

# Touchbase

## May 2012

### Welcome to your monthly e-zine!



Welcome to the May 2012 edition of Touchbase. We're officially well into Spring, although the weather seems to have other ideas at the moment!

This month, we cover topics that demonstrate the range of people DWP helps and supports.

With less than a year to go until Personal Independence Payment is introduced, we're asking for people to work with us on the delivery plans.

A new text messaging service is being introduced for Disability Living Allowance claimants. It will keep them up to date on their claim's progress, and we have details of how people can register for the service.

Extra funding for Access to Work will allow DWP to support more disabled people with finding or keeping a

job. We also look at how DWP is contributing to the Government's 'Putting Full Recovery First' strategy which aims to help people with drug or alcohol issues.

We have news for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants. Recent changes mean that we're now offering claimants extra support if they are victims of domestic violence. Also, as students reach the end of their courses, we explain how they may be eligible for JSA.

I hope you find Touchbase useful, and we welcome your feedback, suggestions and ideas for articles. If there's a topic you think we should cover, please tell us. If you'd like to contribute to a future edition, for example giving others an overview of your organisation's work, send an email with the details.

You and your colleagues can register for an e-alert which you'll receive when Touchbase is published on the DWP [Advisors and Intermediaries](http://www.dwp.gov.uk) website.



To provide feedback on Touchbase email [corporate.stakeholders@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:corporate.stakeholders@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

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# Personal Independence Payment

Implementation plans continue with less than a year to go



Following the Welfare Reform Bill getting Royal Assent in March, DWP is preparing for the implementation of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) from April 2013. There is less than a year to go until PIP is introduced for new claims. In advance of this DWP continues to work with organisations, claimants and staff to develop the systems and processes for the new benefit.

A key element of the new arrangements is who will undertake PIP assessment work. Providers on the new Health and Disability Framework have been announced. Details of the [providers on the framework](#) are on the DWP website. They now have the opportunity to bid for the four regional PIP contracts. The successful providers will be announced in early July.

DWP Partner Managers continue to meet with organisations that represent and advise PIP claimants. Details of local [DWP Partner Managers](#) are on the DWP website.

This engagement is the start of a process to ensure that they have the information, tools, guidance and support they need for the introduction of PIP.

But there is more to do. We are interested in hearing your ideas about:

- What information organisations need about PIP to support and advise claimants
- How we might provide that information, for example through written communications and/or face to face events such as conferences or roadshows
- What opportunities there might be to build on existing engagement between DWP Partner Managers and local organisations in this area.



**To let DWP have your ideas about the information organisations need about PIP, please send an email to the PIP team.**

# Suspending the payment of benefit

## New timescales for claimants to respond to information requests

On 17 April 2012 amendments were made to the Social Security and Decision and Appeals Regulations. The changes reduced the time the Secretary of State must allow before he can suspend the payment of benefit where he is seeking information from claimants.

The Secretary of State must allow a minimum period of 14 days for a claimant to respond to the first request for information. He can raise the possibility of suspension of benefit at this point.

If the claimant does not respond to the request the Secretary of State can suspend payment of benefit. This is not automatic and he will consider the claimant's circumstances and whether the suspension will cause them hardship. If a suspension is imposed, the claimant will be given a further month to respond or face the possibility of having their benefit stopped.

The change to the regulations does not prevent the Secretary of State imposing an immediate suspension in situations where there is doubt about a current benefit award being correct or an issue about entitlement. If the matter can only be resolved by requesting information from the claimant, the Secretary of State will decide whether to:

- Suspend the benefit immediately and then seek information
- Apply the new two week rule
- Allow longer for the claimant to respond.

His decision will be helped by DWP's guidance.

The change allows for a minimum period of seven days for Jobseeker's Allowance claimants to respond, but there are no plans to apply this.



**Read the [detailed guidance used when considering the suspension of benefits](#) on the DWP website.**

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# Putting Full Recovery First

## Support for people with drug and alcohol issues

On 14 March 2012 the Government published the 'Putting Full Recovery First' strategy. It outlines the plans for building a new treatment system based on the commitments made in the 2010 Drug Strategy:

- To restrict the supply of drugs
- To reduce the demand for drugs
- To help people become free of addiction.

The plan is guided by the three principles of well-being, citizenship and freedom from dependence. It sets out how the Government will help people achieve full recovery and live meaningful lives.

DWP will use the Work Programme, Youth Contract and the other support available through Jobcentre Plus to provide flexible and personalised help to get people into work.

DWP introduced the Jobcentre Plus Offer for claimants with drug and alcohol issues in summer 2011. Under these arrangements Jobcentre Plus staff can recognise the implications of overcoming drug or alcohol issues in the Jobseeker's Agreement. Jobcentre Plus works with partners such as treatment providers. Claimants with drug or alcohol issues can volunteer to join the Work Programme early where they will receive flexible and personalised support to return to work. For claimants in treatment, advisers can encourage volunteering and take part in joint case conferencing on topics such as education, training and employment.

