

Touchbase

September 2011

Welcome to your monthly e-zine!

Welcome to the September edition of Touchbase e-zine after our summer break. In this edition we have an article of the DWP Annual Forum that took place at the beginning of July – see page 2. We also take a closer look at one of the workshops at the Forum, Providing information for advisers and intermediaries. Find out on page 7 what changes we have made as a result of your suggestions and ideas.

Jobcentre Plus is developing new ways to maintain Jobseeker's Allowance online. Find out more on page 4.

From October, there will be improvements to the way individuals obtain free vehicle tax – see page 6 for further details.

Although we are all hoping summer is not yet over, we are talking about Winter Fuel Payments on page 5. Also on page 5 are details of this years Older People's Day 1 October. If your organisation is holding an Older People's Day event, why not register it on the event registration tool – see the article for further details.

As always, we have a round up of other news in brief on page 8.

You can register for an e-alert when each edition of Touchbase 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

We hope you find this e-zine useful, and value your feedback and suggestions for improvements. Email me at the address below if you have any suggestions for articles in future editions.



Paula
Paula Young, Editor

To provide feedback on the e-zine email paula.young@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

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The DWP Annual Forum – July 2011

One of three annual events held in London, Scotland and Wales

The DWP Forum events are aimed at front-line representatives of organisations that work with, advise and represent our claimants. Their objectives are to:

- provide policy and operational information
- hear, and respond to feedback about our services
- consult on new policy developments and initiatives

202 delegates attended this year's London event, representing organisations such as Action for Blind People, Barnardo's, Citizens Advice, Leonard Cheshire, National Probation Service, Toynbee Hall, health and social services, and a host of local support organisations.

Lord Freud, DWP Minister for Welfare Reform gave the keynote speech, which covered progress on the Government's work on Welfare Reform over the last 12 months, the progress on the Bill, and current priorities.

The following Welfare Reform plenary session included a presentation on the scope of the Universal Credit programme, the implementation plans and a policy update. Afternoon operational plenary sessions on Jobcentre Plus and the Pensions, Disability and Carers Service, covered their respective key achievements over the last 12 months and the future challenges they face.

The workshops included Housing Support Reforms, Implementation of the Harrington Review of the Work Capability Assessment, Implementing Personal Independence Payment, Get Britain working and information for advisers and intermediaries – see page 7 for the changes we have made to the [DWP Adviser and intermediaries](#) website as a result of suggestions made at the workshop.

Information Points were introduced for the first time to give delegates the opportunity to raise issues and provide input on operational and policy issues. A number of exhibition stands were provided by Child Poverty Action Group, Citizens Advice and Motability.

89% of delegates said that they would recommend it to their colleagues and 84% will use information from the day to feed back to colleagues and inform staff training. A report of the Forum including responses raised will be published later this month on the DWP website. We will also publish a progress update in January 2012.

The next DWP Forum will be held in Scotland on 9 November. If you have previously attended the Scottish Forum you will receive an invitation. If you have not attended, but would like to do so, please email your contact details to corporate.stakeholders@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

 [Forum reports \(DWP website\)](#)

New Enterprise Allowance

Available across Great Britain

The New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) aims to help unemployed people establish businesses that are viable and that have the potential for growth in the future.

By September the roll out of the NEA should successfully be completed making the NEA available across Great Britain.

Eligible unemployed people who wish to set up their own business can get the support they need to move successfully off benefits and into financial independence.

The NEA provides mentoring and financial support to unemployed people who have been receiving Jobseeker's Allowance for six months or more.

Further details about the NEA and a list of the organisations that are helping to deliver it can be found on the NEA page of the DWP Adviser and intermediaries website.

 [New Enterprise Allowance \(DWP website\)](#)



Image: Thinkstock

Get Britain working

Employer communications campaign

This month sees the launch of a multi-channelled employer campaign to raise awareness and increase participation in the get Britain working measures.

The measures are a range of initiatives designed to provide unemployed people with a route into work. They are:

- Work Clubs
- Working Together – volunteering
- Work Experience
- New Enterprise Allowance – self employment
- Enterprise Clubs
- Sector based work academies – pre-employment training and work experience

In order to provide these opportunities we need the support of all types of employers, from sole traders to large global companies.

