

Touchbase

April 2013

Welcome to April's Touchbase



Sinead Gordon, Editor.

In spite of the weather, April is finally upon us. As you know, this month will see the start of the most significant changes to the benefits system in 60 years, so it's going to be a very busy time for all of us.

In this edition, Lucie, our Personal Independence Payment expert, takes us through the gradual transition from Disability Living Allowance to PIP and how the consultation sessions will work for individuals. Take a look at the article for more details on how claims will be handled from 8 April onwards.

Four local authorities will be the first to apply the Benefit Cap from 15 April. Read Suzanne's article for more details on what the national roll out looks like from July 2013.

We have also launched two really useful communication products this month. The DWP Reform toolkit went live earlier this month and provides you with an overview of every change that DWP is looking to bring in over the next few years. From the feedback we have received so far this is shaping up to be a very beneficial product for stakeholders. However, I have to add the caveat that I did work on this product so I am slightly biased.

The Universal Credit toolkit is also a very useful resource and provides in-depth details on what Universal Credit will mean for claimants. It's been written to support partner organisations explain Universal Credit to claimants. Read on to find out more about these great communication products.

I hope you find Touchbase useful and informative. 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.



To provide feedback on Touchbase email corporate.stakeholders@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

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Personal Independence Payment introduced this month

On 8 April 2013 Disability Living Allowance (DLA) will start to be replaced by Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for people aged 16-64 for new claims only.

As we told you in the [March edition](#), PIP will be introduced gradually and you can find full details in the PIP Toolkit for support organisations and advisers on the [DWP website](#).

Claims for PIP need to be made by telephone. Once a claim for PIP has been registered, a 'How your disability affects you' (PIP 2) form will be sent to the claimant. Once the claimant returns the PIP 2 to us, this and any supporting evidence are passed to the health professional.

Most people will be asked to attend a face-to-face consultation unless a decision can be reached on the basis of written evidence. The health professional reviews the claim against a set of clear descriptors to assess how their disability or condition affects their daily life.

There are a total of [12 activities](#), ten daily living activities and two mobility activities.

The assessment will look at how well individuals can complete the activities, whether they need to use aids and appliances to do so and whether they need help from another person. Help includes supervision, prompting or physical assistance. The assessment will also consider whether claimants can carry out activities safely, to an acceptable standard, repeatedly and in a reasonable time period. This is in legislation.

“Eighty per cent of consultations will be held at assessment centres, however, home consultations will be offered to claimants that are unable to attend face-to-face consultations.”

For example, those individuals who can't walk more than 50 metres will be entitled to some rate of the Mobility component – either standard or enhanced.

Individuals who cannot stand and then move 20 metres will receive 12 points and therefore enhanced rate Mobility regardless of whether they need an aid or appliance.

Individuals who can walk distances longer than 20 metres could still receive the enhanced rate Mobility, if they are not able to do so safely, to an acceptable standard, repeatedly and in a reasonable time period.

In addition, if someone can walk more than 20 metres they could still score enough points to receive the enhanced rate Mobility component, if they have scored points in the other mobility activity which looks at their ability to plan and follow journeys.

We will use all the information in the PIP 2, from the health professional and any supporting evidence that has been provided to make a reasoned decision on entitlement, including the rate and length of award.

Atos will undertake the assessments in the controlled start area from 8 April 2013. Their service will be based on working with local partners, including the NHS, private hospitals and physiotherapists, using partners and staff to undertake face-to-face consultation.

These local partners are established in their communities and may already be familiar to claimants.

The majority of consultations will be held at assessment centres, however, home consultations will be offered to claimants that are unable to attend face-to-face consultations.

The local partners will be responsible for undertaking the face-to-face consultation and writing a report. They will also complete any administrative activities relating to the face-to-face consultations and some staff training.

Responsibility for other activity will sit with Atos including: any paper-based assessments; home consultations; support for health professionals; payment of claimant expenses and complaints handling. More information can be found in the [PIP toolkit](#).

There are a number of additional resources available to support you in advising claimants for PIP including: [tailored communications and guidance](#) and a [PIP checker](#) tool to see when a claimant may be affected by PIP.



The PIP toolkit can be found on the DWP website.

