 4 December 2013.

Reminder to test smoke alarms

The Fire Kills campaign is encouraging everyone to make sure that they test their smoke alarms.

People are four times more likely to die in a fire in their home if their smoke alarm is not working. Although the number of fatalities has fallen in the last two years, over 70 per cent of the 203 people who died were not alerted to the fire by a smoke alarm. A common cause of smoke alarms not working is flat or missing batteries.

More than half the people who died in fires in the home last year were aged 65 and over so people are also encouraged to test the smoke alarm for loved ones who may need help to test theirs. It takes only a minute but can be a real life saver.

The Fire Kills campaign is run by the Department for Communities and Local Government in partnership with England’s fire and rescue services.

