

Touchbase

February 2012

Welcome to your monthly e-zine!

Welcome to the February edition of Touchbase e-zine and the first edition of 2012. Happy New Year to all our readers.

In this edition we take a closer look at the Youth Contract, which was announced towards the end of last year. This includes a range of additional help for unemployed young people and is worth almost £1 billion – further details can be found on page 2.

A new process has been introduced to review appointees who manage the financial affairs of DWP claimants – see page 3 for further details. Also on page 3, we take a look at The Caxton Foundation, that may be able to provide financial support for people infected with hepatitis C. See the article for further details on the eligibility criteria.

Details of how to take part in the informal consultation currently taking place to improve the Work Capability Assessment for cancer patients are on page 4. Also on page 4 is a Personal Independence Payment update.

We have articles on a couple of recent events on page 5 for Carers Rights Day held in December, and a Combining to Care event held in January.

As usual, we have a round up of other DWP news in brief on page 7.

We hope you find this e-zine useful, and we value your feedback and suggestions for improvements. Use the email address below if you have any suggestions for articles that could be included in future editions.

Remember, you and your colleagues can register for an e-alert when each edition of Touchbase e-zine is published on the [DWP Adviser and intermediaries](http://DWP Adviser and intermediaries website) website. If you would like to receive an e-alert, please send your details, including name, organisation and email address to corporate.stakeholders@dwp.gsi.gov.uk



 To provide feedback on the e-zine email corporate.stakeholders@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

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Youth Contract

Additional help for unemployed young people

At the end of November, the Government announced a Youth Contract, which includes a range of additional help for unemployed young people. Youth Contract builds on the support already available through Jobcentre Plus and the Work Programme, and is worth almost £1 billion.

The core features of the Youth Contract are:

- 160,000 wage incentives, worth £2,275 each, for employers who recruit an 18-24 year old from the Work Programme; this is more than enough to cover an employer's National Insurance contributions for employing a young person for a year, and exceeds the recommendations by the CBI in their recent report on youth unemployment

- an extra 250,000 Work Experience or Sector-based work academy places over the next three years, taking the total to at least 100,000 a year; this will come with an offer of a Work Experience place for every 18-24 year old who wants one, before they enter the Work Programme
- least 20,000 extra incentive payments worth £1,500 each for employers to take on young people as apprentices, and
- extra support through Jobcentre Plus for all 18-24 year olds; consisting of weekly, rather than fortnightly signing, extra advisor time to provide more back-to-work support, and referral to a careers interview from the National Careers Service.

We are also making extra funding available to support 16 and 17 year olds into learning, and apprenticeship or job with training.

To find out more about the Youth Contract and read the latest updates visit [Youth Contract](#) (DWP website).



Sign up to support the Youth Contract

If you are an employer, we encourage you to sign up to pledge your support for the Youth Contract. By registering your support, you will be the first to find out how you can benefit from the Youth Contract and how to get involved.

[Youth Contract](#) (DWP website)



DWP Digital services

Do it online

Do it online

Access our services on the web, at the push of a button.

You can look for work, find benefit information or make a claim without having to phone or visit the Jobcentre.

- Search for jobs, build your CV or get job advice
- Get benefit information and an estimate of your entitlement
- Claim Jobseeker's Allowance

We can help if you are not online, ask a member of staff.

www.direct.gov.uk

Department for Work and Pensions

As part of our commitment to putting people in greater control of their job seeking and benefit activity, we are moving more of our services to digital formats. This enables people to access information at their own pace, at a time that is convenient to them, whilst online help is at hand throughout the service. By empowering those who can go online to do so, we free up time and resource to focus on those who need the most help and support in finding work. Internet access devices will be made available to the Jobcentre network over the next three to six months. This will be a great opportunity to support our claimants in accessing job search and our online services.

“By empowering those who can go online to do so, we free up time and resource.”