Benefit Cap details on national roll-out

In December it was announced that Bromley, Croydon, Enfield and Haringey local authorities would be the first to start to apply the Benefit Cap from April 2013.

All remaining local authorities have now been advised that they will be implementing the benefit cap 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.

In March, a letter was sent to those claimants previously advised that they would be capped in April, to tell them that the benefit cap will be applied from 15 July 2013. The precise date the cap takes effect will be confirmed to the claimant by their local authority.

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

The priority for DWP remains to support households into work and towards a stable and sustainable working lifestyle. We are working intensively with claimants, explaining and identifying the support available locally, such as to help them look for work.

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 child care 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](#).

DWP reform communications toolkit launches

DWP has produced a toolkit of communications materials to help staff and stakeholders tell the DWP Reform Story.

The toolkit explains the context behind the reforms and provides an overview of all the changes that DWP will be delivering over the next few years.

To support this overview, DWP has produced more detailed packs such as the [Personal Independence Payment toolkit](#), and the [Universal Credit Partner toolkit](#).

The reform communications toolkit will be continuously updated to ensure it is accurate. A new version will be uploaded on the DWP website every month.

The toolkit is comprised of four parts and the amount and type of detail presented can be selected as appropriate:

1. A reform narrative setting out DWP's vision;
2. A brief overview of the joined up reform story. This high level document lists the changes the reforms will bring, and is intended for use at conferences and events;
3. A presentation version of the above overview, with less text and detailed speaker's notes, is provided for

use when the information is being delivered face to face;

4. A more detailed reform breakdown going through the DWP reforms in greater depth. It has been designed to be delivered in sections which can be removed or combined in different ways depending on the target audience.

Please disseminate and share the DWP reforms toolkit through your channels to your colleagues and stakeholders, so they can download and use this valuable resource.

Feedback

We would welcome your continued feedback on the toolkit.

- Do you find it useful?
- How have you used the toolkit?
- Who have you shared this toolkit with?



For more information, or to submit comments and feedback on the toolkit, please email the [DWP stakeholder team](#).

Single-tier White Paper: Frequently Asked Questions

We announced on 18 March 2013 that the new single-tier pension will be introduced in April 2016.

The new simple flat-rate pension will provide a foundation for saving for today's working generation by replacing complicated system with an individualised modern system. We published an article outlining the details of the new system in the February edition of Touchbase. Recent evidence given to the Work and Pensions Select Committee during the pre-legislative scrutiny has praised the simplicity of the new system.

Who is affected by the change in start date? All women born on or after 6 April 1953 will reach State Pension age (SPa) after the introduction of single tier and will now get a single-tier pension (as long as they have the required minimum number of qualifying years), as will every man born on or after 6 April 1951. By bringing forward the implementation date of single tier by one year, to 6 April 2016, an extra 400,000 people will reach SPa under single-tier.

Are current pensioners missing out? No. Current pensioners and those who reach State Pension age (SPa) before the introduction of single tier are already a priority for the coalition Government. We introduced the triple lock to ensure that the basic State Pension rises by at least 2.5 per cent per year and as a result the basic State Pension will this year represent a higher share of average earnings than at any time since 1992.

Who will get the full single-tier amount? The transition process has been designed to ensure that everyone's

National Insurance record keeps its value at the point the single-tier pension is implemented. Under the proposals, there will be a range of contribution histories that will lead to a full single-tier pension. For example, people who may have fewer than 35 qualifying years but who have contributed towards the additional State Pension for a number of years. For people who start their National Insurance records after implementation there will be clarity that 35 qualifying years will give them a full single-tier pension.

What about those who reach State Pension age (SPa) under single tier who only have 30 qualifying years? We will first calculate an individual's State Pension valuation based on the rules of single tier and then check if their valuation under the current system is higher. Using the assumed start rate of £144 (as we have modelled in the White Paper), 30 qualifying years will be worth £123.43 per week. In the current system 30 qualifying years for the basic State Pension is worth £107.45 per week. The single-tier valuation is almost £16 higher. If someone wanted to improve their single-tier pension amount after implementation they could continue working, gain credits or pay voluntary contributions. HMRC have advised that people who delay paying voluntary contributions until a pension statement based on single-tier rules is available will not lose out.



How do I find out more? Further information can be found on the DWP website.

