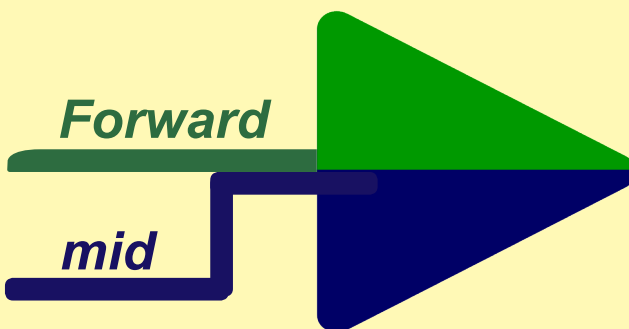


FORWARD

MIDLOTHIAN

DISABLED PEOPLE



Equality - Diversity - Inclusion

Welfare Reform: Supporting each other

Welcome to the 2nd Welfare Reform Newsletter from Forward Mid. Our aim with this newsletter is to offer clear, useful information to disabled people across Midlothian. We know from conversations with our members and from contact with other disabled people that many are concerned and worried about the impact of Welfare Reform on their ability to live a fair and equal life.



This edition includes sources of support for those struggling with Welfare Reform change, including organisations working locally that may be contacted for advice. We also include an in-depth article on Universal Credit, the Scottish Welfare Fund and details of local drop in clinics as well as a personal perspective about being disabled and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.

Forward Mid continues their commitment to disabled people in Midlothian in relation to the impact of Welfare Reform. We hope to establish a small support group to include disabled people and possibly some local practitioners – what we may call a “peer support group”. We intend that this group meets monthly to share experiences and offer helpful information regarding people's existing challenges.

It is hoped that this sharing of ideas can go some way to minimise the often negative effects of Welfare Reform and also promote some positive outcomes for disabled people.

If you are interested in being part of this local support group for Welfare Reform, or just want to know a bit more about it, please contact either Ian or Eric on 0131 663 9471.

If you want to find out more about Forward Mid's efforts in minimising the impact of Welfare Reform on the lives of disabled people in Midlothian, we encourage you to connect with us. As well as contacting us directly you can come along to Café Connect, which is a monthly community café held in Dalkeith Welfare Hall on the last Tuesday of each month. The next dates are 29th of October and 26th of November, 2-4pm. Come and join in. History tells us that the collective voice is stronger than that of the individual.

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Welfare Reforms: The Human Cost.

Overall, between 2010 and 2017 some 3.7 million disabled people will experience some reduction of income, and, will lose a total of £28 billion in benefits as a group.

- ✂ A total of 88,000 people currently on contributory ESA and in the Work Related Activity Group will see their benefit capped by 1% through the Benefit Up-rating Bill, and also time limited to 12 months.
- ✂ 120,000 who will experience some form of triple cut to their benefits, and 99,000 will have a quadruple cut.
- ✂ For those unlucky enough to lose their Disability Living Allowance this year, and who also claim contributory ESA (WRAG), the combined impact of these cuts and the up-rating cap will be a £23,461 loss by 2017.

Sheffield Hallam University estimate that 100,000 Scots ESA claimants will lose an average of £3,000 a year because of Work Capability Assessments and the introduction of the 12 month claim limit for those placed in the Work Related Activity Group. 40% of those who have lost entitlement to ESA so far have either learning difficulties and/or mental health issues - a disproportionate amount.

After all the current Scottish DLA claimants have been re-assessed for PIP the DWP estimates that 90,000 of them will lose some or all of their benefits. The average loss will be £3,000 a year. Half of all ESA claimants also claim DLA so total losses from just those two benefits could average £6,000 a year for tens of thousands of disabled people.

And of course the “Bedroom Tax” is also falling disproportionately on disabled people. Across the UK two thirds of households affected contain a disabled person. In Scotland however it's 80% of the 95,000 households likely to be affected.

Worse still Discretionary Housing Payments are being refused to many of those on DLA . So not only are disabled people facing increased poverty but many thousands could also be facing the loss of their homes and the support of friends and neighbours as they are forced out of the communities they live in to find smaller accommodation elsewhere.