Since March 2011, people in residential treatment for drug or alcohol issues have been automatically treated as having limited capability for work for the purposes of Employment and Support Allowance. This legislative change means that people getting residential treatment are treated the same as those getting medical treatment in hospital.



[Read more about the Government's 'Putting Full Recovery First' strategy document and its role in DWP's Social Justice strategy on the DWP website.](#)

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# Carer's Allowance and Fostering Allowance

## Differences in legislation can affect allowances for foster carers

Local Authorities (LAs) can help DWP to identify the correct legislation used to place a child with a foster carer. DWP contacts LAs to check the claimant's details when processing Carer's Allowance claims.

Foster carers can claim and be paid Carer's Allowance if they meet all the entitlement conditions. Entitlement to the allowance can be affected if the money is treated as earnings. Fostering Allowance can be ignored in some circumstances, depending on which legislation applies.

Money paid for fostering can be completely disregarded if it is being paid by:

- A local authority under Section 23(2) (a) of the Children Act 1989 (before 2009)
- A local authority under Section 22a or 22b of the Children Act 1989
- A local authority under Section 26 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- A voluntary organisation under section 59(1)(a) of the Children Act 1989
- A care authority under Regulation 9 of the Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996.



# Complaints about providers

## Resolving complaints from claimants who are unhappy with providers

Jobcentre Plus has been working with Work Programme providers since June 2011 to support claimants into work. Each provider has a process to resolve complaints about their service.

At the Work Programme referral interview, claimants are given the provider's details which includes information about their complaint process.

If a claimant is unhappy with the service they have received from their Work Programme provider they should, in the first instance, make a complaint directly to the provider.

This ensures that the provider has a chance to resolve the claimant's issues.

If the claimant is unhappy with the provider's final response they can ask the Independent Case Examiner (ICE) to investigate their complaint.

The Independent Case Examiner will not accept any complaint for investigation until the Work Programme provider has been given the opportunity to respond to the complaint.



[Read more information about the Work Programme on the Directgov website.](#)



# Disability Living Allowance claims and text messaging

## Keeping people updated on progress of claims



The DWP customer survey results published in 2011 reported that customers made:

- Twice as many calls to DWP when they were not kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry
- Nearly three times as many calls when DWP did not tell them how long it would take to make a new claim.

In response to this DWP will introduce an extra service for those making new claims to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) from the end of May 2012.

Claimants, parents making claims on behalf of children under 16, or appointees will be able to receive updates on the progress of a new claim by text message to their mobile phone.

Messages will be free to receive and will be sent to confirm receipt of the claim form and give updates on the progress of a claim. The service will not replace written decisions or written requests for further information.

An insert in new claim packs will tell claimants about this service. It will be gradually introduced across the UK so not everyone who provides a mobile number will receive texts immediately.

All texts that are sent will be headed 'DWP' and no sensitive information will be sent by text. Claimants will not be able to respond to these text messages, and need to continue to report any changes in circumstances by telephone on 08457 123 456.



# Access to Work

## Support for people with disabilities or long-term health conditions

Access to Work is a programme delivered by Jobcentre Plus. It supports disabled people or those with long-term health conditions to overcome barriers they face when getting or keeping a job. The programme is provided when an employee requires support or adaptations beyond the reasonable adjustments that an employer is legally obliged to provide under the Equality Act 2010.

The programme supported 35,840 people in 2010/11 and the Government has recently made an extra £15million available for Access to Work to help disabled people realise their aspirations through employment.

### What support is available?

The programme is broken down into several elements, each offering a specific type of help. For example:

- Travel within work
- Special aids and equipment
- Support worker, including interpreters
- Travel to work.

In December 2011, Access to Work introduced a new Mental Health Support Service. This service is delivered on Access to Work's behalf by Remploy. It offers support for those people with mental ill health to move into work or to help keep their current employment.

### Eligibility

To be eligible for support a person's disability or health condition must prevent them from being able to do parts of their job. The person must be aged 16 or over and either:

- In a paid job
- Unemployed and about to start a job
- Unemployed and about to start a Jobcentre Plus arranged work trial, or
- Self-employed.

### Applying for Access to Work

Applications are taken by telephone and a completed form is sent to the applicant to check, sign and return. Once returned, the application is allocated to an Access to Work advisor for them to deal with.

The telephone number for applications is 020 8426 3110. Please quote Touchbase.

People who are unable to use the telephone can contact the business centre using:

- Textphone: 020 8426 3133
- Fax: 020 8426 3134
- Email: [Access to Work](#)



For further information about the [Access to Work programme](#), please visit the [Direct Gov website](#).

# Support for graduates and school leavers

Education courses will be coming to an end soon for many people. School and university leavers will start to think about next steps.

Students whose university course has ended become entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) only after the official end date of their course. Students making claims before their official term end date will be told that they will only be entitled to claim JSA after their course has officially finished.