The background to the campaign is to address rising youth unemployment and, specifically, lead to the creation of opportunities for young people. Current statistics show that there are around 600,000 under 25 year olds who have yet to find sustainable employment since leaving school. The major focus of the campaign is to promote Work Experience and sector based work academies.

To keep in touch with all our key partners, we have launched an official get Britain working Twitter feed. You can follow the feed [here](#). This feed keeps you in the know on all the latest news and views on get Britain working and enables you to join on going conversations about reducing Britain's unemployment figures.

This activity has created interest and discussion about what employers are already doing to recruit new staff. We have stimulated discussion and debate about the creation of opportunities. We currently have over 300 Twitter followers including employer bodies and intermediaries.

In addition, we have been working with a range of key employers, all of whom have pledged opportunities and are willing to act as advocates through their local business community and their networks. They have also agreed to host events on their premises for employers and other stakeholders in the locality.

Employers we are working with include Holland and Barrett, Barnardo's, Hilton Hotels, Bourne Leisure and Partnerships in Care.

Business breakfasts will take place throughout the autumn and be a mix of, presentations from an employer, about how they've been operating Work Experience and sector based work academies; Jobcentre Plus, about local employment agenda; a young person who has been helped after participation;

“We will aim to get as much media coverage as possible in the national, local and trade press.”



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followed by discussion and networking opportunities.

We will aim to get as much media coverage as possible in the national, local and trade press.

Sue Davies the HR Director from Bourne Leisure gave her reasons for getting involved with the campaign, saying, “I care passionately about this agenda and anything we can do as a business to give the young people of this country a chance of a brighter future is where we want to be”.

Beverley Bustin from Partnerships in Care echoed this by saying, “I’m delighted to be involved with the campaign. It’s good to be at the forefront of this initiative and encouraging other employers to do as we have done. The young people have brought so much commitment and enthusiasm to our business”.

We have already run an event with Spirit Pub Company. This employer has pledged 3,500 Work Experience places for young people in London and the South East over the coming months.

14 employers who attended the Burton-on-Trent head office event heard

presentations from Spirit on how effective Work Experience is for their business and the young people who’ve been involved.

One of the young people who has been on Work Experience in a pub owned by Spirit Pub Company said, “After my Work Experience at The Drunken Duck in Stevenage, my whole life is back on track. I’ve now secured a permanent position in a local pub. This wouldn’t have happened if I hadn’t been on Work Experience which gave me valuable insight into the world of hospitality and the confidence to apply for a permanent position.”

For the next stage of the campaign, we are looking to bring together employer and young person requirements through large scale interactive recruitment and opportunities events, in areas where youth unemployment is high.



For more information about the campaign please contact Clare.kiszely@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or Amanda.straw@dwp.gsi.gov.uk



Further details of the range of initiatives (DWP website)

Changes to the way Jobseeker's Allowance is administered

Jobcentre Plus is developing new ways for claimants to maintain their Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) online



It offers increased flexibility and opportunity to contact us and access our services in a way that suits them. Research has shown that many of our claimants prefer to use online services to deal with us.

From this autumn, some claimants claiming JSA in the North West and North East of England will be invited to take part in our pilot test of this service. They will participate in reporting a number of changes to their claim online, for example, part-time work, change of address and method of payment, which will be processed automatically. They will also be able to request a proof of benefit letter online.

Participation in the pilot will be by invitation only as we are testing a small number of changes.

Support will be provided throughout this test by Jobcentre Plus staff, for those who need it.

In order to provide a secure service, the invited claimants will first need to register with the Government Gateway on Directgov.

Findings from this pilot will develop plans for the national roll out of the Pathfinder functionality which will start later this year.

Our current ways of contacting the Department such as telephony and face-to-face will remain in place for those claimants who cannot access the online services or prefer not to.



If you have any questions or want to know more please contact us at asd.comm@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk

An update on the PDCS Pathfinder Programme

The programme's primary activity has been to focus on reviewing and improving the effectiveness of our existing partnerships to reach and serve the most vulnerable in our communities better. Partnership Managers are also building effective relationships with a local network of relevant core and specialist partners with the disabled customer group as its focus.