Other cuts which are not cuts to disability benefits but which affect disabled people include –



- ✂ The freezing of child benefit (affecting 1 million disabled parents),
- ✂ Discretionary payments to the Social Fund (945,000 disabled people),
- ✂ The 10% cut to Council Tax Credit (1.38 million disabled people),
- ✂ Or the cutting of Local Housing Allowances for private tenants (827,000 disabled people).
- ✂ And of course the closure of the Independent Living Fund (21,000 disabled people)

Information courtesy of Inclusion Scotland

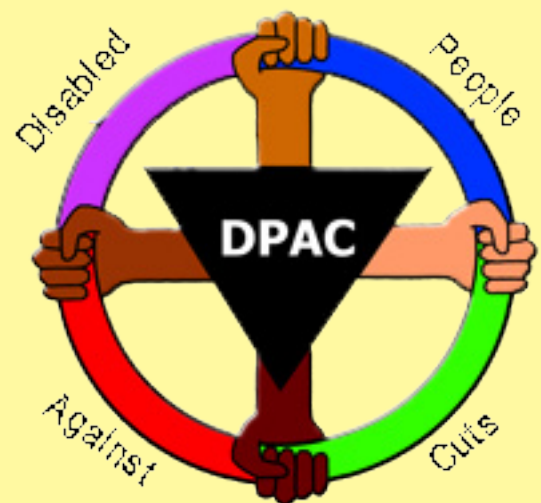
Inclusion Scotland

Inclusion Scotland believes that only disabled people can speak on behalf of disabled people and that we are stronger together than we are apart. We have been campaigning and lobbying on Welfare Reform for the last three years and have won important concessions from the Scottish Government such as transitional protection for disabled people's Passport Benefits (i.e. the Blue Badge and Concessionary Travel).

Inclusion Scotland membership is free to disabled people and organisations controlled by disabled people. Members receive a weekly bulletin and monthly newsletter. We regularly bring policy & decision-makers (such as MPs and MSPs) and disabled people together and members can attend these events for free.

If you would like to know more about Inclusion Scotland and our work please contact us .

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Employment Support Allowance vs Job Seeker's Allowance

Earlier this year whilst job hunting, I came down with an upper respiratory tract infection. Being disabled and on biological medication this is something I am often prone to. On this occasion I was sick for 10 days. Then in August I was rushed into hospital for an operation which resulted in a five day stay. Going in and out of hospital with the various impairments I have is a regular occurrence.

Sometimes I am admitted for a couple days, sometimes a lot more. Having multiple impairments means that one infection might span multiple conditions. It also affects my recovery time making me slow to heal.

Has Jobseeker's Allowance been designed to consider that disabled people may have additional sick days or admittance to hospital? What support can a disabled person expect when applying for jobs (a condition of Jobseeker's Allowance) from the DWP or from employers themselves?

Let's see what you think!

What happens if you're ill?

Fit notes and proof of sickness

Employees must give their employer a doctor's 'fit note' (formerly 'sick note') if they're off sick for more than 7 days. Hospital doctors or GPs provide them. They can charge a fee if a fit note is asked for before the 7th day. The fit note will say the employee is either 'not fit for work' or 'may be fit for work'. If it says the employee 'may be fit for work', employers should discuss any changes that might help the employee return to work (different hours or tasks). The employee must be treated as 'not fit for work' if there's no agreement on these changes. Employers can take a copy of the fit note. The employee should keep the original.



What if you go into hospital?

If you go into hospital, you may still get Jobseeker's Allowance for up to two weeks. Always ask for advice. After that time, you must claim Employment and Support Allowance because you can't meet the Jobseeker's Allowance rules while you are in hospital.

My Situation

Being on Job Seekers Allowance in my personal situation sees me switching between Job Seekers Allowance and Employment Support Allowance regularly. I now know how a yo-yo feels. When I am physically drained, the effort of gathering all the information can take days not hours. Spending time on the phone reporting the changes leaves me emotionally drained.

Being disabled and looking for work, I have found that some businesses are using the two ticks symbol to say they are positive about disability and if you meet the minimum criteria for a job they will guarantee you get a job interview. If you do not get an interview who are you supposed to contact? Is it the employer directly and ask them why you did not get an interview? Should I have to chase an employer if I meet the minimum criteria for a job? To go chasing these employers' impacts on my time, drains my energy and with living on benefits the cost implications are not practical.

If a business advertises the two ticks symbol and does not adhere to their promise, should I bring this to the attention of the Department of Work and Pensions? You are required to provide the original vacancy details and dates, your qualification level, and the proof of no interview. Once again spending physical energy, time and emotional distress. By the time it takes me to do this the position has been filled long ago.

How would I solve this problem? Job application forms already have a "do you consider yourself disabled" tick box. If you are applying electronically and the tick box is ticked, have a full copy sent to the DWP. Also have the minimum criteria checked and then send the employer a reminder to say you are required to give this person an interview.

Our thanks go to Iain Tait for this personal journey with DWP.

Jobseekers to account for their efforts to find work.

Jobseekers will have to account more clearly for their efforts to find work and will be given a weekly timetable of tasks to complete as part of the Claimant Commitment which rolls out nationwide this autumn.

From October, around 100 jobcentres a month will begin using the Claimant Commitment with new jobseekers, until it is in place across the country.