Appeals process changes for PIP and UC

In the November 2012 and March 2013 editions of Touchbase, we advised you about reforms to the appeals process.

These are:

- Mandatory reconsideration of disputed decisions;
- Direct lodgement of appeals with Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service;
- Time limits for DWP to return appeal responses to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service.

Initially, the changes will form part of the disputes process for Personal Independence Payment, which is being introduced gradually with a controlled start from 8 April 2013 and Universal Credit, which is being rolled out in some areas of Greater Manchester and Cheshire from April 2013.

The changes will then be introduced for all other DWP-administered benefits and child maintenance cases from 28 October 2013.

“Initially, the changes will form part of the disputes process for Personal Independence Payment, which is being introduced gradually with a controlled start on 8 April 2013.”

What this means for PIP and Universal Credit

The changes mean that from the rollout dates until 28 October 2013, the process for PIP and Universal Credit claimants who want to dispute a DWP decision will be different from the disputes process for other DWP-administered benefits and child maintenance.

There will be three important differences:

- PIP and Universal Credit claimants who dispute DWP's decision will have to ask DWP to carry out a mandatory reconsideration of the decision before they can appeal against it, instead of being able to appeal straight away;
- PIP and Universal Credit claimants who still dispute DWP's decision after a mandatory reconsideration will lodge their appeal directly with Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, instead of with DWP. Their appeal will also be made on a new appeal form, the SSCS1, which can be downloaded at www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals;
- DWP will be subject to a 28-day time limit to return appeal responses to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service in PIP and Universal Credit cases.



More information is available on the DWP website.

Universal Credit: Preparing for Pathfinder

DWP has produced a toolkit to help partner organisations understand Universal Credit, and explain it to people who may be affected.



Universal Credit will introduce greater fairness to the welfare system by making work pay. It will replace a range of existing benefits with a single monthly payment and smooth the transition into work by combining in work and out of work benefits.

The early rollout of Universal Credit will start in some areas of Greater Manchester and Cheshire from April 2013 and be progressively rolled out nationally from October 2013.

The Universal Credit partner toolkit includes a range of information products that can be printed off and shared. This toolkit is to inform organisations – particularly those in the Pathfinder locations – about Universal Credit and to help explain the changes that Universal Credit will bring.

In addition, DWP recently held a successful Universal Credit Pathfinder conference in Manchester on 6 March.

The conference brought together stakeholders, delivery partners and local authorities to learn more about Pathfinder implementation and understand the activities that will support its launch.

Representatives from Citizens Advice, UK online centres and the Money Advice Service also presented on the work they are doing to help claimants prepare for Universal Credit, whilst parts of the online system and the supporting claimant communications were on show at the conference Marketplace.

Alanah Donnell, DWP Head of Strategic Engagement, said “It was great to see so many different groups, from local authorities to national welfare advice organisations, come together to discuss Universal Credit and how best we can support Pathfinder claimants.”



The Universal Credit Partner toolkit is available on the [DWP website](#).

Changes to Regulated Social Fund

DWP is making changes to the Sure Start Maternity Grant and the Funeral Payment Schemes from 1 April 2013. The changes will apply to claims made on or after that date.

Universal Credit has been added to the list of qualifying benefits for Sure Start Maternity Grants and Funeral Payments. This ensures that people in receipt of Universal Credit in the future may qualify for help with funeral and maternity expenses.

The rules have been changed so that arrears of social security benefits and tax credits are not taken into account in calculating the assets of the deceased

when deciding entitlement to a Funeral Payment.

In addition, as Council Tax Benefit no longer exists from 1 April 2013, this has been removed from the list of qualifying benefits for Funeral Payments.

The SF200 Funeral Payment application form and SF200 notes booklet, and SF100 Sure Start Maternity Grant application form, have been amended to take into account these changes.



More information about [Funeral Payments and Sure Start Maternity Grants](#) is available on the [GOV.UK website](#).

Universal Jobmatch gains momentum

Universal Jobmatch is a new online service which is radically changing the way people look for and apply to jobs.

Universal Jobmatch is available to all jobseekers, regardless of whether or not they are claiming a benefit. The service will make it quicker and easier for jobseekers to find a suitable job.

The service allows companies to do much more than simply advertise their jobs. They can manage their recruitment at their own convenience and receive automated job matches.

