

Benefit Bulletin: Big benefit changes and news

Produced by the Active Inclusion Service, Newcastle City Council

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let's talk
money

Universal Credit - the big migration - the final rollout

How claimants are to move to Universal Credit between 2019 and 2023

Universal Credit is presently being introduced across the UK, Jobcentre by Jobcentre. People in those areas, who are on the benefits that Universal Credit is replacing (called 'legacy benefits') will remain on them until they have a certain change in circumstances, where they **may** have to claim Universal Credit ([see below for when Universal Credit has to be claimed and when it does not](#)). This is called 'natural migration'. If their 'legacy benefits' are higher than Universal Credit, they will drop down to the lower amount

But what about the remaining claimants? The government have always said that at some stage, they will be told they must claim Universal Credit. Now, the government have produced draft rules (regulations) on how this will happen and the [Social Security Advisory Committee are consulting on the detail](#). Newcastle City Council and others are responding to this consultation which ends 10am on 20 August 2018

The government call the process 'managed migration' and 'moving claimants to Universal Credit' but to be clear, the proposals do not include 'moving' or 'transferring' people across to Universal Credit. Rather, that 'legacy benefits' will stop and people will have to claim Universal Credit

Some of the proposals (that may change of course) include:

- The 'migration' timetable from 2019 to 2023
- How those on 'legacy benefits' will be told they will have to claim UC and the 'warm up' communications before
- How much time they will get to claim and what happens if there's a delay
- The special measures for vulnerable people
- How the top up will be calculated if their 'legacy benefits' are higher than Universal Credit (called 'transitional protection'), including how it will be eroded or lost
- How certain severely disabled people who get a higher amount in their 'legacy benefits' (called the Severe Disability Premium) will be protected from loss. And how those who had already lost under 'natural migration' described above would be compensated

For more information on Universal Credit, visit our [Universal Credit web page](#)

Learn about Universal Credit, the 'e' way!

Check out our 'Introduction to Universal Credit' e-learning module, which can be accessed by Newcastle City Council **and** non-council staff. Sign up via our web page: www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals

Housing Benefit retained for supported housing

The government had proposed to replace Housing Benefit with Local Authority funding for supported housing but those plans have been dropped. Services including women's refuges have [expressed their relief](#). For more details see [All supported housing funding to be retained in welfare system](#) from gov.uk

Newcastle West Jobcentre closure date announced

As reported previously, the DWP announced plans to close Condercum House Jobcentre Plus office on the West Road but the date was delayed. Now, the date of closure has been confirmed as 5pm on 31 August 2018 and from Monday 3 September, all Jobcentre services previously delivered from that location will move to Newcastle City Jobcentre. Opening days and times will remain the same. All residents claiming Employment and Support Allowance from Newcastle West Jobcentre were transferred to Newcastle City Jobcentre some time ago

Residents using Newcastle West Jobcentre should be aware of the change but there will understandably be some residents who might not have seen or taken in the information, or who need more support to adapt to the change. If you are working with any residents who use Newcastle West Jobcentre, please take the opportunity to remind them / check they're aware of the change. Residents who need support to make an online claim to Universal Credit can get support from the Assisted Digital Support team. For information on Universal Credit, including help with making an online claim and budgeting, visit our [Universal Credit more detailed web page](#). Also see our page which lists the [jobcentres in Newcastle](#)

Personal Independence Payment news

The end of unnecessary Personal Independence Payment (PIP) reviews

From this summer, [the government say](#) that those who get the highest level of PIP and have severe or progressive conditions will only have a 'light touch' review every ten years

Important PIP decision involving people with chronic conditions needing regular monitoring or medication, such as diabetes and epilepsy

The government have accepted that its approach to Daily Living Activity 3 - before it made amendments in March 2017 - was wrong and will try to identify people who were wrongly underpaid. For more details see the [statement from the solicitors who bought the case](#) and who say this may also cast doubt on the legality of the March 2017 amendments. See also the [Secretary of State's statement to Parliament](#)

Psychological distress

The government have also this year decided to review earlier PIP awards after a court decision found amendments to PIP mobility activity descriptors were unlawful. For more details on that case see [Disability Rights UK](#)

Definition of 'safely' and measuring risk when carrying out PIP activities

The DWP have issued new guidance [ADM Memo 15/18](#) following a court case on this subject

Track your PIP appeal online

Being able to track your Personal Independence Payment appeal online is the first in other developments to more online access. See [Disability Rights UK](#) for more details. Also see '[appealing news](#)' below

Top tips – benefit advice corner

How to help people avoid benefit problems and get their correct benefit entitlement

Universal Credit – when you have to claim it – and when you don't

Given the above news about the further and final roll out of Universal Credit, it may be worth reminding you that:

- Some people in Universal Credit areas on 'legacy benefits' do not have to claim Universal Credit, despite some being wrongly told they have to!
- Some people are better off claiming Universal Credit and some are not, and
- For some, there may be a choice to claim Universal Credit

We have produced a table on our [Universal Credit web page](#) which lists some [common circumstances when a Universal Credit claim has to be made, or not or when people have a choice](#)

For those with a choice, it is best they get a 'better off calculation', which is a comparison between their 'legacy benefits' and Universal Credit. To do this, use the [online benefit calculators on our benefit information web page](#) or [get advice using our benefit contacts web page](#).