A new web page went live on Directgov in January for our Jobseeker's Allowance Online service. This was designed to make it a much shorter and simpler journey and offer additional benefits for our users.



Jobseeker's Allowance - start a new claim online (Directgov website). We will keep you informed of new digital improvements throughout 2012.

To find out more about our digital campaign and what you can do to help job seekers, see our stakeholder asset pack on the DWP website.

[Digital services – getting people online](#) (DWP website).

Other signposts: www.direct.gov.uk

Throughout 2011, DWP worked closely with partner organisations to raise awareness of online benefit claims. In the autumn, we worked with Race Online to encourage all our staff to 'give an hour' to help someone who isn't using the web to get online and see how it can change their life.

We are also supporting UK online centres with their 'New Year, new online you' campaign which launched on 23 January 2012, and showcases the benefits of the internet. Our Jobcentre Plus offices continue to develop their relationship with UK online centres to make everyone aware of the local help available to get online and learn new skills.

Review of appointees

Applies to new and existing appointees



A new process has been introduced to review appointees, who manage the financial affairs of DWP claimants. The change was introduced from 3 October 2011.

The process involves a postal review of any appointee looking after adults and children aged under 16, who receive any benefit delivered by DWP including:

- Disability Living Allowance
- Attendance Allowance
- State Pension
- Pension Credit, and
- Working Age benefits including Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance.

This will initially apply to cases where a new appointee is agreed but measures are in place to begin to review existing appointees during 2012.

The review means that DWP will be proactive in making sure that, once appointed, appointees continue to meet the responsibilities they have committed to. It will also help make sure that the customer does still need someone else to manage their affairs.

Lynne Wood, DWP Appointee Review Project Manager said:

“Importantly, it will make sure that our customers’ well-being and financial affairs are being properly looked after. It will help minimise risk of financial abuse of adults and children, making sure that benefit entitlements are being used in the customer’s best interest.”

More information can be found on the Directgov website.



[Becoming an appointee for social security benefits \(Directgov website\)](#)

The Caxton Foundation

Financial support for people infected with hepatitis C

In January 2011, the Secretary of State for Health announced the introduction of an enhanced package of financial support for people who were infected with hepatitis C as a result of NHS treatment with contaminated blood, blood products or tissues prior to 1991, as well as their dependants

A significant new development was the establishment of the Caxton Foundation, which is able to make discretionary payments to people who have been affected and are experiencing financial difficulties. The categories of people who are eligible to apply to the Foundation are:

- people who have been infected with hepatitis C as a result of NHS treatment with blood, blood products or tissues prior to 1991
- anyone who has been infected with hepatitis C by a person who was themselves infected with hepatitis C as

a result of NHS treatment with blood, blood products or tissues prior to 1991, and

- uninfected partners, parents, dependants and some carers of people who have died after being infected with hepatitis C as a result of NHS treatment with blood, blood products or tissues prior to 1991.

If you have any clients who have been affected by hepatitis C as a result of NHS treatment prior to 1991, could you please bring the Caxton Foundation to their attention.



Details of how to register with the Caxton Foundation can be found on the website www.caxtonfoundation.org.uk



Or by writing to:
Alliance House
12 Caxton Street
London
SW1H 0QS



Improving the Work Capability Assessment for cancer patients

Informal consultation

On 16 December 2011, the Government launched a consultation on reforming the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) to ensure that cancer patients receive the support they need.

The consultation seeks views from interested stakeholders, particularly from individuals who have been or are being affected by cancer, their families and carers, healthcare practitioners and cancer specialists, and employers.

“Based on evidence, we aim to build on the consensus that the WCA must better reflect the reality of today’s cancer treatments as well as keeping the option of work open to those who want to.”

The consultation aims to gather evidence about the effects of different cancer treatments and the range of debilitating effects they can cause. In addition, it seeks views and experiences about the importance and appropriateness of work for individuals who are being treated for, or recovering from cancer.

