

# Touchbase

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This month we are celebrating the 50th edition of **Touchbase**. From our launch in 1995 to the present day, our aim has remained the same: to provide you with the information you need to help you to help others. We hope that you continue to find **Touchbase** useful.

## The new Pension, Disability and Carers Service

From 1 April 2008, The Pension Service and Disability and Carers Service will join together to form a new agency, to be known as the *Pension, Disability and Carers Service*. It will have a single Chief Executive and leadership team but, for the time being, continue to operate as two brands.

### Why are the agencies merging?

The main reason for the decision is that, increasingly, the agencies share a common customer base. More than 50 per cent of Disability and Carers Service customers are also customers of The Pension Service. As more and more people are living longer, this figure will continue to rise.

**The new agency will allow us to deliver more seamless products and services designed around our customers' needs. This is at the heart of our ambition for change.**

While this is a significant administrative change, it will not make any difference to the way our customers interact with us in the short term. The same services will be available from the same staff, using the same contact numbers and face-to-face channels. We are proud of the progress we have made in customer service, and want the new agency to build on that.

As we bring the two agencies together it will be very much business as usual. We will continue to update customers and their representatives, and provide more details as they become available – through our website, **Touchbase** and other channels.

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# Change of address for some pension centres

Back in September 2007 (**Touchbase 48**), we announced that Royal Mail had changed the way it manages the post sent to pension centres. And that we had introduced new postal addresses for some pension centres. The remaining pension centres, listed below, have now also changed their address.

Pension centre	New address now in use
Birmingham	The Pension Service Po Box 10, Birmingham B99 1AN
Burnley	The Pension Service Po Box 12, Preston PR11 2AJ
Leicester	The Pension Service Po Box 13, Birmingham B99 1AP
Warrington	The Pension Service Po Box 15, Chester CH70 8BG

### Royal Mail will divert any post sent to an old address.

Pension Service business reply envelopes with new addresses can be ordered through the iON contact centre. If you have stocks of old envelopes please destroy them and use the new envelopes immediately.

For information about ordering, and to obtain an order form, visit [www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/cat1/pubsorder.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/cat1/pubsorder.asp)

Or telephone iON on **0845 850 0475**.

### Further information

Sylvia Fearn, TPS Infrastructure Team,  
Room 319, Newcroft House, Market Street East,  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 6ND

E: [sylvia.fearn1@thepensionservice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sylvia.fearn1@thepensionservice.gsi.gov.uk)

# Simpler benefit claims for older people



**On 5 December 2007, the Government announced changes that will further simplify benefits for pensioners and make the benefits system less intrusive.**

## From October 2008

- When a customer applies for Pension Credit over the telephone and, at the same time, for Housing and Council Tax Benefit, The Pension Service will automatically send their claim information to the appropriate local authority. The customer will not need to complete another claim form, or provide a signature, or send the form themselves.
- Customers will be able to spend up to 13 weeks abroad (up from 4 weeks) and still retain their entitlement to Pension Credit. This brings it into line with Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

- Backdating of Pension Credit claims will be limited to three months, bringing it into line with other means-tested benefits. This will significantly cut the amount of personal information we need to request – and speed up claims. At the moment, arrears can be backdated for up to 12 months, but this requires pensioners to provide details of their circumstances for the past year, which can be burdensome and stressful.
- Backdating of Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims will also be limited to three months (for pensioners and working age customers).

From April 2009 (subject to the successful passage of the Pensions Bill) most Pension Credit customers aged 75 and over will no longer need to tell us about changes to their retirement income. This includes income from their retirement pension, capital and annuities.

# Right Payment Programme

**The Right Payment Programme helps to ensure that the right amount of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is paid to the right people at the right time.**

Introduced in May 2007, it builds on the previous Periodic Enquiry process, and is part of DWP's wider strategy for welfare reform and tackling benefit error.

