

BEDFORDSHIRE BENEFITS NETWORK

13/09/2023

Bedfordshire
Advice Forum



UNIVERSAL CREDIT CHANGES

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Managed migration

- 2023/24 – Tax Credit only claimants
- All Jobcentre areas to be included by end of March 2024
- By end of 2024/25 – all other claimants, of HB, IS, JSA-IB, except for ESA-IR only claimants, to be migrated
 - Trial in some areas starting shortly, not Bedfordshire
- 2028/29 – ESA-IR only claimants

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI)

- From 3 April 2023
- Number of assessment periods before can claim reduced from 9 months to 3 months
- Zero earnings rule reduced – so workers can apply
- 6 month linking rule – if return to UC, can reapply for SMI and not have to wait 3 months again

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Backdating

- From 29 June 2023
- Earliest day claim can be backdated to is the first day of the AP that ends on the date on which UC claim was made or treated as made
- e.g. claim on 13/9/23, request backdating to 2/8/23 for an allowable reason which remained true through whole period. AP which ends on 13/9/23 starts 14/8/23, so claim can only be backdated to 14/8/23.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Childcare

- Max amounts increased for 1st time in years:
 - For one child max is now £951
 - For two or more max is now £1,630
- Awards for childcare costs under flexible support fund will no longer reduce childcare costs element
- From April 2024, working parents of 2yos will get 15 hours free childcare
- From September 2024, working parents of 9mos to 2yos will get 15 hours free childcare
- From September 2025, working parents of 9mos+ will get 30 hours free childcare

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Conditionality

- Administrative Threshold:
 - Increasing from 15 to 18 hours x NMW per week
 - Intensive Work Search regime for those that don't earn this
 - No couple threshold now – each claimant considered individually
 - Lead carers of children aged 3-12 will be expected to spend more hours looking for work
 - More frequent meetings for lead carers of 1yos and 2yos

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Earnings rules

- Surplus earnings rule threshold stays at £2,500
- Court rules way UC operates in relation to fortnightly earnings, where some APs claimants receive 3 payslips, is not irrational so is allowed

UC Phone lines

- DWP to introduce virtual agent to UC phonedlines
- They say that you can ask to speak to a person and you will still be put through



HEALTH AND DISABILITY RELATED NEWS

HEALTH AND DISABILITY

Terminal illness claims for disability benefits

- From 3 April 2023:
 - Special rules claims can now be made if the claimant is likely to die within 12 months instead of 6

PIP

- From August 2023
 - Claimants with stable disabilities, or severe disabilities which aren't likely to improve, will be sent shorter 6 page review forms
- Online claims now available in some areas

HEALTH AND DISABILITY

Consultations on changes to assessments

- White paper – Transforming Future Support
 - Earliest scheduled is 2026 under a new parliament
 - Proposals:
 - Abolish WCA and use PIP assessments for UC/ESA
 - Replace LCWRA with element related to PIP entitlement – same amount awarded
 - New claims only for 2026-2028
 - Other claims to be changed from 2029, with transitional protection
 - Conditionality for *all* claimants

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HEALTH AND DISABILITY

Consultations on changes to assessments

- Consultation on reforming the WCA (before they abolish it)
 - Two driving factors appears to be the idea that more people can work from home and that exceptional circs rules being used too often
 - Proposals:
 - Change or abolish mobility, continence, getting about and socialising activities as part of WCA
 - Remove exceptional circs rules for LCWRA, i.e. excep circs only awards you LCW
- Consultation open until 30/10/2023

COST OF LIVING CRISIS

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Spring cost of living payment

- £301 was paid to each eligible claimant between 25/4/23 and 17/5/23
- Eligible if entitled to relevant benefits between 26/1/23 and 25/2/23

Disability benefit cost of living payment

- £150 was paid to each eligible claimant between 20/6/23 and 4/7/23
- Eligible if entitled to disability benefits on 1/4/23

OTHER BENEFIT NEWS

IMMIGRATION RULES

Sudan

- From 15/5/23:
- People fleeing Sudan who resided there before 15/4/23, left due to the violence and have either:
 - Been granted leave to remain,
 - The right of abode in the UK,
 - Or do not require leave to enter or remain in UK; are
- Exempted from habitual residence and past presence tests for benefits

IMMIGRATION RULES

Child Tax Credits

- Refugees who claimed asylum before rollout of UC Full Service have been written to, to offer backdating of CTC
- As of 1/9/23, only half responded
- 'Late' claims will be allowed

EU

- Those who still have non-settled status will automatically be given an extra 2 years to obtain settled status, following a legal challenge

MEANS-TESTED BENEFITS

New disregarded payments

- From 9/7/23:
 - The following payments are disregarded for means-tested benefits and exempt from recovery of benefits:
 - Payments in respect of the Post Office Horizon scandal
 - Grenfell Fire compensation payments
 - Vaccine Damage Payments also disregarded, but not exempt from recovery of benefits
- From 30/8/23:
 - Compensation in respect of inflected blood also disregarded

INCOME SUPPORT

- Compensation available for claimants who should have been advised to claim for IR-ESA when moving to ESA
- Conditions are:
 - Claimed IS on or after 31/1/11 due to ill health
 - Weren't getting IB or SDA when claimed
 - If still on IS now, need WCA and be found to have LCW
 - If have since moved onto ESA or UC, needed to have been found to have LCW when claimed
- Have to self-identify – contact their local Jobcentre