

Benefit Bulletin: Big benefit changes and news

Produced by the Active Inclusion Service, Newcastle City Council

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The move to Universal Credit – what is happening and how you can help

Universal Credit is replacing six 'legacy' benefits such as Housing Benefit and Tax Credits.

If those on a 'legacy' benefit have a change in circumstances that means they have to claim another new 'legacy' benefit, they are told they have to claim Universal Credit.

For example, they are living at home with their parents on income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) and move into a new tenancy and need to claim Housing Benefit to help with the rent. That is a 'new' claim for a 'legacy' benefit so will have to claim UC instead which replaces their JSA.

But, not all changes in circumstances mean they have to claim UC.

That's the first way people on 'legacy' benefits are ending up on Universal Credit.

The second way is where the DWP - at some stage - will write to those on 'legacy' benefits telling them they have to claim UC and after say 3 months, their 'legacy' benefits will stop. That's called 'managed migration'. At the moment, the DWP are only writing to a very few people in certain areas e.g. 250 in Northumberland mid-September.

We are telling people that **before** they get these letters, they should look into whether they would be better off on Universal Credit and claim it now – or whether they would be worse off and wait, if possible, for managed migration (the letter!).

The third way is that people can actually claim UC – but again, we would advise people to check if they would be better off and to understand the consequences of being on UC.

Attend a briefing session!

We are providing four briefing sessions about this for non-advisers on 7,8, 12 and 14 September. They are open to NCC and non NCC staff. We are also doing two sessions for advisers on 5 and 9 September.

Sign up: www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals

See our special webpages about this:

www.newcastle.gov.uk/the-move-to-Universal-Credit

www.newcastle.gov.uk/UniversalCredit-supportinNewcastle

Once we hear of when those in Newcastle will be written to, we will let people know and change the message.

Introduction to benefits training – live via Teams

This session gives a basic overview of the benefits system and rules, who can claim what, avoiding benefit problems, practical information about where **you** and residents can get further information, advice and support.

This 'live' session via Teams allows for questions and should last no longer than two and a half hours.

Tue 13 September 2022. 2-4.30pm

Tue 6 December 2022. 2-4.30pm

Tue 14 March 2023. 2-4.30pm

To sign up for the training go to 'training' on the page: [Information for professionals and volunteers - financial inclusion](#)

More details from clive.davis@newcastle.gov.uk your friendly trainer!

Where to get benefit and debt advice in Newcastle

The latest version of **Where to get benefit and debt advice in Newcastle**, can be found on the Newcastle City Council website page: [Benefit advice services in Newcastle and benefit offices](#) includes details on the Welfare Rights Service's Public advice line.

Support for professionals and volunteers in Newcastle

Professionals and volunteers can get help and advice from [the Council's Welfare Rights' consultancy line](#) when supporting a resident with their benefits.

If you are dealing with someone's benefits or simply have a question, ring the consultancy line or email welfare.rights@newcastle.gov.uk

Cost of living crisis

The Government's measures to help people with the cost of living crisis were listed in the last Benefit Bulletin, so this is news and information since then.

New local webpage

We have produced a cost of living 'landing' page www.newcastle.gov.uk/our-city/cost-living-support so people can find advice and support in Newcastle.

Cost of Living Payments

There are three kinds of Government Cost of Living Payments. A **Cost of Living Payment** (paid in two parts to people on *some* means tested benefits) a **Disability Cost of Living Payment** (paid from [20 September](#) to those on a disability benefit, including those made by the Ministry of Defence) and a **Pensioner Cost of Living Payment** (paid to those entitled to the Winter Fuel Payment this winter)

Those who haven't received their Cost of Living Payment can let DWP know online via the [Cost of Living Payments webpage](#).

The Government have [clarified](#) that for tax credits claimants to get the first Cost of Living Payment of £326, they must have been entitled, or later found to be entitled, to tax credits for any day in the period 26 April 2022 to 25 May 2022, rather than they received a payment between those dates.