Under the programme, a sample of 12,000 cases are reviewed each year (less than 0.5 per cent of DLA customers) to measure and correct any error and ensure customers receive the benefit they are entitled to.

**The Right Payment Programme focuses on whether the DLA payment is correct and looks at potential underpayments as well as overpayments. If the review finds a change in entitlement, the award is adjusted.**

Customers are sent an enquiry form to complete and return by post. They can ask someone they know to help them fill it in.

The form is considered by a special team of decision makers, who may ask for more information before deciding on the amount of benefit that should be paid.

**We are constantly evaluating the Right Payment Programme.**

We will learn from the results, review the programme as necessary, and share our findings with external partners who represent our customers and their carers.

## Edinburgh Disability Benefits Centre

Edinburgh Disability Benefits Centre (DBC) will close in 2008. Disability and Carers Service is committed to providing a quality service to customers during the transfer of work to teams in Preston and Blackpool.

The transfer, which is expected to be completed by October 2008, will take place in four stages:

### Attendance Allowance

#### From 11 February 2008

All new claims for Attendance Allowance in the Edinburgh DBC area are dealt with by the Attendance Allowance Team, Palatine House, Preston PR1 1HB.

#### From 17 March 2008

All existing Attendance Allowance claims will transfer from Edinburgh to Preston.

### Disability Living Allowance

#### From 12 May 2008

All new claims for Disability Living Allowance in the Edinburgh DBC area should be sent to Unit 1, Disability and Contact Processing Unit, Warbreck House, Warbreck Hill Road, Blackpool FY2 0UZ.

#### From 1 September 2008

All existing claims for Disability Living Allowance will transfer from Edinburgh to Blackpool.

### Further information

Neil Blackburn, Customer Service Manager, Edinburgh Disability Benefit Centre, PO Box 38, Edinburgh EH91 5AJ

E: [neil.blackburn@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:neil.blackburn@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council

**Public meeting at the Novotel, Birmingham on Thursday, 26 June 2008 from 10.00am until 15.00pm**

The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) advises the Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions on occupational diseases, industrial accidents and other matters relating to Industrial Injuries benefits. It is formed of medical, scientific and legal experts, and employer and employee representatives.

On 26 June 2008, IIAC is holding the seventh in a series of meetings to give members of the public, and people with a professional interest in occupational diseases, the opportunity to:

- describe the process of prescribing occupational diseases
- take part in a day of presentations and structured workshops
- contribute views and ideas on new issues of concern in occupational health and IIAC's future programme (for details see website).

Please note – individual cases or claims cannot be discussed at the meeting.

### Further information

Zarina Hajee, IIAC Secretariat  
on 020 7712 2433

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

[www.iiac.org.uk](http://www.iiac.org.uk)

# DWP

## Change Programme

Dealing with DWP's different agencies can be a frustrating experience for some customers – they are often asked for the same information two or three times. The DWP Change Programme is working to streamline the services we provide and join up delivery for our customers.

**Launched in 2007, the programme recognises these frustrations and, having listened to what our customers have told us, is our response to their concerns.**

We are re-designing our services to reflect customer needs so they will not have to deal with more than one of our agencies to get the help and support they need.

*The Change Programme will bring in a 'no wrong door' approach, which aims to meet the majority of our customers' needs through a single contact.*

We are also committed to delivering against the wider government Service Transformation agenda. This cross-departmental working will give citizens a more effective joined up service.

To drive the programme forward, we have established a new Customer Insight team. This will enable us to gain a deeper understanding of our customers' needs and provide a more informed basis for future service design.

In order to improve our processes for customers, a number of sites have started to trial the use of Lean techniques. These use various business tools to look at organisational processes and where improvements can be made – from the customer's point of view. Other sites are involved in providing more integrated services for customers who move in an out of employment. This work is being done in partnership with local authorities and HM Revenue & Customs.

In addition, from Spring 2008, we are improving our internet services, via Directgov.

Our aspiration is to provide a better service with shorter, more efficient processes, while giving a greater choice of channels by which customers can access our services. Starting to deliver these changes is one of our key priorities for 2008.

In future, there will be fewer phone numbers for customers to use, consistent telephone greetings across all agencies and better information about what to expect.

Another aspiration is to facilitate greater direct support from intermediaries, who are recognised as an important part of customer interaction, offering real solutions to the challenges we face.

Speaking at a recent workshop with intermediaries, Stephen Holt, Director of the DWP Change Programme, said:

*"I am delighted to see our organisations working together so effectively to improve the way we deliver for our shared customers. As the journey of change continues within DWP, there will be further opportunities for us to work collaboratively and enrich our thinking on how best to meet our customers' needs, and on the role of intermediary organisations like yours in doing that. I am very keen, therefore, that the workshop is seen as the start of a sequence of engagements that will contribute significantly to the Department's programme of change."*

## Further information

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

# 50th edition

This month we are celebrating the 50th edition of **Touchbase**. We published our first newsletter in 1995 and our aim then was to provide information and support to the wide range of professional advisers and volunteers who our customers turn to for help and advice within their local community. We wanted to keep them up-to-date with any changes within DWP, bring them details of legislation that may affect their clients, and to act as a two-way channel of information.

Although DWP has seen many changes since 1995, (and is still undergoing change – see our article opposite) the aims of **Touchbase** remain constant.



However, we do want to ensure that **Touchbase** continues to meet your needs. If you have any comments about the newsletter, or topics you would like to see covered in future editions – please do let us know. Our contact details are on the back page.

We look forward to hearing from you!

# Employment and Support Allowance

## Working with the medical profession

The Employment and Support Allowance will be introduced in October 2008. Previously, we have looked at how it will build on the success of Pathways to Work in supporting customers with health conditions or disabilities to move towards work.

This month, we look at how the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is paving the way to the new regime by working with GPs, nurses and other healthcare workers.

Finding out more about their current attitudes to work and health was an important first step.

**We conducted an investigation that confirmed that almost two-thirds of GPs surveyed were unaware of the evidence supporting the benefits of work – and only half felt confident in dealing with matters connected with their patients returning to work.**

But, contrary to popular belief, the results also showed that GPs are keen to change the 'sick note culture'. In the survey, 56% of those who replied said that their sickness certification practices would change if they had better skills to deal with issues around work and health.

**In response, we have launched a series of education programmes to help the medical community to understand the positive impact that work can have on health and well-being.**

And, in support of this, we are reviewing the sick note (form Med 3) and plan to replace it with a more user-friendly certificate. The new form will help GPs to provide their patients – and employers – with more helpful advice about their fitness for work.

To underline the importance of engaging with the medical profession, the Government's national director for health and work, Dame Carol Black said:

*"Work is a very important part of improving and maintaining health. It is crucial that GPs bear this in mind when offering advice and support to people with all types of health conditions".*

### Further information

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

# Improving skills and job prospects

**The European Social Fund (ESF) will invest £2 billion in employment and skills strategies in England in 2007-2013.**

At the launch of the new ESF programme, James Plaskitt, Work and Pensions Minister for ESF, said: *“Our priority is to help those who face the biggest barriers to work. Over the next seven years, the ESF programme will help 200,000 people into jobs and enable at least 140,000 of the most disadvantaged people to make positive progress toward the labour market. It will help 80,000 disadvantaged young people into learning or a job.”*

New ESF projects will begin from spring 2008. To find out more about how ESF is extending employment opportunities and developing a skilled and adaptable workforce, visit [www.esf.gov.uk](http://www.esf.gov.uk)

You can also subscribe (via the website home page) to the bi-monthly *ESF at work* e-zine, which reports on the latest news and showcases the activities and achievements of ESF projects and participants.

*Before joining an ESF project, David suffered from anxiety and depression, and found it difficult to be around groups of people. After joining the ESF-funded Blueprint project, and following a period of coaching, work experience and voluntary work, David found a permanent job. He is now happy at work and looking forward to the future.*



# Accessing Jobcentre Plus services

**As part of our continuing efforts to improve customer services, Jobcentre Plus is looking at how we can best help those people who drop into Jobcentres without an appointment.**

The aim is to ensure that Jobcentres focus on providing services that help people to return to work. We are currently running tests that will strengthen and enhance this role, and refresh the way in which we provide tailored face-to-face support to customers who need our help but have difficulty using the internet or telephone.

This will mean that customers without appointments who are able to access the telephone may be asked to call a contact centre, where they can make a claim or get

advice on benefit entitlement and jobsearch services.

Customers who can use the internet may be redirected to the Jobcentre Plus website, where they can access over 600,000 jobs nationwide and find out more about benefits and Jobcentre Plus services.

In this way, Jobcentre staff can focus their time and support on those who most need our help.

We will report our findings in a future edition of **Touchbase**.

## Recovering DWP debts

**In March 2005 DWP's Debt Management service appointed four private debt collection agencies to assist in the recovery of outstanding debts.**

The contracts, which end in March 2008, were to recover debts from people no longer receiving a DWP benefit and 'corporate' debt. This is where companies have failed to pay back benefits received as a result of an accident, injury or disease where a compensation payment was also made.

Following a re-tendering exercise, five private sector suppliers have been successful and will join the DWP framework:

- Eversheds
- iQor
- Credit Solutions
- CCSCollect
- To be announced

DWP will continue to work with The Lewis Group, one of the previous suppliers, on current, outstanding cases. Any debts that remain outstanding by the end of March 2008 will be returned to DWP.

The new contracts will be in place from April 2008.

### Further information

Julie Thompson on 01253 339057

E: [julie.s.thompson@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:julie.s.thompson@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

# Local Housing Allowance

*goes live on 7 April*

**As regular readers will know, Local Housing Allowance is set to go live nationally on 7 April 2008.**

Local Housing Allowance is the new way of working out Housing Benefit for private sector tenants, including new claims and those who change address in the UK.

Launching in March, DWP will be supporting the national rollout with a communications campaign to help make stakeholders aware of the changes.

We will use a range of PR activity, including articles in key stakeholder publications and websites, to target landlords, landlord organisations and welfare rights organisations, at a national level. Our aim is to signpost them towards our website for more information.

Alongside our campaign, local authorities will target the same audiences at local level. Their mix of communications activities may include individual meetings and forums.

Using our experiences from the pathfinders, we have produced a communications toolkit for local authorities. This contains template leaflets, letters and fact sheets that they can use to inform tenants, landlords and other stakeholders about the changes.

## Further information

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

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

## DWP Forum update

The DWP Disability Forum will be held in Manchester on 16 April 2008.

The DWP Annual Forum will be held in London on 10 July 2008.

The DWP Pensions Forum is due to take place in October 2008.

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)

# A reminder about tax

**Banks and building societies are required by law to take 20% tax off all the interest they pay.**

**A non-taxpayer whose interest payments are being taxed can easily register their account(s).**

All they have to do is complete form R85 – which comes with a helpsheet – and hand the completed form to their bank or building society.

All their future interest will be paid without having tax deducted.

Form R85 is available from banks, building societies, the HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) website:

**[www.hmrc.gov.uk/tdsi/forms.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/tdsi/forms.htm)**  
and any HMRC office.

A third party – for example a friend, relative or neighbour – can help if someone lacks the mental capacity to manage their own affairs (see article on page 18) or is in poor health. They can complete form R85 using the saver's details but must also sign the form themselves.

Tax can be claimed back for earlier tax years by filling in a repayment claim form R40. This is available from the claim office on **0845 366 7850**, the HMRC website or any HMRC office.

A third party can also claim tax back on behalf of anyone unable to do this for themselves.

## **Further information**

For information about registering an account call the helpline on **0845 980 0645**

For information about claiming tax back call **0845 366 7850**

# Tax credits calculator

**HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is helping to develop DWP's online benefits adviser service, which will allow customers to calculate a wide range of benefits and entitlements.**

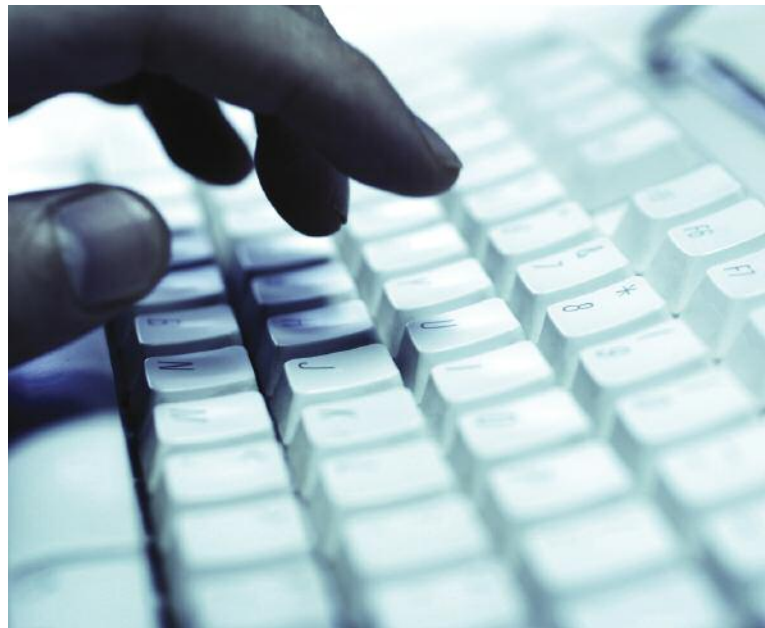
Research has shown that some tax credits customers are confused by the way in which changes in their personal circumstances can affect their benefits and credits.

The tax calculator that HMRC currently provides allows customers to predict the impact of changes on their tax credit award but not on other benefits and entitlements. This makes it hard for some customers to make informed decisions, and can result in unexpected and unwelcome changes in the amount of tax credit they receive.

**The new self-service tool will allow customers to project their circumstances into the future and base their decisions on a far greater level of knowledge.**

It should also mean that advisers have less tax credits enquiries to deal with.

**The new, improved calculator is being developed as part of *MyDWP* – the secure online claim service for customers, which is planned for the Directgov website.**



HMRC will provide support to ensure the calculator accurately covers Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, Child Benefit, Income Tax and National Insurance.

## Further information

Martin Friar (Individuals Customer Unit) at HMRC  
E: [martin.friar@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:martin.friar@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk)

# Child maintenance update

January 2008 saw Stephen Geraghty appointed Commissioner Designate of the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission.



Stephen brings extensive knowledge and experience from the private sector, and from his current role as Chief Executive of the Child Support Agency, where he has improved performance and, as a result, increased the number of children in receipt of child maintenance.

Legislation for the formal creation of the Commission is currently going through Parliament and Royal Assent is anticipated later this year. Following which, the Commission will take on responsibility for the child maintenance system.

Stephen said: *"The Commission marks a new era in child maintenance and will give us the operational freedom to develop new services to support parents to take more responsibility for their children. The passage of the Bill through Parliament will, at last, give us the policy framework needed to make a difference to more children. But the operational improvements the Agency has already made must continue to underpin the transition into the new Commission."*



In November 2007, Janet Paraskeva was appointed Chair Designate of the Commission. Her previous roles include Chief Executive of The Law Society. Janet's appointment is for four years.

Janet said: *"I am particularly pleased that reforms to the child maintenance system are being taken forward with a focus on tackling child poverty. In particular, I welcome the emphasis on giving parents more choice and support over their maintenance arrangements and, through the significantly higher maintenance disregard, ensuring that when maintenance is paid it is the children who benefit."*

The disregard will mean that all parents with care getting Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-based Employment and Support Allowance can, by the end of 2008, keep £20 a week in child maintenance payments before their benefit is affected. This will rise to £40 a week from April 2010.

## Further information

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

# Fighting child poverty

Jobcentre Plus is introducing several new measures this year to combat child poverty and help meet the Government's target to eradicate it completely by 2020.

Getting parents back to work is at the heart of the Government's strategy to tackle child poverty. To support this, the Government has issued proposals that mean lone parents of older children will no longer be able to claim Income Support **solely** on the grounds that they are a lone parent. This change was outlined in *Ready for work: full employment in our generation* and will be introduced in three phases.

The first lone parents affected will be those whose youngest child is aged 12 or over in October 2008. This will be extended from:

- October 2009 for those whose youngest child is aged 10 or over
- October 2010 for those whose youngest child is aged 7 or over.

Jobcentre Plus personal advisers will meet with lone parents to discuss their options to replace Income Support. These include claiming Jobseeker's Allowance if they are able to work, or Employment and Support Allowance if they have a health condition or a disability.

To help lone parents, a range of additional support will be available, such as:

- extra financial support for the first 12 months they are in work
- invitations to attend events offering support to help them move into work

- work trials of up to six weeks without the loss of benefits
- guaranteed job interviews for lone parents who are ready to move into work
- in-work emergency discretionary fund
- in-work support from a personal adviser
- more frequent Work Focused Interviews
- piloting additional financial help, with upfront childcare costs, in London.

Jobcentre Plus is working closely with employers, through Local Employment Partnerships, and local authorities in England, to ensure there are both jobs and formal childcare available to help meet the needs of all working parents.

## Further information

Simon Ellse, Lone Parent Obligations Project, Rockingham House,  
123 West Street, Sheffield S1 4ER

T: 0114 240 8622

E: [simon.ellse@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:simon.ellse@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk)

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

# Welfare at the heart of the veterans community



*A SPVA welfare manager at work*

In previous editions of Touchbase we have brought you news about the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA), which provides 'through life' support to around 900,000 serving personnel and the veterans community.

The SPVA's dedicated welfare service provides one-to-one support, in the home if needed, from their 25 offices based across the UK. Enquiries range from help with completing claim forms and requests for financial assistance to referrals for treatment or home adaptations. SPVA welfare managers work with local authorities and other bodies to ensure that veterans get the help and support they need to resolve their problems.

### Robert and Sarah's story...

Robert, a disabled veteran, and his partner Sarah were homeless and living in a car in a public car park; their only income was Robert's army and war pension. After receiving a call on the Veterans Helpline, a welfare manager met with the couple that same day, to advise them of their entitlement to additional benefits and allowances. She also got in touch with the local council, who quickly placed them in temporary housing.

Robert and Sarah have now made a fresh start. They have found permanent accommodation through continued SPVA support, in partnership with the council and The Royal British Legion, who are helping them to buy furniture and pay for work on the house. Robert says: "I hit lucky with Service Personnel and Veterans Agency and now I'm back on my feet."

For the address of your local Veterans Welfare Service office, visit [www.veterans-uk.info](http://www.veterans-uk.info) or call the Veterans Helpline on 0800 169 2277.

## Veterans-UK

The new name for services to veterans

It's now almost a year since the Ministry of Defence created *Veterans-UK*, the single access point for services to veterans provided by a range of different organisations, including other government departments.

Remember to look out for the name ***Veterans-UK!***

# turn2us

turn2us is a new charity helping people to find out about the charitable grants and state benefits they may be entitled to.

Many people in financial need don't know what help is available, or where to look for it.