This new form of Jobseeker's Agreement will more fully set out a benefit recipient's responsibilities in order to receive state support. Those who fail to comply with their responsibilities risk losing their benefits.

A personal statement setting out what they will do to prepare for and find work will be based on the discussion between the jobseeker and their adviser. They will renew the commitment on a regular basis.

The new commitment is an important part of the cultural transformation that Universal Credit will bring and will place a strong focus on the responsibilities that claimants must fulfil.



Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan Smith, said:

“This is about redefining the relationship between benefit claimants and the state. The welfare state will support people when they fall on hard times, but in return they need to meet some contracted responsibilities agreed with a Jobcentre Plus adviser.”

“For those people on Jobseeker's Allowance, looking for work should be a full time job. It is fair and reasonable for the taxpayer to expect that claimants should do everything within their power to get into work.”

“It's a fair deal people will have to sign up to in return for receiving support from the state. Our reforms are ushering in a new culture of conditionality and the Claimant Commitment lies at the heart of this.”

“The Claimant Commitment is backed by a strict compliance regime to ensure jobseekers do all they can to have the best chance of finding paid work quickly. Those who fail to comply with their responsibilities risk losing benefit.”

Building on the current form of the Jobseeker's Agreement, the Claimant Commitment sets out more details of the requirements of claimants and information about the consequences of failing to meet these.

The National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers is keen to monitor the use and effect of sanctions and wants to hear about any examples you have. These could include:

- ✗ Sanctions applied inappropriately
- ✗ Failure to consider good cause
- ✗ **Hardship caused as a result**
- ✗ Inability to seek work as a result of having no money
- ✗ Falling into rent arrears and homelessness

They plan to collate the evidence and use it to challenge inappropriate use.

More information can be found at www.gov.uk/government/news/claimant-commitment-to-spell-out-what-jobseekers-must-do-in-return-for-benefits



Universal Credit is a new benefit being introduced from October 2013, replacing current means-tested benefits and Tax Credits for working-age people.

The basic provisions to implement Universal Credit are set out in the Welfare Reform Act 2012, and more detail has been provided in regulations made in February 2013.

When is it being introduced?

From the 28th of October 2013 to April 2014.

New claims for Universal Credit are to be introduced gradually over this period - starting in one district in each of the seven Department for Work and Pensions regions in Great Britain.

No new Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support or Housing Benefit claims are accepted once Universal Credit has been introduced in an area.

People moving from out-of-work benefits into work transfer onto Universal Credit.

From the 6th of April 2014 there will be no new claims for Tax Credits (except for people over pension credit qualifying age)

From April 2014 to October 2017 existing claimants will transfer to universal credit.

Which benefits are going?

The following benefits are being abolished and replaced by Universal Credit:

- Income Support;
- Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance;
- Housing Benefit;
- Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit;
- Budgeting Loans and Crisis Loan alignment payments are being replaced by payments on account (an advance of Universal Credit) in cases of need.

Council Tax Benefit, Crisis Loans for other needs and Community Care Grants have also been abolished. The responsibility for an equivalent has been passed to local authorities or devolved governments.

Disability Living Allowance for adults of working age is being abolished and replaced by the Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Which benefits are staying?

Benefits other than those listed above remain. In particular, people are still able to claim:

- Contribution-Based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Contributory Employment and Support Allowance;;
- Child Benefit;
- Carer's Allowance;
- Bereavement Allowance, Bereavement Payment and Widowed Parent's Allowance (subject to separate reform proposals);
- Maternity Allowance;
- Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit;

- Statutory Maternity/Adoption/Paternity pay;
- Statutory Sick Pay;
- Maternity Grants, Funeral Payments and Cold Weather Payments are to be extended to people on Universal Credit.

Who can claim Universal Credit?

Universal Credit replaces means-tested benefits and Tax Credits for working-age people up to Pension Credit age. It can be paid to people in or out of work. To claim, you must meet the following basic conditions:

- Claims may be made by a single person, or members of a couple jointly.
- You must be at least 18 years old (16/17 year olds can claim in special cases such as lone parents, disabled people or if they are estranged from their parents).
- You must be under the qualifying age for Pension Credit (this is 61 years and 10 months in October 2013 – rising to 65 by 2018). Where one member of a couple reaches the qualifying age for Pension Credit and the other is of working age, they must continue to claim universal credit until both have reached pension credit qualifying age.
- The capital rules are the same as for Income Support, with lower and upper capital limits and tariff income assumed for capital between the limits. This excludes people with savings over £16,000.
- Some income is disregarded – e.g., Disability Living Allowance (and its replacement, Personal Independence Payment), while other income is taken into account in full – e.g. occupational and personal pensions.

Net earnings above the work allowances are deducted from Universal Credit amounts at the rate of 65 per cent– ie, 65p for every pound of extra earnings. Claimants are better off by 35p for every pound earned above their work allowance.