The Partnerships Pathfinder Programme, consisting of four pathfinders, was established to inform future planning for working with partners to address the:

- likely increase in demand for PDCS face to face services which may be hidden currently; the test region was Newcastle, testing has concluded and a final report is pending
- shift required to move people to more appropriate channels and help prepare them to do business with PDCS; the test region is Brent, Buckinghamshire and the Isle of White and the evaluation phase has commenced

- usage of face-to-face services, delivering more from community locations outside of the home; the test region is Tameside and an evaluation of the findings has commenced, and
- potential for a more radical delivery approach which joins up face-to-face services to shared customers across a range of organisations (Voluntary, Private and Charity) operating in a locality; the test region is Lincolnshire, which is running along side 'Excellent Ageing' and completion is expected Autumn 2011

The ethos of the Programme is to bring together Partnership Managers and local partners, carrying out practical activities to help determine the size and shape of face to face services. Its focus is on developing the requisite insight, metrics, products and enablers, as appropriate, to apply learning in the above areas across the new Partnership Network during the second half of 2011/12.

“The primary activity in the Pathfinder has been to focus on reviewing and improving the effectiveness of our existing partnerships to reach and serve the most vulnerable in our communities better.”

Summer is barely over, but it's time to claim Winter Fuel Payments

Over 13 million older people are entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment each year

The large majority will receive payments automatically without the need to claim. In June and July, we wrote to those people who will reach the qualifying age this year, and asked them to fill in a claim form. This means people who were born on or before 5 January 1951.

However, we don't have address details for everyone who is eligible. For instance, we won't have details for people who don't get their State Pension yet or people who have never claimed any social security benefits. These people will need to ask for a claim form.

Claims received by 23 September 2011 will be processed and payments should arrive before Christmas.

Winter Fuel Payments are paid at two household rates:

- £200 (qualifying age to – 79 years) and
- £300 (80 plus years)

Claim forms must be received on or before 30 March 2012 to meet the final deadline. People who have had a Winter Fuel Payment in previous years don't need to claim again - they will be paid automatically.

Call the Winter Fuel Helpline on **0845 9 15 15 15** for a claim form or to tell us about a change in circumstance. Or visit the [Winter Fuel Payment](#) Directgov website for more information.



Image: stock.xchng

UK Older People's Day celebrates its 5th birthday on 1 October 2011

Celebrating the contribution older people make to society



Image: 123rf


1 October is UK Older People's Day. This will be the fifth year the day has been celebrated in the UK and we hope to build on the successes of previous years.

The theme for UK Older People's Day 2011 is getting and staying active in later life. This theme is to encourage people to take up, maintain a physical activity and to raise awareness of the benefits physical, social and mental activity brings in later life. The Government and other supporting groups will promote the day using the 'Full of Life' campaign.

Hundreds of events, big and small, will be taking place all around the country, on or around 1 October. Activities already registered include digital photography for beginners in Leicester, Zumba dancing in

Bolton and Wii sports events in Coventry. Many organisations are simply using one of their existing activities on or around the day to mark the occasion.

If your organisation would like to get involved, please register your event on [Directgov](#) or visit the [Full of Life homepage](#) where you can find lots of [tools and resources](#) to help set up your event.

 Join us on [Facebook](#) to help promote events and raise awareness of the day. Let us know how your events have gone and share your pictures.

 For more information contact dwp.fulloflife@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Improvements to obtaining free vehicle tax

Changes are being introduced by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) to improve the way free vehicle tax is obtained.

From 24 October, a new Certificate of Entitlement to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) will be introduced.

The changes introduce a simpler one page Certificate of Entitlement to DLA, which will support the Free Vehicle Tax services that are provided through Post Offices, Motor Dealerships, DVLA Offices and on-line DVLA services.

The new certificate will mean eligible DLA benefit recipients can claim their free vehicle tax for as long as they remain entitled to the Higher Rate Mobility Component (HRMC) of DLA. Therefore, there is no longer a need to renew certificates annually.