Following a media briefing by the Secretary of State on 20 December 2012, account registrations for Universal Jobmatch from both companies and jobseekers have continued to rise.

There are now:

- Over 2.2 million jobseekers with a Universal Jobmatch account;
- Over 490,000 employers with a Universal Jobmatch account;
- On an average working day, over 6 million job searches are carried out.

Emma Wilson, the Recruitment Manager for Camberley Premier Inn, said “Universal Jobmatch is fantastic.”

Emma really likes the way she can see potential employee details and also likes being able to manage her own recruitment through the service.



Further information on [Universal Jobmatch](#) can be found on the [DWP website](#).

Help and support available for separated families

The Help and Support for Separated Families programme enables parents to access the right support to help them to collaborate in the best interests of their children.



The first part of the programme to be launched was the Sorting out Separation web app which includes videos and information on a host of issues affecting people going through separation. It includes an interactive diagnostic tool to help users work out what support they need and signpost them to relevant expert organisations that can help them.

The web app is designed to be embedded on websites that parents already use and is already hosted by organisations including Money Saving expert, Relate, National Family Mediation, 4 Children, Mumsnet, Dad.info, Gransnet and Wikivorce. Around 45000 people have already visited the web app since it launched.

In March, the Help and Support for Separated Families Mark was launched. The purpose of the Mark is to provide reassurance to parents that when they use the services of an organisation with the Mark, they can trust it to help them collaborate with their ex-partner and focus on the interests of their children.

Organisations will need to meet a set of standards to receive the Mark and we expect the first awards to be made later in the Spring.

By the Summer, we will be forming a network of third-party telephone helplines currently used by separated and separating families. They, in addition to their existing conversation with customers, will be promoting messages which encourage collaboration between separated parents and couples to diagnose wider support needs and signpost consistently.

DWP has also announced an Innovation Fund to test and evaluate effective interventions that encourage collaboration between separated parents and reduce conflict. Successful bidders from the first round are expected to be announced later in the Spring.



The web app can be accessed at www.cmoptions.org/en/sortingoutseparation/index.asp

Armed Forces Independence Payment introduced

On 8 April 2013 the Ministry of Defence (MOD), in conjunction with DWP, will introduce a new benefit called the Armed Forces Independence Payment (AFIP).

It will provide financial support to members of the Armed Forces who have been seriously injured as a result of their service since 6 April 2005, and will help with the extra costs they may have due to their injuries.

Service personnel and veterans who are entitled to a Guaranteed Income Payment (GIP) of 50% or higher through the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme will be eligible for the payments.

AFIP payments will be £134.40 per week, the same amount as the enhanced rates of both the daily living and mobility components of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), or the highest rate of both components of Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

AFIP is awarded for life, not subject to review or further medical assessments and will not be stopped when the

claimant is in hospital (except Royal Chelsea Hospital), care home or prison. It will be non-taxable, non means tested and is payable anywhere in the world.

Claimants who choose to claim AFIP will not also be eligible for PIP, DLA or Attendance Allowance (AA). Claimants who choose not to apply for AFIP will be treated as a DLA, PIP or AA applicant in the usual way.

The MoD's Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) have already started to identify eligible claimants and invite claims to AFIP. The SPVA will be responsible for making decisions on entitlement to AFIP. DWP will be responsible for the payment and ongoing maintenance of AFIP claims.



Further information about AFIP on the payment is available at www.veterans-uk.info or by contacting the SPVA Helpline on 0800 169 2277.

DWP updates fit note guidance

DWP has updated its fit note guidance for employers, patients and GPs.

The fit note was originally launched in April 2010 to replace the old sick note. It allows doctors to give more information to patients about the functional effects of their health condition on their fitness for work, to help people return to work where appropriate.

Patients and employers use fit notes to discuss possible ways that employees could be supported to return to work or, if this is not possible, to arrange sick pay.

The updated guidance is based on feedback from employers, doctors and patients, and has been developed in close consultation with professional bodies.

It clarifies that the fit note is about someone's general fitness for work, and is not tied to their current or most recent job. This allows maximum flexibility to discuss what changes could help someone return to work (in either a full or reduced capacity).

The revised guidance also includes:

- Details about the computer generated fit note
- An improved question and answer section
- Clarification about the legal status of the fit note

Getting the most out of the fit note
New guidance for GPs, employers and patients.