A new minimum income can be assumed for self-employed claimants.



How much is Universal Credit?

Universal Credit is made up of:

- Personal amounts for a single claimant or couple;
- Additional amounts for:**
 - Children (or qualifying young people), with additional amounts for disabled and severely disabled children;
 - Rent or a mortgage (support for mortgage interest is only available for a month in which the claimant does not do any paid work, and after a waiting period of three months);
 - Limited capability for work;
 - Limited capability for work-related activity;
 - Regular and substantial caring responsibilities for a severely disabled person;
 - 70 per cent of registered childcare costs, within limits.

The maximum award is subject to the 'benefit cap' based on median net earnings – this is set at £2167 a month for couples or lone parents and £1517 for single claimants without children. The cap includes other benefits such as Child Benefit, but is implemented by reducing the amount of Universal Credit someone gets.

There are exceptions to the cap for:

- Households where someone gets Disability Living Allowance (or Personal Independence Payment) or Industrial Injuries benefits;
- Those with limited capability for work-related activity;
- Those receiving a War Disablement Pension or War Widow's/Widower's Pension;
- Working families (earning at least £430 per month); or
- Unemployed after working for at least 12 months (exempt from cap for 9 months).

The Universal Credit amounts are mostly at the same level as the means-tested benefits and Tax Credits it replaces, except:

- The amount for most disabled children is halved;
- The amount for most disabled adults is reduced due to the abolition of disability premiums;
- The lower allowance for people under 25 includes lone parents and couples.

What are the work allowances?

Universal Credit allows most people to earn higher amounts than under the old benefits system before their payment is reduced. The amount you are allowed to earn before your Universal Credit is reduced is known as a 'work allowance' ('earnings disregard' under the old system). Work allowances are set at different levels for each of the following groups:

- Single people and couples without children;
- Lone parents with one or more children;
- Couples with one or more children; and
- People with limited capability for work.



Only one work allowance, whichever is highest, is available in each household. There are two levels of work allowances for each group, depending on whether or not they are getting help with rent. There are substantially higher work allowances for households with no rent.

What about income from self-employment?

If you are self-employed and on a low income, you may be assumed to have a certain level of earnings, equal to the minimum wage for the hours you are expected to work. This does not apply during the first twelve months of starting a new business. Self-employed people have to report profits every month.

What happens to existing claimants?

Existing claimants on old benefits should not lose out at the point of change. There is transitional protection in the form of additional payments, although this is frozen and may be lost when circumstances change.

How do you claim and get paid?

Universal Credit is administered by the DWP. Couples must make a joint claim. Claims must normally be made online with alternative access by telephone accepted in specified cases. Subsequent contact must usually also be online, including claimants having access to an online account with details of their award and a facility for reporting changes of circumstances. Face-to-face support for those that need it will be provided in partnership with local authorities.

Universal Credit uses HMRC's 'Real-Time Information' system to identify earnings when they are paid. Those paid through PAYE should have no need to report changes to their earnings.

Payments are monthly, paid directly by the DWP into a claimant's bank account, including amounts for rent. There is provision to pay amounts differently if it appears necessary to protect the interests of the claimant, partner or child. Certain groups are considered a high priority for budgeting support or alternative payment arrangements.

What about conditionality and sanctions?

There is extensive conditionality and a tough sanctions regime for Universal Credit. All claimants must accept a 'claimant commitment' as a condition of receiving Universal Credit. They are then placed into one of the four following groups:

A. Claimants subject to no work-related requirements:

- People with limited capability for work-related activity because of health or disability – ie, those in the support group for Employment and Support Allowance;
- Lone parents or the main carer in a couple with a child under one;
- Carers with regular and substantial caring responsibilities for a severely disabled person;
- People earning above a set threshold.

B. Claimants subject to the work-focused interview requirement only: – lone parents or the main carer in a couple with a child over one but below the age of five

- Lone foster carers or the main carer in a fostering couple, with a foster child under the age of 16
- People who have become the main ‘family and friends carer’ for a child in the past year

This group are expected to attend periodic interviews to discuss their plans for returning to the labour market.

C. Claimants subject to the work preparation requirement:

- People with limited capability for work because of health or disability – ie, those in the work-related activity group for ESA;

This group are expected to take reasonable steps to prepare for work, such as attending a skills assessment, improving personal presentation, participating in training or an employment programme, and undertaking work experience or a work placement.

D. Claimants subject to all work-related requirements:

Everyone else - the default for claimants including lone parents and the main carer in a couple with children over the age of five. This group is subject to a work search requirement (including making applications and registering with employment agencies) and a work availability requirement (subject to limitations as agreed), as they would under Jobseeker’s Allowance.

There are other circumstances that are also included in each group. Each adult in a household is placed into her/his own conditionality group depending on her/his individual situation.

