

# BEDFORDSHIRE BENEFITS NETWORK

15/03/2023

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## UNIVERSAL CREDIT CHANGES

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# UNIVERSAL CREDIT

## Managed migration

- 2023/24 – starting with Tax Credit only claimants
- 2024/25 – all other claimants, of HB, IS, JSA-IB, except for ESA-IR only claimants
- 2028/29 – ESA-IR only claimants

# UNIVERSAL CREDIT

## Administrative Threshold

- The amount claimant needs to earn to avoid work search and work availability requirements.
- Increased from 30 January 2023
- Single from 12 x NMW to 15 x NMW per week
- Couples from 19 x NMW to 24 x NMW per week

# UNIVERSAL CREDIT

## Court decisions on backdating

- A recent court decision stated that backdating does not have to be requested at the point of claim –
- Claimant can ask during first assessment period, or as an MR/appeal against decision on first AP
- Claimant will need to meet the normal backdating criteria (which is very restrictive)

# OTHER BENEFIT NEWS

# BENEFIT UPRATING

## Benefit Up-rating

- From April 2023, benefit rates are being increased by 10.1%
- Newly, this **includes** the Benefit Cap
- The benefit cap for single claimants outside of London is increasing from £13,400 pa to £14,753
- For couples and lone parents outside of London it is increasing from £20,000 to £22,020
  
- NB: Local Housing Allowance is NOT included in the 10.1% rise
- LHA rates frozen

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# LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE

## Shared room rate exemptions

- From 1/10/22, victims of:
  - Domestic abuse
  - Modern slavery
- Are now exempted from the shared room rate on LHA
- Qualify for 1 bedroom rate instead

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# PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENTS

- Due to delays in assessments, claims being extended by 12 months automatically.
  - Was meant to be from 31/10/22 that letters were issued
  - However this was pushed back to December 2022
  - If a statement of entitlement is required and has not been sent, call helpline to request

# BEREAVEMENT BENEFITS

## Surviving cohabiters

- Following a court case, from 9 February 2023, surviving partners responsible for children can now claim for either Widowed Parents Allowance or Bereavement Support Payment
- Previously had to be married or in civil partnership
- Those who should have qualified at any point since 30 August 2018 have until 9 February 2024 to make their claim

# PENSIONS

## Missing pension entitlement

- Some pensioners have missed out on full pension entitlement. DWP have identified many, but there are some groups which need to apply directly:
  - married women whose husbands reached pension age after them and they became entitled to his pension before 17/3/08
  - 80+ with no state pension or graduated retirement pension only need to claim for Category D State Pension
  - Pensioners who divorced or civil partnership dissolved need to update DWP about this so their entitlement can be checked

## Deadline for voluntary contributions extended

- Deadline for working-age to make voluntary NI contributions for period between April 2006 and April 2016 extended to 31 July 2023

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# COST OF LIVING CRISIS

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## Extra for benefit claims in 2023/24

- £900 paid for claimants entitled to means-tested benefits, split between 3 payments
- £150 for claimants of AA, DLA, PIP, Armed Forces Independence Payments, Constant Attendance Allowance or War Pension Mobility Supplement.
- Extra £300 on Winter Fuel Payment for all pensioners

# COST OF LIVING CRISIS

## Fuel Direct

- From 1/4/23, energy suppliers can apply to DWP for new or amended deductions for energy costs, but need claimant's express permission
  - Third party deductions for fuel arrears remain possible.

# COST OF LIVING CRISIS

## Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding

- Between October 2022 and March 2023, domestic users of electricity received £400 rebates via their electricity supplier
- Some missed out as their landlord sells them their electricity, or they live in a park home, houseboat or off the electricity grid
- Those who missed out can now apply to receive this funding directly

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-energy-bill-support-if-not-automatic>

## Alternative Fuels Payment

- Those who use fuels alternative to gas (excluding electricity) for heating can get an extra £200 through their electricity provider
- If they don't have an electricity provider, they have to apply:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-alternative-fuel-bill-support-if-not-automatic>

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# SPRING BUDGET 2023

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# SPRING BUDGET

## Possible announcements

- White paper on reform of sickness and disability benefits. Rumoured details include (from the Independent):
  - Abolish WCA
  - Work coaches take greater role in deciding capability for work
  - Pushing more ill people to work – more sanctions?
  - Childcare costs to be paid in advance on UC
  - Working partners required to attend UC meetings?