New claims awarded DLA HRMC, and existing DLA HRMC recipients who are replacing their current DLA404 or annual Certificate of Entitlement, will receive the new certificate. A new DVLA information leaflet INS216, will also be issued with each new certificate providing more information on how to obtain their free vehicle tax.

Recipients can continue to use their existing DLA404 Certificate or annual Certificate of Entitlement until they expire and need to be replaced.

The only time an individual will need to contact us to obtain a new Certificate of Entitlement to DLA would be if:

- the Certificate of Entitlement to DLA is lost, damaged or stolen
- the vehicle or registered keeper changes
- their DLA404 has expired and needs to be replaced.



More information can be found on the Directgov website [Vehicle tax for disabled people](#)

DWP Charter of service standards

DWP developed its Charter using inputs from our service users, front line staff and intermediaries.

This helped us to agree what the Charter should look like, what its role should be, and how best to embed it in our business.

The Charter was based on four Key Drivers of Satisfaction, Right Treatment, Right Result, On Time, Easy Access, and was launched in 2009.

A priority has been to ensure that DWP staff understand the role of the Charter and recognise how it can help them to deliver good, efficient services.

Since we last updated you, we have been working to embed the Charter in the following areas:

- External communications – leaflets, letters, office posters
- Internal communications
- Staff performance and development tools
- Process improvements and change projects
- Policy design and development
- Department and Agency service measures

A spokesperson for DWP said: “Staff have really taken the Charter to heart and are actively using it to improve how they deliver services. A recent communications campaign to staff about the Charter

received over 14,000 pledges from staff to “make one change” to improve services”.

Our regular satisfaction surveys for DWP service users are now based on the Key Drivers, and findings from our first Departmental survey are published on the DWP website. [Research, analysis statistics - DWP](#)



Open Public Services

How you can shape the future of public services

Last month the Government published proposals for improving public service delivery. It is very important that your views are heard and members of the public, businesses and the voluntary sector are urged to respond.

The White Paper aims to ensure that citizens benefit from the best services available, by giving them more control over the public services they receive, and opening up the delivery of those services to new providers as well as giving public sector professionals more freedom and control over their work.


The proposals centre around five key principles:

- Wherever possible choice should be increased
- Power should be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level
- Wherever possible public services should be open to a range of diverse providers, competing to offer a better service
- Fair access, fair funding and fair competition should be ensured in the provision of public services
- Public services should be accountable to users and taxpayers.



A website has been set up to support the [Open Public Services White Paper](#). This lays out the Government's aims for public services over the next few years.

The website will feed into a wider 'listening exercise' running throughout the summer, which will include a number of regional events and the next steps for the White Paper will be announced before the end of the year.

 [To give your views go to the Opening Public Services website.](#)

“The website will feed into a wider ‘listening exercise’ running throughout the summer, which will include a number of regional events...”

Providing information for advisers and intermediaries

Outcomes from the workshop held at the DWP Annual Forum

This workshop provided an opportunity for delegates to share their ideas and suggestions about how we can better provide information about DWP. Delegates understood the strategy for providing information is electronic, the reasons for that, and were content with this approach. Ideas are summarised below, with updates from DWP.

Postcode search facility for benefit centres

This is available on the Directgov website. Input the relevant postcode to find the Benefit or Pensions Centre.

[Jobcentre Plus: Local Office Search](#) [Find your pension centre: Pension and retirement planning](#)

The [Contact us](#) link at the top of each page on the DWP website, can be used to identify the most appropriate area of the business to contact.

RSS facility for news items

It is possible to set up an RSS feed to send an alert when the update page on the DWP Adviser & intermediaries website is changed.

[Adviser and intermediary updates](#)

Leaflets and claim forms

On the home page of the Advisers and intermediaries website, there is a link on the right hand side to '[Catalogue of information products](#)' This takes you to forms and leaflets, including details of how to place an order.

Availability of a benefit calculator - including a Welsh version

The benefit calculator is available on the Directgov website; for a Welsh version, click on 'Cymraeg' at the top of the screen. [Benefits adviser service - Do it online](#) We have since included a link to the benefit calculator on the home page of the DWP Advisers and Intermediaries site.

