

GREATER WESSEX NEWS

Update 3 – August 2013



Welcome to the third edition of the Greater Wessex Newsletter

This newsletter focuses on the significant changes being delivered by the Welfare Reform Agenda as it rolls out nationally, and includes information about how DWP is working in partnership to ensure successful outcomes.

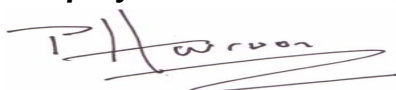
DWP aspires to make a difference to people's lives, helping to reduce poverty by supporting people into work. In this edition you will gain insight into the benefits which result from sharing expertise and knowledge across partner organisations, including examples where we have worked alongside key workers and co-located JCP staff to ensure employment advice and support can be made readily available when needed.

You will also read about how Poole Jobcentre Plus is spearheading the digital agenda for Greater Wessex.

I hope that you find this edition informative and, as ever, I am happy to receive any comments and suggestions you want to make for future editions. Finally, I would like to mention that we have a new 'newsletter co-ordinator', Karen Randall whose contact details appear on page 18. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Gill Stockley for all her hard work on this publication which I know she has thoroughly enjoyed.

Phil Harrison

Employer and Partnerships Manager



1

Contents:

Welfare Reform Update

Get Britain Working Update

Digital Agenda

News in Brief

jobcentreplus

Personal Independence Payment - Update

From 10 June, new claims to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are being taken in all parts of Great Britain, and no further new claims to Disability Living Allowance from people aged 16-64 can be made. New claims to PIP are registered over the phone by calling DWP. Basic information, including contact details, is given as part of that call. For further information go to: [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Paper forms can be requested in writing from the address below, by anyone unable to claim over the phone, or unable to get help to make the initial call, however, this can delay the initial claim.

Personal Independence Payment
PO Box 1303
Blackpool
FY1 9HF

What information is available for Support Organisations?

A [PIP Toolkit](#) for support organisations and advisers is available on the DWP website. The toolkit contains fact sheets about how to claim PIP; completing the “how your disability affects you” form; examples of letters claimants may receive in connection with PIP claims, and information organisations can use for their own PIP communications.

From 10 June, please do not issue any DLA1A or DLA1 forms and destroy any stocks you hold.

There’s a [simple checklist](#) that suggests some practical steps you can take to ensure you are offering the best advice.

Personal Independence Payment - continued

What happens after a new claim for PIP is made?

We'll send a questionnaire called 'How your disability affects you' after the initial claim has been taken over the telephone. Usually it will take less than a week to receive the questionnaire which will be sent out by second class post. This is just the average length of time, if we need to do additional checks before we send the questionnaire, it could take longer.

How long will it take to deal with the claim?

There are a number of stages that need to take place before we can make a decision on a claim. The length of time before we let an applicant know will depend on how long each stage actually takes on each case. We will let people know as soon as we can.

When will a claimant hear from the Assessment Provider (Capita or Atos)?

When the 'How your disability affects you' questionnaire (form PIP2) has been submitted the timescales for when the claimant will hear from the assessment provider will depend upon what assessment action is required.

For example, if the assessment provider decides they can provide us with the report without the need for further medical evidence or a face to face consultation, they will not be contacted by them at all. The DWP decision maker will consider the assessment provider's report, make a decision on their claim and send a letter to them explaining the decision.

If the assessment provider needs to obtain further medical evidence and/or they need to see people for a face to face consultation, they will contact them about this. This will be after they have had an initial look at their claim and any other information already sent to them. This will normally be within three weeks of the claimant returning their PIP2 questionnaire to DWP.

Personal Independence Payment - continued

Further information on Personal Independence payment can be found on the following link:

[Personal Independence Payment \(PIP\) - GOV.UK](#)

How people will contact us: To start a new claim for PIP the claimant or representative should telephone DWP on 0800 917 2222 or textphone 0800 917 777.

For PIP general enquiries telephone 0845 850 3322 or textphone 0845 601 6677.

Both numbers will be open between 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday

Benefit Cap – Update

The Benefit Cap was introduced on 15 April 2013 in four local authority areas in London and was followed by a National rollout in the remaining local authorities **from 15 July 2013**. All households where a cap is appropriate will, in line with existing plans, be capped by the end of September 2013. Lessons learnt from the four London local authorities will be applied to the national roll out. DWP has committed to a formal published evaluation and as such there will be independently verified analysis in due course (expected publication: Autumn 2014). The priority of DWP remains to support households in to work and towards a stable and sustainable working lifestyle. We are working intensively with them, explaining and identifying the support available locally to help them look for work and how they can look at other options if appropriate.

