

DWP Stakeholder Bulletin – November 2011

Welcome to the November 2011 issue of the DWP Stakeholder Bulletin – an e-newsletter to let you know what is happening in the Department for Work and Pensions.

If you have a comment or feedback about this bulletin, please email corporate.stakeholders@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

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Iain Duncan Smith sets out next steps for moving claimants onto Universal Credit

On 1 November, Iain Duncan Smith, the Secretary of State for DWP, announced that over one million people will be claiming Universal Credit by April 2014, as he set out the Government's timetable to move 12 million claimants onto the new benefit by 2017.

He said, "Universal Credit is the most radical redesign of the benefits system this country has ever seen. From October 2013, it will replace the current costly, outdated process with a digital system, which will be simpler to use and make work pay for hundreds of thousands of people across the UK".

- [Press Release: Iain Duncan Smith sets out next steps for moving claimants onto Universal Credit](#) (DWP website)

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The Pensions Bill receives Royal Assent

Help for firms to automatically enrol staff into workplace pension schemes from next year became law 3 November, as the Pensions Bill received Royal Assent. From October 2012, employers will begin to automatically enrol eligible workers into a qualifying pension scheme, and will contribute to that pension. People who are automatically enrolled will also contribute to the scheme and get tax relief.

Measures such as allowing companies to defer automatic enrolment for up to three months, simplifying the scheme certification process, and greater flexibility on choosing the automatic re-enrolment dates, will reduce red tape and cut costs.

As a result, the Pensions Act 2011 will save employers around £170 million each year (in 2011/12 earnings) in contribution costs, £12 million in administration costs in the first year and £6 million a year in ongoing administration costs.

- [Press Release: Pensions Act will cut costs and lift burdens on business](#) (DWP website)

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Get Britain working – Employer pledge

An on-line pledge for employers to show their support for one or more of the measures set up to help get Britain working, has been launched on the Business Link website.

To get Britain working, we need to harness a wide range of talent, helping to develop dynamic and diverse workforces, as well as ideas and good practice about how to achieve that. This requires the help of businesses, from sole traders to the largest global companies.

Employers who show their support will be contacted by their local Jobcentre Plus offices to discuss this further. Pledge your support here.

- [We need your help to get Britain working](#) (Business Link website)

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Second draft of the assessment criteria for Personal Independence Payment

On 14 November, a second draft of the assessment criteria for Personal Independence Payment was published. This is significantly different from the initial proposals, and most of the changes that have been made are a direct result of the feedback we received on the first draft. We believe that the second draft enables a fairer, more accurate assessment of an individual's ability to participate. The revised proposals also include our initial views on descriptor weightings.

We intend to discuss this draft with disabled people and their organisations, and to consult on the proposals once we have firmer views on the proposed weightings and entitlement thresholds. In the meantime, we would welcome any comments on the changes made.

- [Personal Independence Payment](#) (DWP website)

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Second review of the Work Capability Assessment

On 24 November, Professor Harrington will be publishing the second of five annual reviews of the Work Capability Assessment (WCA). This review is expected to provide an update on Professor Harrington's first year recommendations and to provide further recommendations to improve the fairness and effectiveness of the WCA going forward. It is also anticipated that the Government will publish a response to his recommendations.

- [Work Capability Assessment independent review](#) (DWP website)

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Cross-government action on gangs and serious youth violence

Iain Duncan Smith has said that Britain's street gangs are the product of family breakdown, addiction, unemployment and worklessness.

The Home Office and DWP are jointly leading a cross-government programme of action to deal with gang culture and serious youth violence.

DWP is providing assistance for young people, by improving skills and back to work support, and through completing welfare reform. This will help lift thousands out of poverty and give many young people the chance to get into work for the first time.

- [Knife, gun and gang-related violence report](#) (Home Office website)

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Proposals to time limit ESA

Last month, we finished writing to people currently receiving contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and who are in the Work Related Activity Group, to advise that their contribution-based benefit may be limited to 12 months. Around 115,000 letters were issued over a four-week period to help prepare people for the proposed changes.

We received fewer enquires following this mailshot than anticipated, and call volumes remain low, but activity is still ongoing to answer any claimant queries resulting from this notification. Although the early notification has now ended, we continue to advise any claimants making a new claim.

The proposed time limit is part of the Welfare Reform Bill currently progressing through Parliament. If it becomes law, the time limit will not apply to people with no, or limited, means of supporting themselves, and those most severely affected by their medical conditions. Any time spent in the Support Group will not count towards the 12 months. Those who are affected by the 12 month time limit may be able to receive income-related ESA.

Claimants living abroad and receiving contribution-based ESA will also be affected by this proposed change. However, unlike people living in the UK, they will not be able to claim income-related ESA if their contribution-based ESA ends.

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Pension Credit online stakeholder toolkit

The Pension Credit toolkit is available nationally, following four regional pilots last year. This online toolkit has been endorsed by Steve Webb, Minister for Pensions, as a free resource for stakeholders to use when working with the most vulnerable pensioners. It contains up-to-date information and tips based on customer insight research. Updated and new products will be added, as required.

- [Pension Credit - My toolkit](#) (DWP website)

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Older People's Day 2011 was a huge success

This year, Older People's Day was bigger than ever before, with over 4,000 events taking place around the UK. Events took place from early September

and some continued right through October. From the information provided by event organisers, we estimate that around one million people were involved directly in an event on or around 1 October 2011. The Full of Life team would like to thank everyone for their support in making this happen.

We continued the 'Getting and staying active in later life' theme which supports the wider active ageing agenda. Local authorities and other community groups got involved and organised events, many at grassroots level by linking the day to their own events and objectives. Activities have varied from short events to month-long festivals, offering many different opportunities and taking place across the whole of the UK.

Evaluation is currently underway to find out people's experiences and how we can improve the support we offer. Organisers have been asked to complete a short survey.

- [UK Older People's Day Survey](#) (Directgov website)

If you have any queries please contact us at dwp.fulloflife@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

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DWP consultations

New DWP-related consultations launched since the last Stakeholder bulletin, with closing dates:

- [The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes \(Levies – Amendment\) Regulations 2012 – consultation on draft regulations](#) (DWP website) closing date 30 January 2012
- [Consultation on the abolition and transfer of functions of the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission](#) is still open and due to close 3 January 2012.

All current live DWP consultations and the latest published consultation responses are available on the consultation pages of the DWP website.

- [Consultations](#) (DWP website)

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