There is a new concept of ‘in-work conditionality’ where working claimants may be required to look for more work unless they are earning at least the minimum wage x 35 hours a week (or less if reduced availability for work has been agreed)

Sanctions

‘Higher level sanctions’ may be imposed on claimants subject to all work-related requirements. This includes failure for no good reason to comply with the requirement to prepare or apply for work, take up an offer of paid work; and ceasing work voluntarily or through misconduct. This may result in a reduction of the award, for a period up to a maximum of three years, depending on the number and regularity of such failures. The amount sanctioned is the adult personal allowance, and does not include additional amounts for children or housing. Other sanctions may be imposed on claimants subject to work preparation requirements for failure to undertake work-related activity, or in the work-focused interview group for failure to attend an interview. These may be imposed for a period until a claimant meets the compliance condition, or for up to 26 weeks. Hardship payments may be available for claimants who have been subject to sanctions and are, or will be in ‘hardship’. Hardship payments are at 60 per cent of the amount reduced, and are effectively in the form of a loan that may be recovered in future.

Is there a right of appeal?

There is a right of appeal to the First-Tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber) against decisions concerning entitlement to Universal Credit, as with the current benefits and tax credits system. However, you must first request a reconsideration before you can appeal.

View from the Chair.



Research study into welfare reform.

Recently I was forwarded an e-mail which had come from Edinburgh Napier University. The e-mail was a request for people who receive a disability related benefit, such as Disability Living Allowance, to take part in a research study into the affects of welfare reform on people living in Scotland. Being someone who does receive disability related benefits, who has experienced first-hand the impact of welfare reform and who has heard directly from some people of the devastating affect these reforms have had on their lives I was keen to get involved in this study.

I contacted the University and a meeting was set up, at my home, for my first interview. After discussing exactly what the research was about, getting answers to the questions I had about the project, the questioning began. It was totally painless; in fact, I would say it was quite enjoyable. There were some questions relating to my personal financial situation which some people might find intrusive but I was quite happy to answer them. After all, I don't think the study would produce a great deal if such important details were omitted.

At the end of the interview we discussed the next stages in the process then I was presented with my 'reward' for taking part in the research - a £10 voucher for Tesco. However, far more valuable to me was the knowledge that I had contributed to an extremely worthwhile investigation into this issue which has, and will continue to have, a major impact on the lives of those of us who receive welfare payments. I would urge anyone who has been affected by welfare reform to contact Edinburgh Napier University and volunteer to participate in this research study detailed below.

Jeff Adamson

Chair, ForwardMid



Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY



The Impact of Welfare Reform in Scotland: Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. This leaflet explains why the research is being done and what taking part would involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the Purpose of the study and who is organising it?

The aim of the study is to explore the impact of the welfare changes over time on a range of households in Scotland. The project is being carried out by the Employment Research Institute, Edinburgh Napier University and the University of Stirling on behalf of the Scottish Government.

What will happen to me if I take part? What do I have to do?

Taking part in the study would involve being interviewed for approximately 30 minutes, twice a

year over the next three years, about your experiences of welfare changes. The interviews will take place in:

September-November2013
April-June2014
September-November2014
April-June2015
September-November2015
April-June.....2016

We would also like to interview any other adults in your household if appropriate, and if you agree.

The interview could take place in your home or somewhere else convenient. If you agree, the interview would be audio recorded. All the information you give would be kept confidential.

You would be asked to sign a consent form and given a copy to keep.

Expenses and Payments

No payment for time would be provided to you. However, we will give you a voucher to compensate for your travel and any other expenses, at a rate of £10 per household per meeting.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your taking part in the research will be confidential. Your name and other personal details will not be included in the writing up of the research. Quotations may be used but you will not be identified by name. The recordings will be kept securely and destroyed after the reports or any articles that might come from the research have been published. Transcripts of the interviews will be anonymised and retained for future research.

What are the disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Sometimes talking about what is happening can be distressing. If this happens we can stop the interview if you wish.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

We cannot promise the study will help you but the information we get from this study will help understand the impact of the welfare changes in Scotland and will help the Scottish Government in making decisions related to these areas.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

If you change your mind and decide that you no longer want to take part in the study, you can withdraw at any time.

What if I want more information about the study?

If you have any questions about any aspect of the study or your participation in it please contact:

Dr Valerie Egdell
Research Fellow
Employment Research Institute Edinburgh Napier University
Tel: ☎ 0131 455 4714
Email: v.egdell@napier.ac.uk

Professor Ronald McQuaid
Professor of Work and Employment
Stirling Management School University of Stirling
Tel: ☎ 01786 467323
Email: r.w.mcquaid@stir.ac.uk

Changes to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Appeal Process.