We will report back later in the year on other ideas put forward, once we have investigated their viability. These include:

- A timetable to provide information about forthcoming DWP changes
- Links to Pension Partnership Managers
- Publishing a summary of queries coming into DWP from advisers
- Improve links with Rightsnet and info4local
- Better information about the effect of the Work Programme and the Jobcentre Plus offer.

We regularly update and make changes to the [DWP Adviser & intermediaries](#) website pages, so please check them regularly.

Other news in brief...

WCA Independent Review call for evidence – last chance to submit evidence

The call for evidence for Professor Harrington's second independent review of the Work Capability Assessment closes on 16 September. If you have not yet submitted evidence and wish to do so, visit the DWP website for the call for evidence document and response template.

[Work Capability Assessment – Year 2 call for evidence](#)

Other DWP Consultations due to end soon

Below are a number of other DWP consultations which are due to close during October. If you wish to take part please use the links below. All open DWP consultation exercises are available on the DWP website, consultation pages.

[Housing Benefit Reform – Supported Housing – public consultation](#) closing date 9 October

[Workplace pension reform: consultation on draft regulations and guidance](#) closing date 11 October

[Specialist disability employment programmes – public consultation](#) closing date 17 October

You may also be interested in another DWP-related consultation, [Localising support for council tax in England](#). This is available on the Communities and Local Government website. The closing date is 14 October 2011.

Changes to DWP leaflets

The following leaflets have recently been amended and updated on the DWP Adviser and Intermediaries website:

- [PTB1](#) Pensions - the basics - April 2011
- [SPD1](#) State Pension Deferral - April 2011
- [PC1L](#) Pension Credit - Do I qualify and how much could I get? - August 2011

Details of how to order the leaflets are also available on the DWP Adviser and Intermediaries website.

Changes to contributory Employment and Support Allowance

The Welfare Reform Bill that is currently going through Parliament includes proposals to limit the amount of time people in the Work Related Activity Group can receive contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance to 12 months. To ensure claimants are aware of this potential change, Jobcentre Plus will be writing to everyone in the Work Related Activity Group currently receiving contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance.

We will write to nearly 170,000 claimants over a four week period starting 19 September. We are expecting to handle a range of enquiries as a result of these letters. We have also provided information for our external advisers and intermediaries in case they receive any queries.

If this change is introduced, people affected by the introduction of a time-limit may be able to receive income-related Employment and Support Allowance. Those in the Support Group will not be affected by this change.

[Proposed changes to contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance](#) (DWP website)

Personal Independence Payment

We're improving access to information about the Personal Independence Payments on our website. Watch this space.

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

You may read the article about obtaining free vehicle tax. As you know, the Government is reforming DLA by replacing it with Personal Independence Payment – the intention is that Personal Independence Payment will be introduced for people of working-age (aged 16 – 64) from April 2013.

Further details about existing passporting arrangements and the introduction of Personal Independence Payment are available on the DWP website.

[Briefing Passporting from Personal Independence Payment](#)

Occupational health advice services for smaller businesses

Pilot occupational health advice services for small and medium-sized businesses are operating across England, Scotland and Wales.

The services provide employers and employees with health and well-being at work advice and support to help individuals experiencing health at work issues, remain in or return to work.

England: Health for Work Adviceline; 0800 0 77 88 44; www.health4work.nhs.uk

Scotland: Healthy Working Lives Adviceline; 0800 019 2211; www.healthyworkinglives.com

Wales: Health at Work Advice Line Wales; 0800 107 0900; www.healthyworkingwales.com

Health, Work and Well-being – a programme of research into attitudes

DWP commissioned a programme of research in order to address gaps in the evidence base in relation to GP, employer and employee attitudes and behaviours towards health and well-being at work.

The findings from the programme of research were published in four reports on 28 July 2011:

- [Attitudes to health and work amongst the working-age population \(RR763\)](#)
- [Health and well-being at work: A survey of employers \(RR750\)](#)
- [Health and well-being at work: A survey of employees \(RR751\)](#)
- [General Practitioners' attitudes towards patients' health and work \(RR 733\)](#)