The consultation follows evidence from Professor Malcolm Harrington (the independent reviewer of the WCA), and Macmillan Cancer Support, that the current approach for assessing individuals with cancer is not correct. Based on this new evidence, the Government has drawn up initial proposals on which we are now consulting.

Based on evidence, we aim to build on the consensus that the WCA must better reflect the reality of today’s cancer treatments, as well as keeping the option of work open to those who want to.

The consultation will run until 9 March. The consultation document and supporting evidence is available on the DWP website.



Work Capability Assessment: accounting for the effects of cancer treatment – informal consultation
(DWP website)

Personal Independence Payment update

Maria Miller, the Minister for Disabled People, has recently announced a further consultation on the Personal Independence Payment assessment, which started on 16 January and runs until 30 April.

The proposed weightings and entitlement thresholds for the rates and components of the benefit have now been published on the DWP website.

Personal Independence Payment: assessment thresholds and consultation (DWP website)

DWP will discuss this draft with disabled people and their organisations, and carefully consider responses to the formal consultation.

A set of case studies has also been published that will help illustrate what some of these changes may mean for individuals.

We are also continuing to consult with the Personal Independence Payment Implementation Development Group (IDG), and local grass roots organisations, on the delivery aspects of Personal Independence Payment.

The IDG is made up of representatives from over 50 disabled peoples’ organisations at national and grassroots’ level including user-led organisations. Over the next six months the group will participate in a number of subject specific workshops looking at:

- the end-to-end claimant journey and reassessment
- change of circumstances
- the appeals process
- effectively communicating passported benefits

- communication products for Partners.

A number of other groups will also be held to focus on issues that affect specific claimant groups. Two have been established to date:

- one focussing on issues affecting young people transitioning from DLA and those aged 16 to 24, and
- another looking at assistive technology for sensory impaired claimants.

These groups are made up of disability organisations who have extensive experience in supporting claimants with these types of disabilities/conditions.

This work complements other research activity underway. We have contracted an independent contractor (IFF) to regularly involve disabled people in the design of Personal Independence Payment and to test our products and systems as they are developed. We are also undertaking similar research with local partner organisations and disabled people themselves. If you would be interested in participating in this research, please email insight.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

DWP Partner Managers are also engaging with local disability and health organisations in their area, to raise awareness of the new benefit and to seek views on the likely upskilling requirements these organisations may have. If you would like to let us know the likely upskilling requirements for your organisation, please contact your local **DWP Partner Manager** (DWP website)

Personal Independence Payment - Policy
(DWP website)

Caring for carers

Staff pulled out all the stops for Carers Rights Day on 2 December 2011, to raise awareness of the advice, benefits and services carers are entitled to

DWP staff attended more than 45 events across the UK on the day, working together with local carers' organisations and Carers UK. These included:

- The Disability and Carers Festival at Preston Minster, where Oliver Mawdsley, Outreach Manager at the Carer's Allowance Unit, advised carers of any help they might be entitled to, at the one-day event
- A one-stop carers shop being set up in East Kilbride, where Anne Marie Lafferty, Partner Support Manager with DWP National Partnerships Central Team (Scotland), together with charities and welfare groups, was on hand to offer advice to people with caring responsibilities



Rushden JCP - Hampers left Darren Newman JCP centre Barry Graves chief exec of SERVE right Kerry-Lee Wright JCP.

Praise for Carers Rights Day events

An event attendee said: "I am just moving into a caring role and this event was a very good start in informing and supporting me."

Oliver Mawdsley, Outreach Manager at the Carers Allowance Unit, said: "Carers Rights Day once again raised the profile of what great work carers are doing."

- An advice day at the Asian Carers Resource Centre in Bolton, where Philip Carter, DWP Partner Support Manager, was one of those offering help and support at the event, which was attended by the Mayor of Bolton
- Staff at Rushden Jobcentre Plus, Northamptonshire, put together a hamper for local charity Serve, to raffle and raise money for its day care centre. The charity offers a range of services for disabled people in Rushden, such as enabling carers to take a break by providing short-term care for their loved ones in their own homes, and
- An event in Blackburn, where Liz Barker from the DWP Visiting Team in Lancashire, together with solicitors and charities was on hand to give advice to carers. The event was also attended by the Mayor of Blackburn.



For more information visit the [Carers UK website](#) or the [Carers Rights Day pages on the DWP website](#).

Mayor of Manchester celebrates Combining to Care

An event was held on 10 January, to celebrate the success of the Combining to Care (C2C) partnership pilot in Manchester. It was held at the Sure Start Centre, Longsight and attended by the Lord Mayor of Manchester, Councillor Harry Lyons, and older people who have been helped by C2C in some way.



Combining to Care was launched in November 2010, and ran until the end of September 2011. Over 20 partners including Manchester City Council, British Gas, DWP and Age UK were involved.

The aim of the pilot was to reach out and improve the lives of vulnerable pensioners, by encouraging over 55's to find out about the services, benefits and help available to them in Manchester.

The pilot also tested different ways of doing things. These initiatives included:

- Printing "keep warm and well" messages on 80,000 Pharmacy bags which were distributed through 80 pharmacies in Manchester
- Developing a short training programme to help local partners to identify and serve vulnerable customers better
- Trialling a dedicated 0800 number called 'Care to Chat' to bring together isolated pensioners, and
- Producing leaflets and posters to encourage older people in Manchester to ring the Age UK Advice on 0800 169 65 65 or visit their local Age UK or Age Concern.

Charles Breslin from British Gas and Chair of Combining to Care said: "C2C has shown it is possible for many diverse organisations to work together successfully and see real results. Our aim was to help vulnerable older people in Manchester. I believe we have made a difference."

The Lord Mayor spoke to the stall-holders on the day and took time out to listen to their contributions to the pilot. He spoke to many of the older people attending and encouraged all the differing organisations to continue to work together to improve the lives of older people in Manchester.

Mervyn Kohler from Age UK attended the event and wrote in the Age Action Alliance blog: "I've been in Manchester to an event showcasing the work of the Combining to Care (C2C) partnership, and it is impressive and exciting, and is implementing all the features and aspirations of the Age Action Alliance."



You can read his blog in full at [Combining to Care Age Action Alliance \(Age Action Alliance website\)](#)



For more information contact [Amanda Barker at amanda.barker@thepensionersservice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.barker@thepensionersservice.gsi.gov.uk)

Request for continued support from Local Authorities

Residential care and the effect on DLA or AA

If a disabled person, who is in receipt of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) care component or, Attendance Allowance (AA), goes into residential care or a nursing home, the amount of benefit they receive may be affected.

This is usually after 28 days, but linking rules for short periods of respite care or time in hospital, may mean these days are also taken into account. It is important that the Disability and Care Service (DCS) is informed when a claimant has gone into residential care, as failure to do so can result in recoverable overpayments. This can apply even if the customer was not in a position to tell DCS themselves.

In many situations where a claimant goes into residential care, the Local Authority has been involved. We are very grateful for

all the work Local Authorities do to inform DCS that this is the case, and providing details of specific dates and funding arrangements. Understandably however, due to resource pressures this does not always happen. We would therefore like to remind Local Authorities of the value of continuing to inform DCS where a claimant goes into residential care, and to ask for your continued support.

It would also be helpful if the contact details for the person dealing with the claimant funding could be provided. This would be of great benefit to DCS should we need to clarify any information.

If you have any questions about how DLA or AA may be affected when a claimant goes into residential care, please contact the DLA/AA Helpline on **08457 123456**.



DWP launch campaign to support automatic enrolment into workplace pensions

Saving for retirement

Automatic enrolment into a workplace pension is a major Government reform programme. Starting from October 2012, we estimate that 1.3 million employers will enrol between 9 and 10 million eligible workers into a pension scheme, starting with large employers and moving on to small employers.