Appeals Process.

The appeals process began to change from April 2013 when, if you disputed a decision about your Personal Independence Payment or Universal Credit, you would lodge an appeal with DWP which would straight away be referred to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal's Service (HMCTS). It is hoped that the new process will mean that decisions can be resolved without the need of referral to HMCTS.

Timescales.

Currently only Personal Independence Payment and Universal Credit is affected but from 28 October 2013 this will be how you appeal against all DWP decisions.

What Are the Changes?

Mandatory Reconsideration.

You have one calendar month to ask DWP to reconsider a decision you dispute before you can appeal to HMCTS. This is called mandatory reconsideration. The DWP hopes that this will encourage people to provide as much evidence as they can early in the process to avoid an HMCTS hearing.



How to make a request for reconsideration of your decision.

Ask DWP to reconsider your decision by telephone call or in writing (the address will be on the decision letter the DWP sent you) one calendar month from the date of the decision. There is no mandatory time limit on how long the DWP can take to carry out this reconsideration. After reconsidering your decision the DWP will send you two Mandatory Reconsideration Notices. These will give you the reasons for their decision and provide you with the details of how you can appeal this decision. One of these letters is for you and the other is for the HMCTS if you want to appeal. **Remember: if you apply late for a mandatory reconsideration, without a valid reason for doing so, you will not be able to appeal against the decision.**

Making your appeal.

If you disagree with the reconsidered DWP's decision and wish to appeal you must send your appeal directly to HMCTS within one calendar month. **You must include the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice that the DWP sent you otherwise your appeal will fail.** In benefits cases the DWP has 28 calendar days to give an appeal response to HMCTS and 42 calendar days in child maintenance cases.

What happens to your benefits?

If you dispute an Employment Support Allowance disallowance decision you will not be paid until the DWP reconsider their decision but you will be paid pending any appeal. **Remember: there is no limit on the time the DWP have to make their decision.** You may be able to claim other benefits, such as Jobseeker's Allowance, during the mandatory reconsideration period.

How to make your appeal.

To appeal against a Personal Independent Payment or Universal Credit decision you should choose a SSC51 form which you can download at: www.justice.gov/tribunals or you can get the form from the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Complete the SSC51 form, attach the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice and send it directly to HMCTS. The current form, GL24, will also be available until the end of 2014. If you use the wrong form your appeal will still be valid as long as you send it, with the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice, to HMCTS.

Address to send your appeal: HMCTS SSC5 Appeals Centre, P.O. Box 27080, Glasgow G2 9HQ.

Grapevine

If you are a disabled person living in Midlothian, or support a disabled person through your caring role or work with them you can contact Grapevine, the specialist disability information and advice service.

Based at the Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living (LCiL), Grapevine offers a telephone helpline on ☎️ 0131 475 2370 (available Mon-Thu 10am-4pm) and responds to online requests for information sent to the email address: grapevine@lothiancil.org.uk

The service can assist disabled people living in Midlothian to claim the new disability benefit, Personal Independence Payment, and assists with claim forms at LCiL offices in the Norton Park Centre, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh.

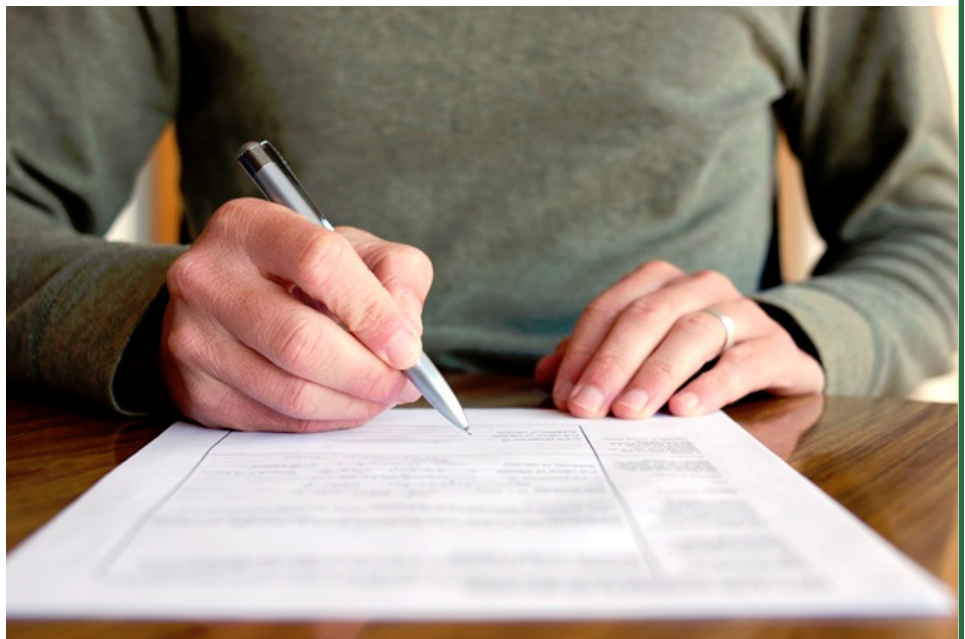
Grapevine has over 21 years of experience in providing independent information and advice to disabled people, people with long term conditions and older people. Now that many of the Welfare Reforms are taking affect, the service has been advising service users of the changes and how they may affect them, with a specific focus on disability benefits such as claiming PIP, the assessment process, what to expect at a face to face interview and how to make appeals. The service is based on the social model of disability which seeks to empower its service users to take up their rights and entitlements. The service not only covers disability benefits, it includes other disability topics such as: community care support; accessibility and equality rights; housing and council tax; employment and education; blue badges and using public transport; equipment and adaptations; holidays and short breaks; funding and grants to pay for essential items or support, etc.