Our benefit cap advisers have made 82,000 calls to people to help them understand their options. To date more than 25,000 people potentially affected by the benefit cap accepted our offer of Employment Support.

Jobcentre Plus is also working with Local Authority colleagues to ensure that households likely to be impacted by the cap 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 childcare provision.

To date DWP have helped around 8000 people potentially affected by the benefit cap to find work.

From 28 May 2013, further letters have been sent to two groups of potential benefit cap claimants, these are:

- Existing claimants not previously notified of the national implementation date and currently over the cap limit.
- New cap claimants currently over the cap limit.

The letter will inform them that the benefit cap will apply from 15 July 2013

Benefit Cap – What is happening in Greater Wessex?

We have identified there are potentially 2245 customers affected by the Benefit Cap in Greater Wessex. To help these customers move closer to the labour market we have co-located Benefit Cap Advisers within Portsmouth City Council (24 June) and Southampton City Council (1 July) and Bournemouth and Poole Borough Councils (15 July).

These advisers will work within the Housing Options teams, providing employment support and better off advice to support claimants into work. This is an enhanced service for the local authorities with the largest volumes of potential caps.

Jobcentre Plus has committed resource to support this work until capping completes mid August.

All local authorities have been provided with details of the JCP offer, together with single points of contact details by site and benefit type. This will enable local authority staff to signpost and support residents directly into employment support.

This is a feature that will remain after the cap has been implemented, to support those claimants who have been capped and encourage them to seek assistance.

Universal Credit ~ Update

The early introduction of Universal Credit has begun in the Greater Manchester and Cheshire area. This is known as a Pathfinder, and it will trial Universal Credit before progressive national roll-out begins in October 2013. It is being delivered through the **four local Jobcentres** in selected areas within the **local authorities** of Tameside, Oldham, Warrington and Wigan. Ashton-under-Lyne Jobcentre is already accepting claims for Universal Credit. Wigan, Warrington and Oldham Jobcentres are trialling the new Claimant Commitment and started taking claims for Universal Credit in July.

The Claimant Commitment is part of the support that Universal Credit will provide to help claimants find work. It sets out the responsibilities that an individual claimant of out-of-work benefits will accept in return for getting those benefits.

We have refreshed the [Universal Credit toolkit for partner organisations](#) to provide information about Universal Credit in different formats, including short films showing personal stories from people who have made a success of their jobsearch.

GOV.UK content will be updated on a regular basis to provide the latest information on Universal Credit. Anyone with questions about how Universal Credit might affect them should be directed to this site.

Any feedback on the toolkit or its content is welcome. Please send to: uc.partnertoolkit@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Social Fund Reform

The Social Fund Reform introduced a number of changes from 1 April 2013, including:

- The abolition of the discretionary Social Fund (Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants);
- The introduction of Short Term Benefit Advances (STBA), administered by DWP; and
- The commencement of new local welfare provision (different names may be used in different locations) developed by upper tier local authorities in England, and under arrangements made by the devolved administrations for Scotland and Wales.

Local authorities and the devolved administrations are **not** administering Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants.

Local engagement between DWP and LAs has been crucial to the successful transition to these new arrangements.

Feedback to date on the transition has been largely positive, and DWP staff and local authorities continue working together to ensure the new systems and processes are fully understood by everyone involved.

Customer Journey to support people with an immediate financial need :

Customers contacting DWP either on the telephone or by calling into a Jobcentre will be supported by our staff who will:

- Establish what help the customer needs;
- Consider whether DWP can help ~ for example with a Short Term Benefit Advance or a Budgeting Loan through the Regulated Social Fund;
- Signpost the customer to other help that may be available within their area including Local Welfare Provision.

Social Fund Reform - continued

It will be for the customer to decide if they want to follow up any of the signposting opportunities that are identified.

Local authorities/devolved administrations expect DWP to have considered entitlement to STBA or any other DWP entitlement before signposting to their services. It is important for claimants to understand that DWP has no responsibility or control over local support; generally speaking customers should be signposted to the contact channels set up in their local area.

Short Term Benefit Advances (STBA):

STBA may be payable under the following circumstances:

- The start of a new claim ~ either at the point of making the claim or before the first benefit payment;
- When or after the claimant reports a change of circumstances which significantly increases the amount of benefit they may be entitled to, or;
- Where the claimant's first benefit payment is part week and insufficient to meet their immediate needs.