People can get help claiming Universal Credit

Did you know about the support people can get with claiming Universal Credit for those who are unable to use a computer, don't have internet access or don't have any other support. For details, see the document called: [Universal Credit - information on support arrangements](#) on our [Universal Credit more detailed web page](#)

Make sure people claim their Council Tax Reduction

Council Tax Reduction is separate from Universal Credit and is not paid automatically. You have to apply for it. Please remind people you work with to claim it

To claim Council Tax Reduction go to the webpage [Council Tax Reduction](#) or the [specific online claim form](#) or ring 0191 278 7878, open 8am to 6pm from Monday to Thursday and 8am to 4.30pm on Friday

Underpaid Employment and Support Allowance

In our [March 2018 Benefit Bulletin](#) we reported that the government had agreed to look into repaying lost benefit because it hadn't included the income related part of Employment and Support Allowance when transferring people to the new benefit from Incapacity Benefit. However, it wouldn't go back further than 2014. Following further pressure from organisations like the [Public Accounts Committee](#) and the [National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers](#) the government has [agreed to pay back benefit to when the error actually occurred](#)

Appealing news

If you are unhappy with a benefit decision you can usually ask the decision maker to reconsider their decision, called a 'mandatory reconsideration'. After that you can appeal to an independent tribunal

From Summer 2018, the Tribunals Service says you will be able to submit your benefit appeal online and from autumn the first online social security hearings will be trailed. [More details from HM Courts & Tribunals Service news item](#) and [a speech by the Senior President of Tribunals](#)

NB recent DWP figures show that [over 60% of Employment and Support appeals were successful](#) and that [71% of Personal Independence Payments appeals went in favour of claimants](#)

Impacts, statistics, research and reports

Centrepont research reports that benefit changes are needed if the positive impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act is to be achieved, such as exempting under 35's from the 'shared accommodation rate' who have received prevention or relief support from the Act. NB the shared accommodation rate is where the Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing costs of some single under 35 year olds in private accommodation is restricted to the amount for a bedsit. see [The Homelessness Reduction Act: will it work for young people?](#) from centrepont.org.uk

Benefit delays, gaps, sanctions and harsh recovery practices are common factors that tip people into destitution

A recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) says that more than 1,550,000 were in destitution at some point in 2017, including 365,000 children. See [Over 1.5 million people were destitute in the UK in 2017](#) from the JRF website

How difficult or easy was it to claim Universal Credit?

New DWP research shows that whilst 98% had claimed it online, 54% needed help. For more information see the DWP [Universal credit full service claimant survey](#)

Universal Credit good or bad?

The [DWP have published a positive report](#) about Universal Credit but the Work and Pensions Committee said it [would prefer a 'fuller' report](#)

Universal Credit - value for money and how is it working?

The [National Audit Office](#) (NAO) has produced its assessment on the claim that Universal Credit will eventually deliver £8 billion of net benefits a year and considered how well it was working. The [head of the NAO responded](#) to the Secretary of State's response to the report, [for which she apologised](#). The Public Accounts Committee commented on the NAO report and also announced its own new inquiry: [Claimants suffering hardship in Universal Credit roll-out](#). See also the views from another Commons Select Committee, the [Work and Pensions Committee](#)

Housing Associations and Universal Credit

A [recent survey](#) of 118 housing associations found that Universal Credit tenants are in £24 million of rent arrears, and are more than twice as likely to be in debt compared to all other tenants. [Other research](#) found that three quarters of council tenants on Universal Credit are in arrears compared to a quarter of all other tenants

Further support, information and training

Find our earlier Benefit Bulletins on our [web page for professionals and volunteers](#) and for more information on benefit changes, see our web page [Changes to the benefits system](#) which includes a [timeline of the main benefit changes](#)

More details about benefits, including those mentioned above, can be found on [our welfare rights and money advice web pages](#), including benefit self-help factsheets and 'Where to get advice in Newcastle' on the [benefit contacts web page](#)

This benefit bulletin was written by the Active Inclusion Service at Newcastle City Council. It is provided bi-monthly and at times of important benefit changes and news. It is as accurate as possible at the time of writing. The bulletin is part of the Active Inclusion Newcastle support to professionals, which includes **'Introduction to benefits' training**. You may also be interested in the **Debt bulletin** which is produced quarterly. [For more details, see our web page for professionals and volunteers](#)

We also produce a weekly **Active Inclusion Newcastle e-bulletin** which provides a brief update on financial inclusion and homelessness prevention issues. If you want to receive this, or for more details, email activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk