

# Big benefit changes and news

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## Here are some significant benefit changes taking place and some important news

This benefit bulletin has been produced by the Active Inclusion Newcastle Unit, Newcastle City Council

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## Longer wait for payment of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

From 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014, the waiting period for JSA and ESA claims is extended from 3 to 7 days. This means there is **no entitlement** to these benefits for the first 7 days of a new claim.

To be clear, it is not a delay in payment but a period of no entitlement to that benefit following a claim.

For example, Geoff claims ESA on Monday 12 May. Some weeks later, it is decided he is entitled to ESA but he is only *entitled* to it from 20 May.

More details of this change can be found on the [legislation website](#) and also see the [TUC view of the change](#).

The longer waiting period does not apply to those who – for example:

- Claimed ESA or JSA before 27 October 2014,
- Were on benefits like ESA, JSA, Incapacity Benefit, Income Support or Carers Allowance within 12 weeks before entitlement to JSA or ESA started,
- Are under 18, claiming JSA and in severe hardship, or
- Are terminally ill ESA claimants.

This is not a full list of exceptions.

The Government propose to apply this waiting period of 7 days to **Universal Credit**, which will apply to more of a person's benefit such as housing costs, amounts for children, childcare and other elements. A [consultation](#) on this ends 17 October 2014.

## Short term benefit advances

If a claimant is waiting for a benefit payment and in urgent financial need they can ask the Jobcentre to consider a repayable 'Short term benefit advance'. [More details about short-term benefit advances with a standard claim letter](#)

## Benefits for migrants update

The last benefit bulletin in July 2014 described serious restrictions to benefits for European Economic Area (EEA) migrants, such as JSA and Housing Benefit. Since then we have been able to update that information. For the latest version, please see this link to the [July benefit bulletin](#).

For general guidance, see the Citizens Advice website on [coming from abroad and claiming benefits](#).

## Work related activity for the unemployed and the sick – sanctions and how to avoid them

If a claimant does not comply with various work related requirements, their JSA can be stopped from 4 weeks to 3 years, and their ESA can be reduced until the claimant complies.

### Sanctions report accepted by the Government

The [Government have recently accepted](#) most of the recommendations of the [Oakley report](#) which they commissioned to look into the operation of sanctions. The Government says it will [improve practice and communications with claimants](#). For example:

- They have produced a [fact sheet on claimants and their responsibilities](#). This is similar to a leaflet that Newcastle City Council and the local Jobcentre Plus have jointly produced. See details below.
- In Autumn 2014 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will pilot [coaching Work Programme providers](#) on appropriate sanction referrals.

More details are in the [DWP Touchbase magazine](#)

### Other recent reports and statistics on sanctions

- The [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) has reported on the impact of sanctions on various groups of people.
- Latest [DWP sanction statistics](#) show that the average monthly number of adverse JSA sanctions in Newcastle has increased to 520 and that nationally, the number of adverse ESA sanctions has increased 6 fold. Another [DWP report](#) shows a 30% increase in adverse sanctions since the October 2012 rules were introduced.
- In 2013, [DWP information](#) showed that out of 42,170 sanction decisions in August 2012, 8,300 hardship payments were made (which is a reduced discretionary amount paid if the claimant is vulnerable or in hardship)

### Avoiding benefit sanctions

Newcastle City Council and Jobcentre Plus are working together help reduce sanctions. For example, we have developed a leaflet and are holding sanctions workshops. The leaflet is available at the bottom of the ['Benefits information' page on our website](#). If you want to be notified of the workshops please contact [angie.smith@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:angie.smith@newcastle.gov.uk) giving your name, email address, phone number and organisation.

### For more detailed guidance,

See the [Government's gov.uk web page on recent sanction rules](#), and the DWP Decision Makers Guidance on:

- [JSA labour market questions, sanctions and hardship payments](#) and
- [ESA work focused interviews, work related activity, sanctions and hardship payments](#).

# Benefits for people with care or mobility needs – Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

PIP and DLA are benefits paid to people who have care or mobility needs. PIP is replacing DLA for people aged over 16. For more details, see our web page '[Changes to benefits for people with care or mobility needs](#)'

## What happens for those who are still on DLA and their needs increase?

If someone believes they are entitled to an increased level of DLA, they can ask for the DWP to reconsider the award. If they do increase it, it will be a higher amount of DLA, not PIP.

But remember, the DWP can also reduce an award so you should seek advice – see below.

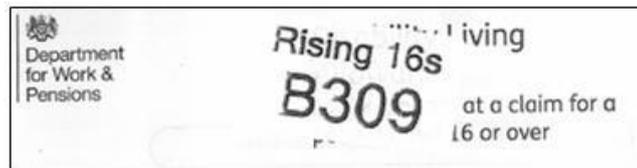
## DLA for those turning 16 years old

The DWP are sending out renewal forms for young people on DLA just before or around their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Please be aware they **must be returned** within **4 weeks**.

This is not the normal 4 to 6 months allowed for a return, so it should be done **straightaway**.

You may spot a sticker saying “rising 16s” looking like this ...



## PIP claims for people with a hearing impairment

Instead of making the first part of a PIP claim by phone or letter, people with a hearing impairment can send an email to: [rfp1.pilot@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rfp1.pilot@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

The email should include the following:

- Full name and title
- Address and postcode
- Text to say: 'Please send me a PIP paper claim form'

## **Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claims – news**

Claimants need a 'fit note' from their doctor as part of their ESA claim. If they put their mobile number or email address on the top right corner of the fit note, the DWP will text or email them – within 24 hours of receiving it – confirming it has been received and when they can expect payment. If the claimant has not received a reply by then, they can assume the fit note has not been received. Note that it can take up to 8 working days (1 week and 3 days) for post to arrive and be actioned.

## **Universal Credit update**

The Government have just [announced plans](#) to bring forward the national roll out of Universal Credit from early 2015 starting with new claims from single jobseekers. New claims to the 'legacy benefits' that Universal Credit is replacing will be closed from 2016. Sometime after that, people on those 'legacy benefits' will be migrated across to Universal Credit.

More details on Universal Credit on [the City Council website](#) and from [gov.uk](#).

## **Parliamentary vote on the Housing Benefit spare room subsidy – commonly known as the 'bedroom tax'**

MP's recently voted in favour of three exemptions to the 'bedroom tax' and a review of affordable housing. However, as this is a private member's bill, with many stages left, it may be a long time before it is finally decided.

For more information see the [Affordable Homes Bill 2014-15](#) on the Parliament website and for more details on the ['bedroom tax' and who it applies to](#) from the Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) website.

## **Further information and help**

Can be found on [www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfarerights](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfarerights) including the benefits mentioned above, 'Where to get advice in Newcastle' and benefits self-help factsheets. In particular, see the ['Changes to the benefits system' web page](#) for more information on the main benefit changes.

Also see [Touchbase](#): DWP news for advisers and intermediaries.

This benefit bulletin was written in September 2014 by the Active Inclusion Newcastle Unit, Newcastle City Council. The aim is to provide this bi-monthly and at times of important benefit changes and news.

Email: [activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk)