

# Touchbase

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Welcome to the June 2007 edition of **Touchbase**, our quarterly newsletter designed to help you help others.

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*Jobcentre Plus is working more effectively with key partners and stakeholders to help people back to work*

## New 0800 service

Jobcentre Plus has listened to customers' and stakeholders' concerns and responded by introducing a new telephone number that will significantly improve the way that people claim benefits.

**Telephone** 0800 0 55 66 88

**Textphone** 0800 0 23 48 88

**Welsh language** 0800 0 12 18 88

(Lines are open from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday)

The new type of phone number is one of a range of modernised services, and part of Jobcentre Plus' longer-term strategy to:

- support people as they try to get back to work
- ensure people receive the right benefits at the right time
- provide a cost efficient service to customers and taxpayers.

Previously, when a person wished to claim benefit they called a contact centre using an 0845 number. To reduce the cost for the customer the centre would note their contact details and arrange for someone to call them back – usually within 36 hours.

The new 0800 number will help customers, particularly the most vulnerable, as the call is free from all landlines. Charges may apply to calls from mobile phones, but we can arrange to call a customer back if they request this.

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The new number will also speed up the claims process. In most cases, customers will only need to have one conversation with a contact centre adviser to make their benefit claim. So, they should receive their benefit more quickly, and the contact centre will be able to make them an early appointment to see a personal adviser to help them to get back to work as quickly as possible.

## Working with partners

Over the past few months, Jobcentre Plus has stepped up its efforts to work more effectively with key partners and stakeholders.

It has set up a National Forum of Customer Representative Groups, which meets every two months, to focus on customer service delivered by Jobcentre Plus. The Forum is developing into an effective way of sharing information and tackling areas of concern. It is also a useful mechanism for consulting on future plans and proposals.

The members of the Jobcentre Plus National Forum are: Child Poverty Action Group • Citizens Advice • Disability Alliance • Local Government Association • MIND • National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers • One Parent Families • RNIB • RNID • Social Security Advisory Commission • Trades Union Congress and RETHINK.

**Although it is very important to liaise at a national level, good links between key local partners are even more essential.**

Jobcentre Plus has recently reviewed its local liaison arrangements, and has a network of external relations managers, based in each of its districts, who are responsible for setting up and maintaining regular and effective links with local stakeholders.

The feedback has been positive – with stakeholders saying they welcome the opportunity to work with local Jobcentre Plus staff.

For further information about working with partners contact Martin Waters, Partnerships Division, Jobcentre Plus, Rockingham House, 123 West Street, Sheffield S1 4ER.

# Lone parent work-focused interviews

**In its efforts to tackle child poverty, the Government has an ambitious target to help 70% of lone parents into work by 2010.**

Research shows that families in which the parent(s) are employed have significantly higher standards of living, reinforcing the view that work is the best route out of poverty.

Jobcentre Plus offers a great deal of help to lone parents to enable them to enter the workplace. But this is of little use if lone parents are unaware of the options available. Research has also shown that more frequent meetings with a lone parent adviser increase levels of awareness and encourage lone parents to participate. Those who see their adviser on a regular basis are more likely to take up the assistance provided through New Deal for Lone Parents, and participants are then twice as likely to move into work.

**To make them more aware of the help on offer, the Government is increasing the frequency of mandatory work-focused interviews for lone parents.**



Initially, they will see their adviser every six months until their youngest child is 14 years of age, after which they will move onto quarterly interviews.

The initiative is being rolled out in two stages:

### Phase 1 – from 30 April 2007

All lone parents with a youngest child aged from 5–13 years of age, and who have been claiming Income Support for 12 months or more, will attend a work-focused interview every six months.

### Phase 2 – from 28 April 2008

From this date, all lone parents with a youngest child aged 13 or under, and who have been claiming Income Support for 12 months or more, will attend a work-focused interview every six months.

## Further information

Helen Duggan, Lone Parent Team, Room 4S25, Quarry House, Leeds LS2 7UA

T: 0113 232 7617

E: helen.duggan@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk

# Health, work and well-being

Improving the health and well-being of the working age population is a priority for government.

DWP is working with other government departments, employers, individuals, healthcare professionals, voluntary bodies and a range of other stakeholders through the *Health, work and well-being* strategy and as part of its welfare reform agenda – including the development of the Employment and Support Allowance.

## Support for people with a health condition or disability

**There are nearly 2.7 million people on incapacity benefits in the UK. Many want to work and could do so with the right support.**

The Jobcentre Plus Pathways to Work back-to-work support is already helping many such people. By the time the new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is introduced in 2008, Pathways to Work will be available in every area of Great Britain.

### Developing ESA

The fine detail of ESA is emerging as the Welfare Reform Bill makes its way through Parliament. For example, at first, ESA will only be available to those customers making new claims. It will have no immediate impact on people on existing benefits such as Incapacity Benefit, Income Support and Severe Disablement Allowance, although these customers will be able to take part in Pathways to Work.

*To make it as easy as possible to move into work, ESA will allow more people to try out work without losing their entitlement to benefit.*

Under the permitted work rules, ESA customers on the income-related or contributory element of the allowance will be able to work up to 16 hours and earn up to £86 per week for a year (as at October 2006) without it affecting their benefit payment.

### Improving the medical assessment

Following a review, and with the help of independent experts and healthcare professionals, we are refining the medical assessment. We have already done some initial testing of the 'descriptors' used to identify levels of disability and assess the impact a health condition has on a person's everyday activities and further testing is taking place.

## Good work

In December, we reported that independent research commissioned for the cross-government *Health, work and well-being* strategy had found that good work is beneficial for people's health.

But what is 'good work'?

In order to answer that question, ministers are holding seminars on the theme of good work, and inviting business, government and the voluntary sector to agree a definition.

Speaking at the first seminar, hosted by the Work Foundation, DWP Minister Lord McKenzie said:

*"We need to figure out exactly what 'good work' is, so that we can ensure workplaces are happy, healthy and productive. This may necessitate a radical rethink, including addressing outdated work practices, increasing flexible working, cutting red tape and promoting effective and open work cultures."*

The seminars are part of the *Health, work and well-being* strategy, which also includes sponsoring employer awards, commissioning research and piloting new approaches, such as testing ways to improve treatment for people with common mental health conditions.

### Further information

The Health, work and well-being team on 0207 712 2528

[www.health-and-work.gov.uk](http://www.health-and-work.gov.uk)  
[www.theworkfoundation.com](http://www.theworkfoundation.com)

## In-work Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

**Following departmental research, we know that many people – both our customers and those in work – are unaware they are eligible to claim in-work Housing Benefit/ Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB).**

We also know that, had some of our customers known, or been made aware of in-work HB/CTB, it would have had a positive impact on their decision to take up employment.

**HB/CTB can make a significant contribution to income. Can you help us to spread the message that it can be claimed in work?**

If you have customers who may be eligible, please refer them to their Jobcentre Plus personal adviser or local authority who can explain about HB/CTB.

The information will enable them to make more informed choices about taking up employment.

### Further information

[www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs2006.asp#hbctbinwork](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs2006.asp#hbctbinwork)

## Basic Skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages

**Jobcentre Plus customers can volunteer to take part in Basic Skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages training, funded by the Learning and Skills Council.**

Since September 2006, Jobcentre Plus has been testing a new approach to encourage customers with basic skills needs to take up this learning if a lack of these skills prevents them from finding a long-term job. Customers may be able to access our training allowance or training premium, and help with travel and childcare costs, if they undertake learning on a full-time basis.

Building on this approach, a new programme, designed specifically for our customers, has now been tested in some areas in all of the regions across England. This has resulted in the development of the *Employability Skills* programme.

The *Employability Skills* programme, developed by DWP, the Department for Education and Skills and the Learning and Skills Council, has four core aims:

- to provide training and support to Jobcentre Plus customers with literacy, language and numeracy needs
- to improve their skills
- to help them gain qualifications
- to help them re-enter the job market.

The programme is suitable for customers with literacy, numeracy and language needs at NVQ Entry Level 1, 2 and 3, and Level 1. A wide range of customers will be eligible for this training, including those entitled to Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Jobseeker's Allowance and those participating in the New Deal for Lone Parents and New Deal for Partners programmes.

### Further information

Jane Porter

T: 0207 712 2299

E: jane.porter1@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

## Community 1000

**Disability and Carers Service (DCS) hope to repeat the success of their Community 500 events by giving even more staff the opportunity to do voluntary work with disabled people and carers, and so gain a meaningful insight into their lives.**

Last year, volunteering opportunities included working as a classroom assistant in a special school, assisting at a hospice, distributing electric blankets and food parcels to the elderly and disabled, and working with carers' organisations.

This year, the renamed Community 1000 is due to take place from 1-14 October 2007. We are always looking to expand the scheme. If you or your customers would like to be involved, or to find out more, contact:

E: andrew.minnis@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

T: 0151 934 6303

## More home visits for DCS customers

**A cross-agency discussion has taken place within DWP to consider the varying levels of service that we provide to working age and pension age customers, and how we could improve our service to vulnerable customers of all ages.**

Kim Archer, DCS Customer and External Relations Director, and Nigel Richardson, The Pension Service Customer and Acquisition Director, sponsored a joint proposal by their teams to look at how we could extend home visits made by The Pension Service Local Service to DCS pension age customers to cover other DCS customers and their representatives.

The decision was made to run a three-month pilot in the Midlands Disability Benefit Centre catchment area, in which the Local Service also dealt with Disability Living Allowance claims (usually covered by Jobcentre Plus). The service provided by Local Service Information Points was also extended to all DCS customers.

**The pilot is now being evaluated. If proved to be successful, it is hoped that roll-out of this extended service will begin later in the year.**

## New DLA adult claim form

A new Disability Living Allowance (DLA) adult claim form was introduced at the end of April 2007.

**Research findings show that customers are significantly more satisfied with the new form, which has been developed in full consultation with customer representative groups.**

### What is different about the new form?

- Customers tell us it is easier to fill in.
- Some of the questions now have a tick-box format.
- New questions help us to obtain better information from our customers at the start of the claiming process.
- The layout and order of questions, and the colour of the form, has changed.
- Some of the language has changed – the claim form carries the Crystal Mark for Plain English.

You can get copies of the claim pack in the usual way – the ordering process has not changed.

### Further information

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/index.htm)

# Keeping their promise

**Findings from the Customer Service Survey 2006/07 show DCS is delivering on their promise to treat customers and representatives with respect and deliver an accessible, accurate and efficient service.**

The key outcomes from the survey were:

- the overall attitude of customers is, generally, very positive
- 86% of customers surveyed were satisfied with the overall service they received (compared to 83% in 2005/06). 56% of customers were **very** satisfied
- two in three customers (67%) would speak highly of the DCS and one in four (24%) would do so unprompted – similar levels to previous years
- customers are more likely to agree that DCS delivers on every element of the Customer Promise than in 2005/06, showing improvements across the board. The exception was being able to access DCS services easily, which remained constant
- 74% of customers agree that DCS uses clear written and spoken English
- listening to customers' views is shown to be an important driver of customer satisfaction. The DCS performs well on this measure, with 61% agreeing that it does so.

Commenting on the results, Customer and External Relations Director Kim Archer said:

*"We took a conscious effort to put our customers at the heart of our service by developing our customer promise and consulting with customers, voluntary and community organisations on the improvements we had planned."*

*"These surveys are an important measure of how we are progressing. We will continue to put the customer first and look to further simplify our claim forms, and improve our systems and the information we provide to our customers."*

Preparations are underway for the 2007/08 survey. The first questionnaires are due to be sent out week commencing 10 September 2007.

The full 2006/07 survey report is available on [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

## Equality for disabled people

*How will we know we are making progress?*

The Office for Disability Issues (ODI) has been asking people to help them find ways of measuring equality for disabled people so they can tell how much progress is being made. The consultation ran from 14 February to 9 May 2007.

**The report, which will be published this summer, will summarise the responses and describe those areas identified as being the most important to disabled people.**

All those who took part in the consultation will be invited to comment on the report, once published. Their comments will help to develop the initial set of measures of equality for disabled people that will be included in the next annual report, due to be published in December 2007.



### Further information

[www.officefordisability.gov.uk/consultations/](http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk/consultations/)

## Improving information for disabled people

ODI has been leading a project to look at how to improve access to information on public services to make sure disabled people can easily obtain the information and advice they need. Disabled people and their organisations, as well as other government departments, have been closely involved.

The findings from the first phase of the project were published in February 2007.

***A report, [Improving Information for Disabled People](http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk/projects/projects.asp) and a guide, [Five principles for producing better information for disabled people](http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk/projects/projects.asp) are now available at [www.officefordisability.gov.uk/projects/projects.asp](http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk/projects/projects.asp)***

The next phase of the project will focus on taking forward the recommendations identified in *Improving Information for Disabled People*.

The project will also be working with four local authorities: Cheshire, Croydon, North Tyneside and Surrey, to develop the five principles identified in the guide and look at how information for disabled people can be improved at a local level.

## Working towards equality for disabled people

The Minister for Disabled People, Anne McGuire launched a new cross-government advisory body on 7 December 2006.

*Equality 2025: the United Kingdom Advisory Network on Disability Equality* currently has 22 members with a range of skills and experiences, all of whom are disabled people. They will work towards ensuring that the views of disabled people inform and influence government policy-making and the development of services.

*Equality 2025 has been set up in response to a recommendation in the report, **Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People**.*

This sets out an ambitious programme of action, particularly in four key areas: helping disabled people to achieve independent living; improving support for families with young disabled children; facilitating a smooth transition into adulthood; and improving support and incentives for entering employment.

The Government's vision is that:

*'by 2025, disabled people in Britain have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and will be respected and included as equal members of society.'*

Equality 2025 will work with government to take forward the recommendations in *Life Chances*, and help it to achieve the aim of equality for disabled people by 2025. It will advise on how government can engage effectively with disabled people, and help to raise awareness about disability, improving attitudes towards disabled people and challenging negative stereotypes in the media and wider community.

### Further information

[www.officefordisability.gov.uk](http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk)

E: [office-for-disability@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:office-for-disability@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Disability rights

Anne McGuire was in New York on 30 March to sign the United Nations Convention on Disability Rights. This confirms the UK's commitment to protecting and promoting disabled people's human rights – at home and abroad.

It was the first day it was possible to commit to the Convention, which represents a significant step forward for disabled people, and the UK was one of the first Member States to sign.

The Government is now working to ratify the agreement by checking its legislation, policies, practices and procedures against the obligations in the Convention.

### Further information

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/index.htm)

# The Financial Assistance Scheme

The Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) offers help to people who lost out when their occupational pension schemes started winding up between 1 January 1997 and 5 April 2005 because they were underfunded and the employer was unable to make up the deficit.

On 21 March 2007, the Government put forward additional public funding so that members of these schemes will receive significant assistance from the taxpayer. This now means that:

- the estimated 125,000 eligible members of affected pension schemes (up from 40,000) will receive the equivalent of **80 per cent of their core pension benefits**
- the cap on maximum assistance has been raised to **£26,000 per year** (it was £12,000)
- tapered assistance levels have been removed and **assistance will be provided to all eligible qualifying members at age 65**

- the rule that excludes those whose FAS payment would be £10 or less a week will be removed
- arrears will be backdated to 14 May 2004 (when FAS was first announced) or the scheme member's 65th birthday, whichever is the later.

If you have customers whose pension schemes wound up, or started winding up, between 1 January 1997 and 5 April 2005, because their employer became insolvent, or no longer exists, they could be receiving FAS payments.

Please encourage them to contact their Pensions Fund Trustees, to ask them to apply on their behalf.

### Further information

[www.dwp.gov.uk/fas](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/fas)

Telephone: 0845 601 9941

Textphone: 0845 601 9942

# Improving information for customers

## DWP leaflets made simpler

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) publishes around 175 separate customer information leaflets – under our own brand and that of Jobcentre Plus, The Pension Service, Disability and Carers Service and the Child Support Agency.

Following extensive research, we are working on a revamp to:

- reduce the number of leaflets overall
- make our leaflets easy to understand and accessible for all customers
- improve the consistency of information and signposting, and ensure the same high standards apply to all products.

Touchbase spoke to Dawn Ashford, leader of the project to make DWP leaflets simpler. Here is what she had to say:

*“With the benefits system as complex as it is, it is vitally important to make the information we publish as accessible as possible.*

*“We have so many leaflets, each containing differing levels of detail, that it can be confusing for users and difficult for them to find the information they need, and to make the right decisions.*

*“I hope these new leaflets will go a long way towards making it simpler for people to understand what they are entitled to.”*

The new leaflets will be in three groups:

**Life events** – engaging guides, based around changes in a person’s own circumstances, for people new to DWP.

**Products and services** – providing core information around an individual DWP product or service.

**Manuals for advisers** – written for advisers with all the details about entitlements and services.

The existing leaflets have been reviewed and new leaflets are currently being developed and quality assured. Every new leaflet will be tested with users and should be available in the next few months.

## Alternative formats

We are looking at ways in which we communicate with disabled people using alternative formats. Through consultation and research, we aim to ensure that our written information is accessible for everyone.

To help our people to plan and produce alternative formats, we have put a minimum standard in place, which will:

- provide a variety of alternative formats
- make sure alternative formats are available at the same time as English and Welsh versions
- make sure customers can still access our information when their chosen alternative format is not available.

It is difficult for us to monitor all the information that we produce, so we are asking advisers for their help.

Our disabled customers are diverse and have a range of disabilities. Our older customers may have extra needs. If you feel we could be doing more to help people to access our information, please let us know – your views will be of great value to us, and may help us to develop future communications.

Please email your views to:

[standards.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:standards.team@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

or write to Josie Granter, Standards Team, DWP Communications Directorate, Room 2E22, Quarry House, Leeds LS2 7UA.

## Crystal-clear leaflets from the CSA

The Plain English Campaign has awarded their Crystal Mark to the Child Support Agency’s (CSA) new set of information leaflets, to recognise their clear language, design and layout.



The 12 client leaflets, which are the first CSA publications to receive this seal of approval, were tested with clients and stakeholders to make sure they meet their needs. They explain what happens once a person becomes a client of the CSA and provide essential information on the child maintenance scheme that was introduced in March 2003.

The Plain English Campaign said:

*“We’re delighted the CSA has taken this important step. It is well known that the child-maintenance system can be very complicated and these leaflets will be of great help to the CSA’s clients and other people interested in their work.”*

The CSA has produced the leaflets as part of their commitment to giving clients a better understanding of what is happening with their child maintenance application or case. The CSA is also improving its website, claim forms and the letters it sends to customers.

You can order the new leaflets in the normal way, or by calling **08457 133 133**.

## DWP awards print services contract

In a move towards greater efficiency and value for money, DWP has awarded a contract for a Print and Associated Services Solution (PASS) to iON – a group of companies led by Xerox.

Under the new contract, iON will manage all DWP's print requirements. It will provide a single, streamlined service and handle orders, sourcing, buying, storage and delivery of items such as leaflets, forms, claim packs and stationery. Services will gradually move to iON over an 18-month period, starting in June 2007.

iON is working closely with DWP staff and customers to develop the future ordering process.

Meanwhile, advisers should continue to order DWP material in the usual way and look out for forthcoming guidance on the new service.

As soon as the new ordering process has been finalised, details of how to order material will be publicised widely, including on the DWP website, and through Touchbase and the Publicity Register.

### Further information

PASS Project Feedback,  
Communications Team, iON,  
One City West, Gelderd Road,  
Leeds LS12 6NJ

## Reducing error in the benefits system:

### A five-year strategy

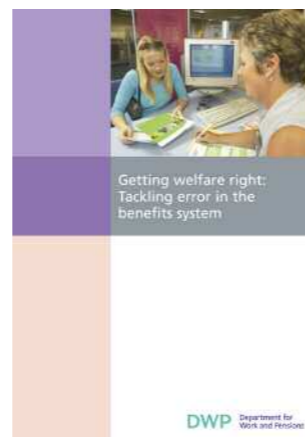
We are committed to providing a quality service to customers, by paying the right amount of benefit every time. However, sometimes both staff and customers make mistakes that result in benefit error.

Our new five-year strategy introduces a number of initiatives that will:

- prevent error from getting into claims
- correct error already there
- help our customers to keep their claims correct
- support our staff in complying with business processes.

### Something to Declare?

As part of implementing this strategy, we have piloted a campaign, *Something to Declare?* in Peterborough, to remind customers of the changes in circumstances they need to tell us about, and to report the changes as soon as they happen. For more about the campaign visit: [www.dwp.gov.uk/campaigns](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/campaigns)



## Child Support Agency

### improves performance

Last year, the Child Support Agency (CSA) launched its three-year Operational Improvement Plan (OIP) to improve performance and provide a better service to clients.

To measure performance in the first year of the Plan, the Secretary of State set the Agency six targets. By the end of March 2007, the CSA was challenged to:

- collect more money through its collection service
- improve the accuracy of maintenance decisions
- get more parents to pay maintenance
- reduce the number of uncleared applications
- reduce the time taken to clear new applications, and
- collect more debt from non-resident parents.

In addition to a year of major organisational and operational change, the CSA has made good progress in most areas and exceeded a number of their targets:

- it increased the amount of money collected through its collection service. Total collections and maintenance arrangements stood at £883m for the 2006/07 financial year, £53m more than the previous year
- it cleared 61% of new applications within 12 weeks, exceeding the Secretary of State's target of 55%
- it reduced the number of uncleared applications by 29% (65,000) exceeding the Secretary of State's target by 4%
- it also exceeded its client service standard in answering telephone calls, with 97% of queued calls answered in just 26 seconds.

The improvements over the past year mean that 45,000 more children now receive child maintenance, bringing the total number to 635,000.

### Further information

Raman Dhaliwal on T: 0207 712 2596

E: [raman.dhaliwal@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:raman.dhaliwal@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2007/error\\_strategy.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2007/error_strategy.asp)

### Further information

[www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/csa.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/csa.asp)

# Reducing child poverty

**New measures to lift thousands more children out of poverty have been announced as part of the Department's strategy to tackle child poverty.**

*Working for Children* was published alongside figures that showed a slight rise in the number of children living in relative poverty.

The strategy will build on the measures announced in the Budget which aim to take a further 200,000 children out of poverty by increasing tax credits and providing wider support for parents.

The measures include:

- piloting a *New Deal for Families* in which more families can access support often only available for lone parents. To do this we will extend the support available in the New Deal for Lone Parents Plus pilot areas to all families with children in those areas
- changing Jobcentre Plus systems so parents are identified earlier, and recording the childcare needs and preferences of all parents, not just lone parents as we do at present
- providing advice and support for the partners of parents claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, and introducing mandatory six-monthly work-focused interviews for this group.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions John Hutton, said:

*"We have made considerable progress against our historic goal to end child poverty in the UK, with 600,000 children helped out of poverty since 1997 and child poverty in the UK falling faster in the last ten years than in any other European country. But we need to go further towards what is a very tough goal to reach."*

*Working for Children* is in response to a report by independent policy adviser Lisa Harker, which made a number of recommendations on what more should be done to reduce child poverty.

## Further information

*Working for Children and Delivering on Child Poverty: what would it take?* (Lisa Harker, November 2006) can be downloaded from [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

Register to receive regular email updates on child poverty and welfare reform at: [www.dwp.gov.uk/welfarereform/blog/index.php/updates](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/welfarereform/blog/index.php/updates)

# Tax and people on low incomes

Do you know someone who could claim tax back on their savings?

**Many people on low incomes don't realise that their bank or building society is required by law to take 20% tax off their interest payment before it is paid to them. This particularly affects pensioners, children, students and unemployed people.**

**Can you help by letting your customers know about 'taxback'?**

If a person does not have to pay income tax, they should inform their bank or building society by filling out form R85 (which has a help-sheet) to 'register' their account(s).

After registering, interest will be paid to them without any tax deduction.

If a person does not have to pay tax, and has not registered, they can claim back some or all of the tax that has been taken off their interest by completing a repayment claim form R40. Savers can claim tax back for up to six years.

Some people on slightly higher incomes may also be able to claim back some of the tax that has been deducted automatically, for example, if they should only have paid 10% tax on their saving income.

## Further information

For information about registering an account call 0845 980 0645

For information about claiming tax back call 0845 366 7850

[www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxback](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxback)

## STOP PRESS

In October 2006, the Government announced it would provide an extra £100 per year to every looked after child who spends the year in care. This is to increase the value of their Child Trust Fund so that, on reaching the age of 18, it is more valuable and provides greater support.

The scheme came into effect from 1 April 2007. We'll bring you more details of how and when these payments will be made in a future edition of **Touchbase**.

# Tax credits and prisoners

**Changes to the tax credits regulations, which came into effect on 6 April 2007, now make it clear that prisoners are not entitled to Working Tax Credit (WTC).**

Child Tax Credit continues to be available to those prisoners who are eligible.

## The new rules

The regulations make it clear that:

- any work done by a prisoner, either within prison or outside prison on licence, does not qualify for tax credit purposes
- any income received by a prisoner for any work done, either within prison or outside prison on licence, is employment income.

The changes do not affect prisoners who have been released into the community to be supervised by probation staff or electronic tag. These people are no longer prisoners but 'citizens under supervision' and, as such, entitled to tax credits as long as they are eligible.

## Childcare element of WTC

Mother and Baby Units provide crèche or nursery facilities to support a mother's rehabilitation back into the community. Under the new rules, mothers who pay private childcare costs are not entitled to the childcare element of WTC because they are no longer entitled to WTC itself.

## What should people do?

As soon as they know they are to serve a prison sentence, they must let HM Revenue & Customs know the start date and length of their sentence. This will help to ensure they (and their families) receive their correct entitlement.

**It is important to do this straightaway, as entitlement to WTC ends when a person receives a custodial sentence and they will have to pay back any overpayment.**

As any income received for work done is regarded as employment income, prisoners should continue to report their income in their annual tax credit declaration.

## Further information

Tax credits helpline 0845 300 3900  
Tax Credit Office, Preston PR1 0YP  
[www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits)

# Working Tax Credit

**People who work less than 16 hours a week, or are unemployed, are not entitled to Working Tax Credit (WTC).**

New rules from April 2007 mean that HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) will continue to pay WTC for four weeks after the date a person's hours drop below 16 per week. This is to reduce the risk of tax credit overpayments and to ease the transition for people who are eligible to claim Income Support (IS) or Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA).

**A person must tell HMRC within one month if they have been working at least 16 hours a week and their hours drop below 16, or they stop working altogether.**

After they have reported the change, HMRC will work out the amount due for the four weeks and send them a revised notice showing the effect on their tax credits for the year.

A person working less than 16 hours a week may need to claim IS/JSA. The four-week WTC payment will not affect their eligibility but Jobcentre Plus will regard it as income in their calculations.

## Forum update

### DWP Ethnic Minority Forum

The DWP Ethnic Minority Forum took place on 27 March in Coventry. Many valuable insights were obtained during the event, which was held for organisations working with, and representing, ethnic minority customers.

The main issues raised were:

- the need for DWP to work more closely with voluntary and community service organisations – for example, by providing them with a single point of contact within each district
- smaller voluntary and community service organisations, particularly ethnic minority ones, can provide services that support

DWP objectives but they need a simple and more inclusive tendering process when bidding for contracts

- the Department needs to be responsive to ethnic minority customers who, in addition to language barriers, may experience other barriers, such as poor mental health.

### DWP Annual Forum

The DWP Annual Forum will be held in London on 11 July 2007.

If you would like to be added to our database to be notified of future events, or wish to receive a report of these meetings, please email [jill.gillatt@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:jill.gillatt@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)



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## Comments about Touchbase

(not distribution queries)

The Touchbase Editorial Board is always pleased to receive comments about the style and content of **Touchbase**. We want to ensure it meets your needs. If you have any comments, questions or suggestions, please contact: Paula Young, DWP Corporate Customer Affairs, Room 3E22, Quarry House, Quarry Hill, Leeds LS2 7UA.

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