What is a workplace pension?

A workplace pension is a way of saving for retirement arranged through an employer. It's a way of helping more people save for their retirement.

Workers will be automatically enrolled if they:

- are not already in a suitable workplace pension
- are aged 22 or over
- are under State Pension age
- earn more than £7,475 a year, and
- ordinarily work in the UK.

Workers will put money in as will employers and the government will also contribute in the form of tax relief. This is the first time that employers have been required by law to contribute to their workers' pensions.

Communications campaign

DWP has developed communications to support the changes. They started in January 2012, and are aimed at individuals and employers.

The campaign to individuals is aimed at two priority audience groups – the 'daunted' and the 'unprepared'. Two large groups of the population, who in the past have been hard to engage on the subject of pensions.

Messages to individuals aim to increase understanding about what a workplace pension is and the benefits, ahead of the more detailed information that a person will receive when they are enrolled.

The campaign includes advertising on radio, in national press and online. It links through to the Directgov website where people can find easy to understand information about being enrolled. From February there will be a telephone line for those without online access.



To find out how what automatic enrolment means for workers, when it will happen and the benefits, please visit the Directgov website. [Changes to workplace pensions starting from 2012 - how this may affect you \(Directgov website\)](#)

State Pension age is changing in different ways for different people



Under the Pensions Act 2011, womens' State Pension age will increase more quickly to 65 between April 2016 and November 2018. From December 2018 the State Pension age for both men and women will start to increase to reach 66 in October 2020.

People due to retire during this period will find that their State Pension age will depend on when they were born and their gender. In order to achieve this, the following changes will happen:

- women born after 5 April 1953 but before 6 December 1953 will have a State Pension age of between 63 and 65
- men and women born after 5 December 1953 but before 5 October 1954 will have a State Pension age between 65 and 66, and
- men and women born on or after 6 October 1954 will have a State Pension age of 66 or higher.

The State Pension age for women has already started to increase from 60 to 65, which affects all women born from April 1950 onwards. Once equalised, the State Pension age for men and women will then increase to 66, followed by further staggered increases to 67 and 68.

From January 2012, The Pension Service will be writing to affected people born up to 5 April 1955 to tell them their actual State Pension age. The letter will advise their new State Pension age date and provide more general information about State Pension changes and extending working lives.



For more information on the changes to State Pension visit the Directgov website.
[State Pension](#) (Directgov website)

Warm Home Discount Scheme

Help with fuel bills – making sure older people don't miss out

More than 600,000 of the poorest pensioners (the Core Group) will receive a £120 rebate off their electricity bill this winter. Most people will get this automatically, but others will need to call a Helpline to check their eligibility before payment can be made.

Eligibility for a Core Group rebate

A person may be eligible if, on 11 September 2011, they (or their partner) were:

- receiving only the guarantee credit element of Pension Credit (not receiving the savings credit element), and
- named on the electricity bill where they live, and
- getting their electricity from one of the six main energy suppliers.

Paying the Core Group rebate

All eligible customers should get a letter from the Government before the end of February 2012. Eligible customers have been identified by matching DWP and electricity supplier data.

Where possible rebates will automatically be added to eligible people's electricity accounts during the winter months.

Where rebates cannot be paid automatically, customers will receive a letter asking them to contact the Helpline before 28 March 2012, to check whether they qualify. They need to call by this date or they will miss out.

More information about the Core Group rebate

[Warm Home Discount Scheme](#)
(Directgov website)

Warm Home Discount scheme Helpline:
0845 603 9439 (Mon-Fri 8am-8pm, Sat 9am-1pm)

Textphone: **0845 606 0285**

Other help

Electricity suppliers may provide 'Broader Group' rebates of £120 to a small number of people who they class as vulnerable. Suppliers have different eligibility criteria and customers need to apply to their supplier for this rebate.

