



Touchbase

May 2013

Welcome to May's Touchbase



Sinead Gordon, Editor.

Spring has arrived, May is here and it's going to be another very busy month. Universal Credit Pathfinder launched last week and in June's Touchbase we will look at this in more detail – keep an eye out for next month's in-depth article.

In this edition we look at how people in selected areas can start to claim Universal Credit on GOV.UK and also give you an update on how the Universal Credit communication toolkit is being received. In the last edition of Touchbase we discussed the launch of PIP on 8 April. Take a look at this month's article for more details on claim forms and how PIP will impact other services and benefits.

We have an article from Suzanne this month on the Benefit Cap. As you know, the Cap was introduced on 15 April in Bromley, Croydon, Enfield

and Haringey local authority areas. Read Suzanne's article for more information on the support that will be provided for affected households.

We also have articles from Anna on the digital deal for social landlords and from Catherine on appeal process changes. I hope you find this month's issue useful and informative. Please drop me a line at corporate.stakeholders@dwp.gsi.gov.uk if you've got any comments or if there's anything you'd like to know more about in next month's edition.

You and your colleagues can register for an e-alert, which you will receive when Touchbase is published, on the DWP Advisers and intermediaries website. Visit our Touchbase subscriptions page to register.



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Find Universal Credit on GOV.UK

Universal Credit was introduced on 29 April 2013 in selected areas of Greater Manchester and Cheshire.

It will be gradually rolled out to the rest of the UK from October 2013 and will be completed by 2017.

Universal Credit is a new benefit that has started to replace six existing benefits with a simpler, single monthly payment for people that are out of work or on a low income. Universal Credit will help people to be better off in work, start a new job or work more hours.

Most people will apply for Universal Credit online via GOV.UK. More details can be found on the GOV.UK website.

Pathfinder claim screens now on GOV.UK

The new online claim screens are now live on GOV.UK for claimants wishing to apply for Universal Credit in the Pathfinder area of Greater Manchester and Cheshire.

Anyone applying for Universal Credit within the Pathfinder will be guided through the information and eligibility pages before being directed to the claim screens.

Help and advice about what claimants can do to prepare for Universal Credit is also available [online](#).

Those who need extra help to get online will be able to access help over the phone or face-to-face.

Universal Credit partner toolkit update

The toolkit is a range of communications materials, from leaflets to posters and videos, for organisations and stakeholders to use to help explain Universal Credit to their own staff and to claimants.

For example, some organisations have used it to update the information on their websites, or to form the basis of articles in their newsletters. It all helps raise awareness and understanding of Universal Credit.

The Universal Credit partner toolkit is also now available on GOV.UK following the move of the DWP Corporate pages to the new location.

The updated Universal Credit toolkit has some new and more interactive additions with two video personal stories. Gary talks about using online services and Bianca describes how her adviser supported her jobsearch. There is also information in other formats to help people understand the changes Universal Credit will introduce.

Anyone can print the documents as they are, use the products to help explain the changes to claimants, or use the toolkit as a resource from which to develop, or add to other materials. The toolkit will be regularly updated as new information becomes available.

We would like to thank our partners for supporting the introduction of the partner toolkit and helping to raise awareness of it on their web pages, with staff and with the people they support.



Any feedback on the toolkit or its contents is welcome. Please write to: uc.partnertoolkit@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

GOV.UK content will be updated on a regular basis to provide the latest information on Universal Credit. Anyone with questions about how Universal Credit might affect them should be directed to this site.

Benefit cap starts in London

The benefit cap went live on the 15 April 2013 in Bromley, Croydon, Enfield and Haringey local authority areas, as planned.

National rollout of the benefit cap will take place in remaining local authorities from 15 July 2013. So all households identified as being appropriate to be capped will, in line with existing plans, have been capped by the end of September 2013.

We are working jointly with the four local authorities to learn any lessons which will be applied to national rollout. In the longer term DWP has committed to a formal published evaluation and as such there will be independently verified analysis in due course (due to be published Autumn 2014).

The priority for DWP remains to support households into work and towards a stable and sustainable working lifestyle. We are working intensively with them, explaining and identifying the support available locally to help them look for work and how they can look at other options if appropriate.

To help those affected there will be employment support offered by Jobcentre Plus, the Work Programme and the Work Choice programme as appropriate.

The benefit cap project team and Jobcentre Plus are working with Local Authority colleagues to ensure that households likely to be impacted are able to access a wide range of support. This includes: help to move closer, or into the labour market, money and budgetary advice, housing options advice, support to negotiate rent reductions with private landlords and access to childcare provision.

The cap will be applied through Universal Credit once claimants make new claims or are migrated to that benefit from October 2013.



Further information about the benefit cap can be found on the [DWP website](#).

Personal Independence Payment update

On 8 April Personal Independence Payment (PIP) started to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for new claims for people aged 16-64 in parts of the North West and the North East of England.

From 10 June, new claims to PIP will be taken from all parts of Great Britain, and no new claims to DLA from adults can be made.

Claim forms

New claims to PIP are registered over the phone by calling DWP. Basic information, including contact details, is given as part of that call. To find out more go to GOV.UK.

A paper form can be requested by anyone unable to claim over the phone, or unable to get help to make an initial call. This form, requesting basic information, will be posted to them.

Once the claim is registered, a personalised PIP2 form is posted to the claimant to allow them to explain how their disability or health condition affects them. Find out more about the claims process for PIP, including an example PIP2 form, in the [toolkit](#) for support organisations.