DWP has updated the guidance about how to use the fit note to its full potential for GPs, employers and patients.

Department for Work & Pensions

Visit www.dwp.gov.uk/fitnote to download your copy.

- Ideas for patients and employers about possible changes to accommodate the advice in the fit note
- What the reassessment box means in practice
- Examples of the fit note being used in challenging situations (such as a delivery driver who can't drive)
- More comprehensive further resources sections

Dr Bill Gunnyeon, Chief Medical Adviser to DWP, said: "The fit note can be a valuable tool to help people return to work quickly and avoid long term absence and potential job loss – this revised guidance helps doctors, employers and patients use it to its full potential."

 **The revised guidance for employers, patients and GPs is available on the DWP website.**

Tax credits renewals: renew before deadline

HMRC and DWP are encouraging people to renew their tax credits claims in advance of the 31 July 2013 deadline.

This is an extremely busy time for HMRC contact centres so tax credits claimants are asked to renew as soon they receive their renewal pack, rather than leaving it until the 31 July deadline. The call centres become especially busy in the week leading up to the deadline, so if claimants try to call to renew their award during the final week, it may take much longer to get through to an adviser.

The 920,000 tax credits claimants who continuously received Income Support, Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit for the whole 2012-13 tax year will have their award automatically renewed.

HMRC will send an Annual Review form (TC603R) to each of these claimants who should review it and only contact HMRC if their circumstances have changed. Guidance notes provided with the form will tell claimants what changes they need to report. HMRC will not send a new Tax Credits Award Notice to these claimants so the TC603R must be retained as proof of ongoing entitlement.

"Guidance notes provided with the form will tell claimants what changes they need to report."

If a claimant receives a Tax Credits Renewal Declaration form (TC603D or TC603D-2) they must provide a declaration to HMRC before 31 July 2013 or their payments will stop and they will have to pay money back.

Jobcentre Plus will assist people who ask for help with completing their renewal form.

Tax credits can be renewed by:

- Telephoning the Tax Credits Helpline on 0345 300 3900;
- Returning a completed renewal notice in the post.

 **More information about tax credits can be found on the [HMRC website](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk).**

Industrial Injuries Advisory Council Public Meeting

The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council Public Meeting on 27 June 2013 is an opportunity for people to learn more about the Council's work.



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.

In particular they give advice on which diseases, and the jobs that cause them, should be included in the scheme. The Council is formed of medical, scientific and legal experts, and representatives of employers and employed earners.

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

The aim of the meeting is to give members of the public, and people with a professional interest in occupational diseases, the opportunity to learn and ask questions about the Council's work.

Sessions will:

- Describe the Council's role in making recommendations to Ministers about the industrial injuries scheme;
- Seek public opinion about new issues of concern in occupational health;
- Provide an opportunity to contribute views and ideas about issues that IIAC should look at and on the Council's future programme.



For further information or to reserve a place, please contact Zarina Hajee on 020 7449 5619. The deadline for reservations is 7 June 2013. To find out more visit the [IIAC website](#).

IIAC does not represent the Department for Work and Pensions and has no involvement in individual claims or decisions. It may not be possible to accept all applications if the number of requests is higher than expected.

Other news in brief...

Tougher benefit penalties on people committing benefit fraud

DWP, HM Revenue and Customs and local authorities are making changes to current legislation to impose tougher benefit penalties on people who commit benefit fraud.

A Loss of Benefit penalty of 13 weeks, 26 weeks or three years will be imposed, depending on the number of benefit fraud offences committed. All the offences have to be committed on or after 1 April 2013, and result in a conviction, for the penalty to apply.

An immediate three-year Loss of Benefit penalty will be imposed for serious organised or identity benefit fraud offences committed wholly on or after 1 April 2013.

More information will follow next month.

New Job Clubs initiative launches

A new Job Clubs initiative was launched by Christians Against Poverty (CAP) at the Houses of Parliament on 6 March.

DWP already has a National Partnership Agreement with CAP to help vulnerable people who are in crisis because of debt, and will soon be expanding this.

CAP have recognised that unemployment is a significant reason why people get into debt, and have launched their Job Clubs so that people who find themselves crippled by debt can be helped to become ready to look for work.

For more information please visit the [CAP website](#).