STBA may be awarded where the Decision Maker is satisfied the claimant has demonstrated that:

- It is likely that they satisfy the conditions of entitlement for benefit and they can afford to repay an advance within 12 weeks (except where there are exceptional circumstances where the claimant's financial need overrides affordability, such as fleeing domestic violence).
- They are in financial need defined as a serious risk of damage to the health and /or safety of themselves or a member of their immediate family, and
- They are without access to any other source of funds or support.

There is no automatic entitlement to STBA for customers who are waiting for their first benefit payment.

Social Fund Reform - continued

Ongoing assistance from the Social Fund

Please note that the Regulated Social Fund (**Sure Start Maternity Grants, Funeral Payments, Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments**) is continuing and still administered by DWP.

Claimants should **not** be referred to local authorities or the devolved administrations for assistance in respect of Regulated Social Fund provision.

An information sheet on short- term advances and budgeting advances can be found :

[Budgeting-short-term- advances-guidance](#)

Post Work Programme Support

The Work Programme launched in June 2011, in line with the Government commitment to “create a single welfare to work programme to help all unemployed people get back into work.” Jobcentre Plus refer unemployed claimants to contracted Work Programme providers who deliver up to two years of support to help individuals find work.

The Work Programme has already helped more than 207,000 people off benefits and into work.

The first people to complete two years on the Work Programme returned to Jobcentre Plus caseloads in June 2013.

What help and support will these claimants receive ?

Claimants returning from the Work Programme will have a diagnostic interview with a Jobcentre Plus Adviser to understand how best to move them towards employment, building on their time on the Work Programme and supported by an exit report from the Work Programme providers.

In preparation for the national roll out of Post Work Programme Support, trailblazers were run in four Districts to test and evaluate what support works best to support the long-term unemployed.

For Jobseeker Allowance claimants completing the Work Programme from June 2013 onwards, the support offered will comprise of two key elements:

Jobcentre Plus Offer – the current offer of flexible personalised support will be offered to claimants with relevant recent work experience (three months or more during their time on the Work Programme); and

Mandatory Intervention Regime (MIR) – a more intensive offer of flexible and personalised adviser based support for a period of six months.

It is estimated that the majority of JSA completers will require the more intensive Mandatory Intervention Regime.

Post Work Programme Support – continued

Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) claimants completing the Work Programme from June 2013 will receive the **Jobcentre Plus Offer** tailored to the specialist needs of ESA claimants, including specialist disability support.

A trailblazer we ran last year included a **third option** - externally provided '**Community Action Programme**' (CAP) and early evaluation showed that CAP had a positive impact on benefit receipt and softer outcomes like motivation and work-related ambition.

The learning from Community Action Programme in the trailblazer is still to be fully evaluated and will inform future policy development.

A press release was issued recently to announce the details of post Work Programme support :

[Post Work Programme support – Press release](#)

The research report on the Jobcentre Plus Trailblazer can be found:

[Evaluation of Support for the Very Long-Term Unemployed](#)

New Enterprise Allowance

DWP has recently launched a New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) campaign, supported by entrepreneur Levi Roots called '**You're Not Alone**' which emphasises the valuable support available through NEA from a business mentor in the early months of trading.

Throughout the summer, Jobcentres will be encouraging unemployed customers to consider NEA as a future career prospect. Posters and flyers will be prominently displayed to generate interest. Jobcentre Plus advisers will be exploring the possibility of self-employment with their customers and explaining what help and support is available in their local area.

There will also be a range of other campaign activity using social media channels as well as press and PR. [The New Enterprise Allowance](#) scheme gives jobseekers access to expert business mentoring and a financial package worth up to £2,274 to help them get going.

Wage Incentives for Employers

Claim a [cash incentive](#) and make a difference to youth unemployment

Wage incentives could be yours when you take on an 18 to 24 year old who has been claiming benefits for at least six months. Wage incentives are available through Jobcentre Plus across England, Scotland and Wales.

They are also available if you take on a young person from the Work Programme, delivered by the private, public and voluntary sector to help individuals at risk of becoming long-term unemployed find work. In addition, wage incentives are available for taking on a young disabled person from the Work Choice Programme.

Phone: **0845 601 2001** (option 2) for more information

Poole Digital Jobcentre

Later this summer, Poole Jobcentre Plus is to become the first digital Jobcentre in the country. The digital jobcentre will be equipped with 14 Wireless Access Devices, and the existing job points and customer access phones will be removed. The new devices will be similar to the Internet Access Devices already available in many jobcentres for customer use.