As part of LCiL, Grapevine is a “one stop shop” of support and information for disabled people, people with long term conditions and older people, Grapevine effectively signposts individuals onto appropriate services in their communities. We can also refer people onto other LCiL services such as Independent Living Support and the Training Team to ensure people get support and advice based on their individual needs. For example, setting up Direct Payments and a care package, requesting a review of their care needs or receiving training on becoming an employer of Personal Assistants.

We also welcome opportunities to speak to groups of disabled people directly so if you are part of a group or work with people who are you can get in touch to discuss your requirements.

To contact the service please call ☎️ 0131 475 2370 or email: grapevine@lothiancl.org.uk

For information on the full range of LCiL services please visit our website at: www.lothiancil.org.uk



Canny Families Midlothian

Changeworks has recently received Fairer Scotland Funding from Midlothian Council to run a new project in Midlothian called 'Canny Families'.

The project aims to help prevent child poverty by supporting low income families with children under 16, to better manage their home budgets by tackling two of the largest household bills – energy and food.

Wasting food costs the average UK family with children £550 a year, or £45 a month (Waste & Resources Action Programme 2009).



CHANGeworks

This is the first project of its kind and Change-works looks forward to providing support to families through home visits and energy and food waste workshops.

For further information on this project please contact Natalie Joyce, Affordable Warmth Advisor, Change-works on ☎ 0131 468 8651 or e-mail njoyce@changeworks.org.uk.



The Family Advice and Information Resource



New Welfare Rights Service in Midlothian

FAIR (Family Advice & Information Resource) in partnership with Intowork has delivered a new Welfare Rights Service in Midlothian since April 2013. This service is part of a wider employability service available to people with a disability, funded by Midlothian's Fairer Scotland Fund. The Advice Worker is based in Buccleuch House in Dalkeith on Mondays from 9am to 5pm and the service is appointment based. Home visits will also be available if the person is unable to attend the office.

The FAIR service will:

- ❖ Carry out initial benefit checks
- ❖ Complete new and renewal benefit forms
- ❖ Make phone calls to and write letters on clients' behalf to relevant agencies
- ❖ Representation up to tribunal level
- ❖ Assist clients to report changes of

circumstances when moving in or out of employment

- ❖ Provide advocacy for clients
- ❖ Facilitate budgeting sessions

For more information on the welfare rights service contact Kimberley Swan at FAIR on

Kimberley@fairadvice.org.uk.

For more information on the employability service contact David Bain on david.bain@intowork.org.uk.

Midlothian's Into-work/FAIR's welfare rights service is now running with a waiting list. A referral form can be obtained from FAIR and completed forms should be sent to Kimberley Swan at FAIR.

Introducing The Scottish Welfare Fund

How changes to the Social Fund could affect you

From April 2013, changes to the Social Fund scheme mean that Crisis Loans for living expenses and Community Care Grants will stop. In their place will be a new scheme called the Scottish Welfare Fund. This is mainly for people on benefits. It will provide two types of grant: Crisis Grants providing a safety net in the event of a disaster or emergency Community Care Grants helping people to leave care and live on their own, or to continue living in their own home.

The new Scottish Welfare Fund is help when you need it most.

Why the changes?

Unlike the Social Fund, which was managed by the Department for Work and Pensions, the new Scottish Welfare Fund will be managed by local councils, based on guidance from the Scottish Government. This will mean national help being delivered locally to provide a broader range of services.

A Crisis Grant may help if...

You are in crisis because of a disaster like a fire or flood, or an emergency such as losing all your money or having to visit a sick child in hospital or you need help with costs that have arisen as a result of the disaster or emergency, to keep you and your family safe from harm. If you qualify for a Crisis Grant, the help you receive will depend on the particular difficulties you face. You may be given money or another form of support, for example, a voucher, fuel card, travel ticket or furniture.