Unlike DLA, all paper claim forms are personalised and barcoded with the details of the individual claimant. They cannot be copied or used for other claimants. Please note that stocks of clerical claim forms are not available to order.

Once PIP has been introduced in an area, existing DLA forms should no longer be used for adults. Issuing a DLA claim form to someone who should claim PIP instead will delay their claim. We can treat a DLA claim form as a claim to PIP, but we have to ask additional questions and will still need to have a completed PIP2 form.

From 10 June, please do not issue any DLA1A or DLA1 forms and destroy any stocks you hold. In the controlled start area, you should already have stopped using paper copies of these forms. There's a simple checklist that suggests some practical steps you can take to ensure you are offering the best advice.

Impact of PIP on other services and benefits

A common question asked is whether PIP will provide the same access to other benefits and services as DLA does. Passporting arrangements which exist under DLA have been maintained for PIP wherever possible.

“Anybody who qualifies for the enhanced rate of the mobility part of PIP may apply for a free tax disc.”

For example, claimants who receive the mobility component of PIP may be eligible for a Blue Badge without further assessment. The arrangements for administering the Blue Badge scheme differ across the country so claimants should contact their local authority or apply online – visit the sites for [claimants in England and Wales](#) and for claimants in [Scotland](#).

Claimants may also be eligible for other transport concessions such as free travel on public transport. Again, criteria differ across the UK – check the rules [for England and Wales](#). The Department for Transport has recently issued updated [guidance to local authorities](#) on assessing eligibility of disabled people living in England for concessionary bus travel.

In Scotland, anybody who receives the daily living or mobility component of PIP will be eligible for the Scottish National Concessionary Travel Scheme. Those claimants who receive the daily living component of PIP will also be eligible for a Companion Card under the Scheme allowing a companion to travel with them for free. Claimants should contact their local authority or visit Transport Scotland for further information.

Anybody who qualifies for the enhanced rate of the mobility part of PIP may apply for a free tax disc. Those claimants who receive the standard rate of the mobility part of PIP will be eligible to apply for a tax disc at half price. [Find out more](#) about Vehicle Excise Duty concessions.

Both the standard and enhanced rate of the Daily Living component of PIP will be a qualifying benefit for Carer's Allowance and Carer's Credit. Entitlement won't be affected as long as carers continue to meet the entitlement conditions. Find out more about benefits for carers at GOV.UK.

A [factsheet](#) summarising passporting arrangements for PIP is available in the toolkit for support organisations.

Appeals process changes: mandatory reconsideration

Mandatory reconsideration is a crucial change to DWP's disputes and appeals process, and will improve the process by helping to resolve disputes earlier.

Last month, changes were introduced to the appeals process for Personal Independence Payment and Universal Credit. From October 2013 they will apply to all other DWP administered benefits and child maintenance cases. Among the changes is 'mandatory reconsideration'.

The context for the changes is a rising volume of appeals against DWP decisions, associated with the introduction of new benefits. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced changes to the appeals process to ensure more disputed decisions are resolved without the need for referral to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS).

As an appeal can be a time consuming process, it is in the interest of appellants, DWP and HMCTS for disputes to be resolved before appeal. Whilst at present people can request that decisions are re-examined, in practice, people very rarely ask for decisions to be re-examined or explanations to be provided. The first action people normally take when they dispute a decision is to request an appeal. Mandatory reconsideration will now require people to ask DWP to reconsider a disputed decision before they can appeal to the First-tier Tribunal.

Mandatory reconsideration will allow DWP to look again at our decision and provides an opportunity for people to submit further information to be taken into account. Mandatory reconsideration also includes a telephone call by the decision maker, to talk through the reasons for the decision with the individual and encourage them to provide any additional evidence if it is available. Where appropriate, DWP will change its decision.

Following mandatory reconsideration, people can accept the decision, or appeal to HMCTS if they still dispute it.

Ultimately, mandatory reconsideration will help resolve disputes without the need for an appeal.

Digital Deal for Social landlords launched on 4 April 2013

Digital Deal is a cross-government challenge fund of £400,000 to encourage social housing tenants to improve their online skills.

It is being managed by Online Centres Foundation, the organisation behind the 5,000 strong UK online centres network.

As most claims to Universal Credit will be made online, to help make the transition into work easier, and more than a quarter of those living in social housing do not currently use the internet, Digital Deal represents a huge opportunity for the social housing sector to really innovate in the way they support tenants to improve their online skills.

Schemes such as e-reading rooms to promote digital learning and one-to-one internet support are already run by some social landlords, and the Government wants to help build on this good practice. As such, social landlords are urged to bid for this funding to design innovative projects to help their tenants get online.



Social landlords have until 3 June to submit a match-funded bid for a share of nearly half-a-million pounds and can find out more by visiting <http://digitalhousinghub.ning.com/>

Other news in brief...

Industrial Injuries Advisory Council Public Meeting, 27 June 2013

The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) is an independent scientific advisory body that provides advice to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Department of Social Development in Northern Ireland on matters relating to the industrial injuries scheme.

IIAC will be holding a public meeting on 27 June at the Holiday Inn Hotel, Herbert Walker Way, Southampton, SO15 1HJ.

For further information or to reserve a place, please contact [Zarina Hajee](mailto:Zarina.Hajee@iiac.gov.uk) on 020 7449 5619. The deadline for reservations is 7 June 2013. To find out more about the IIAC, take a look at our [website](http://www.iiac.gov.uk).