The future will be very much about focusing on those customers that need help with particular skills to help them find work. For example, short, sharp help such as quick improvements to a CV or support with job applications. The service will be particularly helpful when large scale recruitment drives make it imperative that applications are made as soon as possible, a recent example being the recent Sainsbury's recruitment in Weymouth.

It is anticipated this new service will go live sometime in August.

Jobseeker's Allowance ~ claiming via online service

All claimants wishing to make a new or repeat Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claim by telephone will now be assessed for their eligibility to claim online and, where appropriate, directed to the JSA online channel. This is in line with the Government's ambition for our services to be digital by default and will be a key step in changing the culture for DWP's customers.

Telephony agents will offer support and direction to eligible claimants, assisting them in finding online access in their local area. This may include:

- Using the internet of family or friends;
- Directing claimants to local free internet with 3rd party providers, or
- Booking an appointment to use an Internet Access Device at a claimant's local Jobcentre where necessary.

JSA claimants categorised as vulnerable, or those ineligible to claim online, will still be able to make their claim over the telephone.

Further information on the JSA online service can be found on the [Online services for customers - DWP](#).

Troubled Families Programme

The Troubled Families Programme was launched in April 2012 and aims to turn around the lives of 120,000 families by the end of 2015. In March 2013, DWP and the Department for Communities and Local Government published a delivery agreement, designed to boost employability and employment outcomes for identified families.

DWP has put in place 150 specialist JCP advisers (Troubled Families Employment Advisers (TFEAs)) as part of the Programme, to help families with multiple problems. TFEAs will be working with these families in 94 local authorities in England. In Greater Wessex, 4 local authorities were identified as having a high numbers of families that met the criteria and now have 8 TFEAs seconded to them. They are Southampton and Portsmouth City Councils and Hampshire and Dorset County Councils..

We know that employability and employment is crucial to tackling the often intergenerational cycle of benefit dependency and low aspirations of families with particularly complex needs. Problems such as poor school attainment, crime, mental illness, substance misuse and domestic violence can make it incredibly hard for troubled families to secure and retain employment. The Troubled Families Programme aims to address these long-standing barriers to work and make employment an ambition for all, with TFEAs primarily there to support key workers, by bringing their employment expertise to the key worker range of services already available to the families.

Closure of the Benefit Enquiry Line (0800 88 22 00)

With effect from **1st July 2013 and for a period of 6 months**, customers contacting DWP via the Benefit Enquiry Line will hear a message advising them of the closure of the service and signposting them to Digital Channels and specific Help & Enquiry Lines, with contact details. The closure has been agreed by Ministers.

Appeals process changes

Changes to DWP's appeals process were introduced in April 2013, initially as part of the design of the new benefits Personal Independence Payment and Universal Credit. The changes are mandatory reconsideration, direct lodgement and time limits for appeal responses.

They will be introduced for all other benefits and child maintenance cases from 28 October 2013.

To support customer representative and advisory groups in explaining the changes to those affected, DWP has published an [information pack](#) and [detailed lines to take](#), which are available in English and Welsh. Both versions are available from the [Advisers and intermediaries – DWP website](#)

Social Justice

A year on from the Social Justice strategy, DWP has launched [Social justice: transforming lives – one year on](#). This sets out progress made against over one hundred different commitments across government to show what has been achieved so far. The key indicators include tackling the root causes of family breakdown, worklessness, drug and alcohol addiction and promoting social investment.

We published our original report on [Social justice: transforming lives](#) on 13 March 2012. Our second Social Justice national conference in October 2013 will check on the progress in delivering Social Justice. It will include presentations and speeches from ministers, policy makers and policy implementers and show how the Government is measuring the success of the strategy. *We will publish more details about the event nearer the time.*

Further information

Useful websites :

***To access links in this document:
Right click on link and select "open hyperlink"***

The DWP website contains general information about the government's welfare reform agenda.

[DWP Adviser](#)

[Welfare Reform Act - DWP](#)



[GOV.UK website](#)

GOV UK contains information about all JCP services and future changes



The DWP monthly electronic newsletter Touch base e-zine is available – to access right click on the link below and select open hyperlink

[Keeping in Touch](#)

Tell us what you think

If you have any comments regarding this update or indeed would like to raise any issues please contact

Karen Randall on 023 9230 4828 email at : Karen.Randall@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Please note if you do not wish to receive this update or you would like it forwarded to an alternative address, please let me know.

If you are interested in becoming involved in, or would like further information on, any of the Get Britain Working measures including Work Clubs, Enterprise Clubs, Work Experience, Wage Incentive or Volunteering Opportunities please contact Karen Randall.