While around 13 million people live in poverty in the UK, £8 billion of income-related benefits are unclaimed each year, and more than 750 charities give money to those in need.

turn2us, founded by Elizabeth Finn Care, aims to address this problem by increasing awareness and improving access to the help available. As well as obtaining information through their website – [turn2us.org.uk](http://turn2us.org.uk) – people can also apply directly to charities for financial help.

Alice Johnson knows how difficult it can be. She explains:

*"When I lost my job and then my home due to ill health, I didn't know what to do. Eventually I found out I could get some help from a charity, on top of the benefits I was claiming. The extra help made such a difference to my life; I just wish I'd been able to find it sooner."*

turn2us also aims to help advisers fulfil their vital role in referring people to support. Chief Executive, Jolanta Lasota, says:



Jolanta Lasota

*"It's impossible for advisers to keep up-to-date with the hundreds of organisations that provide grants. By using turn2us, they can refer people to help more easily. They may find a charity that will help someone buy furniture, or provide a lump sum for emergency repairs, for example. They can also use the benefits calculator to check that individuals are receiving the state help they are entitled to."*

A new 'advisers' section is planned for the website, allowing you to make enquiries on behalf of your clients.

To sign up for email alerts about their new services email [info@turn2us.org.uk](mailto:info@turn2us.org.uk)

# Mental capacity

## Planning for the future



Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPA) were introduced by the Mental Capacity Act 2005, and allow people to plan ahead for a time when they may not have the mental capacity to make certain decisions for themselves.

**An LPA provides more protection and greater choice than Enduring Powers of Attorney. It allows a person (the donor) to appoint someone (the attorney) to manage their finances, as well as their health and welfare matters, when they are unable to do so.**

There are two types of LPA, covering **Property and Affairs** and **Personal Welfare**.

A **Property and Affairs** LPA enables an attorney to make decisions on the donor's behalf about such things as paying bills, collecting income and benefits or selling property. Attorneys can use this type of LPA either before, or after, the donor lacks mental capacity.

A **Personal Welfare** LPA allows an attorney to make decisions about such things as consenting to medical treatment or deciding where to live. An attorney can only make personal welfare decisions when the donor lacks the mental capacity to do so.

For guidance and information on LPAs, as well as on the Act, contact:

The Office of the Public Guardian  
Archway Tower  
2 Junction Road  
London  
N19 5SZ

T: 0845 330 2900

E: [customerservices@publicguardian.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@publicguardian.gsi.gov.uk)

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

# Community Legal Advice

**Community Legal Advice is the new name for Community Legal Service Direct – the free and confidential legal advice service, paid for by legal aid.**



As well as being rebranded, the service has launched a new website:

[www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk](http://www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk)

Designed to be easier to use, this allows people to:

- download leaflets and factsheets
- use the legal aid calculator
- search for advice or browse by topic
- find out about local and national organisations that could help with their legal problems.

The website is currently being tested by the Shaw Trust, the largest voluntary sector provider of employment services for disabled people in the UK, to ensure it meets their *Accessible Plus* mark.

Plans for the coming year include a pilot of sign language videos and podcast versions of leaflets.

Community Legal Advice is also developing client-led services through their national telephone helpline – **0845 345 4 345**. This provides high-quality specialist legal advice on debt, housing, employment, welfare benefits and education.

The helpline is open from 9.00am to 6.30pm, from Monday to Friday and calls cost no more than 4p per minute from a BT landline. (Calls from a mobile phone usually cost more.) Messages can be left outside office hours – and clients can request to be called back within 24 hours.

The helpline has Welsh speaking operators and advisers, and offers a three-way translation service in 170 languages, through Language Line.

## Help for advisers

Signposting clients to Community Legal Advice can help to relieve pressure for advisers. Not only can you refer your customers to the telephone helpline, but also link to the website, where you can order advice leaflets.

For further information, or to order promotional materials, contact Ellie Virk at [eleanor.virk@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:eleanor.virk@legalservices.gov.uk)



# The Publicity Register

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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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