A Community Care Grant may help if...

You are about to leave care to live on your own in the community, for example after being in hospital or in prison, or face going into care because you don't have the things you need to continue living at home. A Community Care Grant may also be able to help if you are struggling to provide a safe and secure home for your family. You need help to get essential household items like a cooker or washing machine but don't have the money to buy it.

As with the Crisis Grant, if you qualify for a Community Care Grant the help you receive will depend on your circumstances. You may be given money or you may receive support another way, for example, a voucher, fuel card, travel ticket or furniture.

How to apply

To find out if you are able to get a Crisis Grant or a Community Care Grant or make an application, contact your local council. The new Scottish Welfare Fund. Help when you need it most.

You can contact your local council about a Crisis Grant or Community Care Grant in a number of ways: Online Click www.midlothian.gov.uk/scottishwelfarefund By phone Call  0131 270 5600

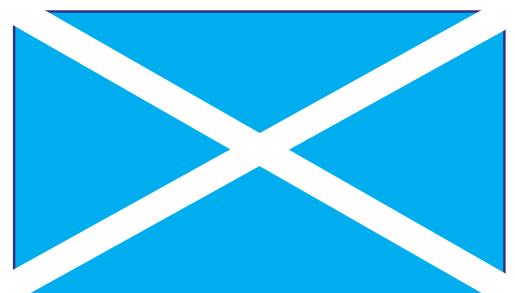
What about other welfare benefits?

Other benefits will stay the same and will still be dealt with by the Department for Work and Pensions.

This includes:

- ❖ Sure Start Maternity Grants
- ❖ Funeral Payments
- ❖ Cold Weather Payments
- ❖ Winter Fuel Payments
- ❖ Job Seekers Allowance
- ❖ Income Support

The Department for Work and Pensions will also continue to offer support if you're waiting for your first benefit payment and need an advance to help tide you over until the benefit is paid to you in full. First though, you need to be able to show you are entitled to benefit and that you will be able to repay the advance within three months. You will also have to show that you don't have any other source of financial help.



**Dalkeith &
District CAB**
8 Buccleuch Street
DALKEITH
Midlothian
EH22 1HA



NORMAL OPENING HOURS:

Dalkeith CAB is open for 'drop-in' sessions (no appointment necessary) on Monday, Tuesday & Thursday mornings from 10.00 – 12.30.

Penicuik CAB is by appointment only. Appointments can also be arranged by telephoning Penicuik CAB on ☎ 01968-675259.

Drop-in sessions have to operate on a '**first come, first seen**' basis – you may have to wait a long time to be seen and the number of people we can see in any one session depends on the number of staff on duty.

How can we help?

The CAB Service can offer advice and assistance on a variety of issues including:

- ❖ Benefits
- ❖ Form filling
- ❖ Debt
- ❖ Consumer issues
- ❖ Housing
- ❖ Utilities

Dalkeith & District CAB is a registered charity, dependent on funding and our main funder is Midlothian Council. Midlothian Council funds us to provide a service for the residents of Midlothian. If you live out with the local authority area, we may have to refer you to your local CAB/advice agency.

Dalkeith CAB also runs the following Outreach Clinics: unless stated no appointment necessary.

Gorebridge Library: drop-in clinic.
Monday 10.00 -12.00,

Danderhall Library: Fortnightly (on the first and third Tuesday of every month) 10.00-12.00, drop in clinic.

Newbyres Medical Centre, Gorebridge:
Wednesday 9.30 – 12.00, by appointment only- for registered patients only.

The Orchard Centre, Bonnyrigg: Tuesday,
1.30 – 3.30, by appointment – for service users only.

If you live in, or near, Loanhead, you can access drop-in clinics run by **Penicuik CAB** at:

Loanhead Library: Monday 10.00 -13.00

Loanhead Miners Welfare:
Wednesday 10.00 – 13.00

Anyone can access phone advice by contacting Citizens Advice Direct on: 0808 800 9060 or on-line at: www.adviceguide.org.uk/scotland

Other useful numbers :

Housing issues / Homelessness: Shelter –
☎ 0808-800-4444

Debt: National Debtline –0808-808-4000

Employment: ACAS Helpline –☎ 08457 47 47 47

Consumer issues: Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline – ☎ 0845 04 05 06

Energy suppliers / Fuel Poverty: Changeworks – 0131-550-4010

Tax Credits:
HMRC Tax Credits Helpline – ☎ 0845-300-3900

Benefits: Enquiries – ☎ 0845-608-8630

Alternative Publications

The editions of the Forward MID newsletters are available in large print or at www.forwardmid.org.uk
For alternative publications please email eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk or call ☎ 0131-663-9471. You can write to Eric at MVA 4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith EH22 1AE with your request.