See the Government's [Cost of Living Payments webpage](#), a [Stakeholder toolkit](#) and [internal guidance memo](#) for more details

Fuel direct

Normally, fuel arrears and bills can be paid direct from a person's benefit. 'From 1 April 2022 to 1 April 2023, the DWP introduced a temporary change to the [Fuel Direct](#) rules to protect claimants given unprecedented energy prices. During this period, energy suppliers can no longer request new deductions or increased payments from a claimant's benefit to pay for ongoing fuel consumption.' More details: [Fuel Direct](#)

The Energy Bills Support Scheme and how you can get support

The Energy Bills Support Scheme is a £400 non-repayable discount to eligible households to help with energy bills from October. 'There is no need to apply for the discount. Energy suppliers will deliver this support to GB households with a domestic electricity connection over 6 months from October 2022'. More details on the Government webpage [Energy Bills Support Scheme explainer](#)

The support equivalent to £400 will be available for households who will not be reached through the Energy Bills Support Scheme. 'This includes those who do not have a domestic electricity meter or a direct relationship with an electricity supplier such as heat network consumers on a private wire system'. [National Housing Federation - Households on heat networks will not miss out on the £400 winter energy discount](#)

Broadband bills could be cut

For millions of low-income households under Government plans to encourage social tariffs. More details from the [Government](#) and [Ofcom](#)

Cost of living hub by the Local Government Association

This month the LGA launched a [cost of living hub](#) that has been designed to share best practice and help councils to support their residents with the rise in the cost of living. You can find a wide range of case studies and resources such as:

[Cost of living data dashboard](#) – updated monthly insights showing the impact on those seeking support from Citizens Advice.

[Energy at Home](#) – a web resource by the Energy Trust which outlines affordable ways for households to cut their energy bills.

[Home energy grants](#) – a search tool by Simple Energy Advice which allows users to see local energy grants they may be eligible for.

[Cost of living vulnerability index](#) – a new index for measuring the cost of living crisis by local area, created by the Centre for Progressive Policy.

[Cutting back to keep warm](#) – research from the Resolution Foundation showing why low-income households will have to cut back on spending by three times as much

as high-income households this winter.

British Gas Energy Trust. Up to £1,500 to help anyone (not just its customers) in energy debt.

'While the scheme's open to British Gas customers all year, it's been closed to non-customers since spring, so it's good news it reopens on Fri 1 Jul.' ([Mirror](#))

See [Who Can Apply - British Gas Energy Trust](#), [Warm and Safe Homes Advice - National Energy Action](#) and the [Energy advice Service](#) by Newcastle City Council

More on Universal Credit

Some latest Newcastle Universal Credit facts

33,737 **people** are on Universal Credit. 37% of them (12,547) are employed. It's 41% in GB

There are 29,400 **households** on UC and 12,081 households on the 'legacy' benefits that UC is replacing – that's 71% roll out. It's 65% in GB

Impact of Universal Credit in North East England

A qualitative study of claimants and support staff [reported in BMJ](#)

Other news

Disabled claimants are 'waiting up to five months for benefit payments'

A new study by the [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#) (IFS) claims disabled claimants are waiting up to five months for benefits payments. See also [PIP delays leave disabled people hundreds of millions of pounds out of pocket](#) by Citizens Advice and also see [From disability to destitution](#) by the Joseph Rowntree Fund.

From Parliament's House of Commons library

[Can private landlords refuse to let to Housing Benefit claimants?](#)

The Government intends to make landlords' blanket bans on letting to people in receipt of benefits illegal. This paper explains the issues behind 'No DSS' adverts.

[Food Banks in the UK](#)

The Trussell Trust, a charity working to end the need of food banks, has reported a 15% drop in the number of three-day emergency food parcels it distributed between 31 March 2021 and 1 April 2022, compared to the year before. This was still an increase of 14% compared to the year 2019-2020, before the pandemic. In 2021-22 it distributed 2.1 million food parcels in the UK.

Further support, information and training

Find our **earlier Benefit Bulletins** on our [website page for professionals and volunteers](#) and for **more information on benefit changes**, see our website page

[Changes to the benefits system](#) which includes a **timeline of the main benefit changes** and of course the [Coronavirus and benefits](#) pages

More details about benefits, including those mentioned above, can be found on [our welfare rights and money advice website pages](#), including benefit self-help factsheets

Find **Where to get advice in Newcastle** on the [benefit advice services website page](#)

For details of our 'live' **Teams training** and **e-learning modules** for professionals such as 'Introduction to Benefits' and 'Universal Credit', see our [website page for professionals and volunteers](#)

Professionals can get phone advice from [the Council's Welfare Rights' consultancy line](#)

You can subscribe to the DWP information for professionals in [Touchbase](#)

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

We also write a weekly-ish adviser's email, with quick details and changes. Email clive.davis@newcastle.gov.uk to go on the mailing list

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