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DWP encourages employers to invest in students and graduates by offering work experience and internships to help them develop skills and increase their chances of getting a permanent job. [Graduate Talent Pool](#) is a free website bringing together graduates seeking internships and employers looking to take on interns.

Students who are aged 19 or younger are generally not entitled to receive JSA in their own right until after the child benefit terminal date has passed. Child benefit is linked to one of four annual terminal dates. For courses ending in May or June 2012, in most cases, child benefit will continue to be paid up to the first weekend in September. People who claim before the terminal date will be told this by DWP staff and given the option to claim at a later date.

Through Get Britain Working and The Work Programme, DWP advisers offer young claimants a comprehensive menu of help including skills provision, advice on [Apprenticeships](#) and job search support. [Youth Contract](#), launched in April 2012, focuses on equipping young people with the skills and opportunities they need to gain long term employment.



Find out more by visiting the [Graduate Talent Pool website](#), the [Apprenticeships website](#) and the [Youth Contract pages of the DWP website](#).

# Crisis Loan changes

## New rules affect how much claimants receive

Two further changes were introduced on 9 April 2012 to the Crisis Loan system as part of the work to:

- Reduce expenditure back to pre 2006 levels
- Prepare for the transfer of funding for new local provisions to Local Authorities from April 2013.

The changes are:

- For non-householders facing an emergency or disaster situation, the maximum Crisis Loan award in relation to living expenses is based on 30% of their benefit personal allowance rate. This is instead of the previous rate of 60%. Householders and people without accommodation will continue to receive maximum awards based on 60% of their benefit personal allowance rate.

- Crisis Loans awarded to alleviate hardship because Child Tax Credits have not been received on time are now treated as alignment payments. They are exempt from the cap that restricts Crisis Loan living expense awards to three in a 12 month rolling period.

These changes do not alter DWP's requirement to consider an applicant's need for an award, whether or not they are a householder.



**Take a look at further information and updates about the transfer of discretionary elements of Crisis Loans to new local provision from April 2013 on the DWP website. You can email any questions on the changes to Crisis Loans from April 2012.**

“These changes do not alter DWP's requirement to consider an applicants need for an award, whether or not they are a householder.

# Other news in brief...

## Employment and Support Allowance linking rules

Changes were introduced on 30 April 2012 that limit the entitlement to contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) to a maximum period of 365 days for claimants in the Work-related Activity Group. These changes are part of the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

ESA linking rules mean that a new period of Limited Capability for Work is treated as a continuation of an earlier period. The two are added together for the purpose of the 365 day limit. The changes mean that rules which were designed to be beneficial to claimants may under some circumstances now work to their disadvantage.

DWP has therefore abolished the long-term linking rule so that claimants who have paid contributions will be able to make a further successful claim for contributory ESA.

## Industrial Injuries Advisory Council Public Meeting

The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) is holding its next public meeting on 28 June 2012 at Weetwood Hall Conference Centre & Hotel, Otley Road, Leeds.

The meeting is for members of the public and people with a professional interest in occupational diseases and the industrial injuries scheme.

This meeting will:

- give an opportunity to learn about the work of the Council
- describe the process of prescribing occupational diseases for the purposes of industrial injuries disablement benefit
- seek public opinion about new issues of concern in occupational health, and
- provide an opportunity to contribute views and ideas about issues that IIAC should look at and on IIAC's future programme.

 Find out more about [IIAC and its work](#) (IIAC website)

 For more information, please contact [Zarina Hajee](#), IIAC Secretariat on 020 7449 5619.

# Other news in brief...

## Update on the movement of Disability Living Allowance processing work

In the April edition of Touchbase we told you about the re-direction of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) new claims work from Blackpool to the regional disability network.

The Sutton DLA new claims work, including claims for children that should have moved to the Midlands Disability Centre on 30 April has been delayed. These postcodes will still be dealt with by Warbreck House, Blackpool: BN, BR, GU, KT, RH, TN and TW. When the work moves we will give details in a future edition of Touchbase.

 The other re-direction work took place on 30 April as planned. Details are in the [April edition of Touchbase](#).

## Budgeting loans for maternity or funeral expenses

There are important changes to budgeting loans from 8 May 2012. Social Fund budgeting loans help people meet additional costs they may find it difficult to budget for.


The changes mean that DWP can award budgeting loans to help families buy maternity and baby items or to help meet the costs of a relative's funeral. This is in addition to other available help such as a Sure Start maternity grant or a funeral payment from the regulated Social Fund.

DWP's budgeting loan application form (SF500) now includes the option to apply for maternity or funeral expenses.

## Benefit cap

DWP is writing to claimants from 4 May 2012 whose benefit may be capped from April 2013, giving them the opportunity to ring the helpline and request help and support. Jobcentre Plus districts and local authorities will be told which claimants will be affected to enable them to offer appropriate support.

People receiving Industrial Injuries benefits will now be exempt from the benefit cap.

 The [benefit cap pages on the DWP website](#) contain more details about the changes.