Details of electricity supplier schemes that may be open are available at:
www.decc.gov.uk/broadergroup

Alternatively, customers who think they are in a vulnerable group can ring the Home Heat Helpline on **0800 33 66 99** (Mon-Fri 9am-8pm, Sat 10am-2pm).

Other news in brief...

Benefit Uprating 2012

The benefit rates for 2012/13 have now been published in full on the Department's website.

[Benefit rates 2012](#) (DWP website)

DWP recognised in Stonewall's top 100

DWP is proud to remain in the top 100 employers for gay, lesbian and bisexual staff in the latest index published by the leading gay rights charity Stonewall. The Department came 27th in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index 2012 – rising from 80th position last year – and scored a total of 158 points out of a possible 200. Overall, 363 public and private sector organisations took part in the index. DWP Sexual Orientation Champion, Sue Owen, said:

“I am delighted. It demonstrates that we are not simply complying with process, but genuinely providing an environment which works for our gay, lesbian and bisexual colleagues.”

Local Partner Managers (Ex Local Service Staff)

The National Partnership Team are pleased to announce the publication of local Partner Manager details. If you want to find out further information about DWP benefits and services, please contact your local rep, who can provide information, advice and guidance.

[National Partnership Team](#)
(DWP website)

Social Fund application line closed

From the evening of 27 January 2012, the Social Fund Application line closed. All Social Fund enquiry agents will now issue Social Fund claim forms directly on request from the claimant.

The social fund enquiry number is 0845 6036967.

For our external partners, all requests for multiple forms should be directed to the iON contact centre on 0845 850 0475.

The New Disability Strategy

Disabled people, and the organisations that support them, have been invited to contribute directly to a new cross-Government disability strategy.

The new strategy aims to give renewed impetus to the Government's commitment to disability equality. A discussion document, published on 1 December, asks for practical suggestions that will make a real difference to the lives of disabled people. Organisations with expertise in supporting disabled people can submit examples of good practice or untested and innovative ideas.

Please let us have your ideas and suggestions by 9 March 2012. These will be considered for inclusion in the Strategy, which will be published in spring 2012.

Visit the Office for Disability Issues website to download the document and find out about hosting your own discussion event.

[Fulfilling potential](#) (ODI website)

Work Programme Web pages now live on DWP Website

We have created a new Work Programme page for stakeholders on the DWP website. The site brings together all the relevant information relating to the Work Programme, with links to useful documents and sites, news and case studies.

The site will be useful if you or your organisation are interested in getting involved in helping to deliver the Work Programme or you are an employer and want to find your local provider contact details.

[The Work Programme](#) (DWP website)

Care home residents to keep DLA/PIP mobility component

In December, the Government announced that the mobility component of DLA will not be removed from people living in residential care homes, and that the mobility component of Personal Independence Payment, which will replace DLA, will also be payable at both the standard or enhanced rate to people in residential care homes, provided they satisfy the entitlement conditions.

[Care home residents to keep DLA/PIP mobility - Press release](#) (DWP website)

Employment and Support Allowance

The Welfare Reform Bill currently going through Parliament proposes changes to contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance. Given the importance of these changes in delivering vital fiscal savings we intend to contact claimants, and introduce these changes, shortly after the Bill receives Royal Assent. We will be publishing further details of how this change will be implemented on the DWP website after the Bill has received Royal Assent. In the meantime people on contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance not previously considered for income-related Employment and Support Allowance can contact Jobcentre Plus if they believe they may qualify for this benefit.

DWP is looking for contractors for a new Health and Disability Assessment Framework

This framework will allow providers to compete for all future DWP health and disability assessment contracts. In the first competition, providers included in the new framework will bid to deliver Personal Independence Payment assessments from April 2013 in four geographical areas.

Pathfinder results – Channel appropriateness

The pathfinder results paper for Brent, Buckinghamshire and the Isle of Wight is now published. This details our findings from our test on Channel appropriateness and building capability of partners to improve preparedness of customers.

[Pathfinder results](#) (DWP website)