

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Head of Housing	Report Number: JSC/01/15
To: Joint Scrutiny Committee	Date of meeting: 28 January 2015

JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF WELFARE REFORM ON RENT COLLECTION AND VOIDS

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The report sets out a review of the impact of welfare reform on rent collection and voids.
- 1.2 The report covers the following :
 - Welfare Reform – Background and detailed timetable of changes, SRP Stats (appendices)
 - Welfare Reform and the impact on rent collection
 - Welfare Reform and impact on voids

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the information provided in the report on the impact of welfare reform on rent collection and voids be noted.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Detailed within the report.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 This report is most closely linked with the Significant Business Risks:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Failure to act upon the requirements of the Welfare Reform Act 2012. Failure to maximise rental income collection to the Housing Revenue Account rents will lead to a reduction in HRA revenue and capital sums available.	Unlikely	Significant	Arrangements under Universal Credit proposals will see housing benefit paid directly to the individual rather than the Councils. The Financial Inclusion Project and dedicated income collection teams with a new team leader post (Dec 14) will seek to mitigate the impact of the changes on the Councils rental streams and HRA budgets.

5. Consultations

5.1 Discussions have been held with various officers to establish the current position.

6. Equality Analysis

6.1 The content of this report is such that there are no equality issues arising from this report.

7. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

7.1 This report in itself has no shared service / partnership implications. However, much of the work to deliver support to tenants affected by welfare reform has been carried out in partnership with others.

8. Key Information

8.1 The Welfare Reform Act became law on 8 March 2012. The Act provides for the introduction of a 'Universal Credit' to replace a range of existing means-tested benefits and tax credits for people of working age, starting from 2013. The Bill follows the November 2010 White Paper, 'Universal Credit: welfare that works', which set out the Coalition Government's proposals for reforming welfare to improve work incentives, simplify the benefits system and tackle administrative complexity.

8.2 Besides introducing Universal Credit and related measures, it made other significant changes to the benefits system.

Key areas

- introduces Personal Independence Payments to replace the current Disability Living Allowance
- restricts Housing Benefit entitlement for social housing tenants whose accommodation is larger than they need (Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy)
- up-rates Local Housing Allowance rates by the Consumer Price Index
- amends the forthcoming statutory child maintenance scheme
- limits the payment of contributory Employment and Support Allowance to a 12-month period
- caps the total amount of benefit that can be claimed (benefit cap)

Welfare Reform and the Impact on Rent Collection

8.3 The Introduction of the changes due to Welfare Reform has affected tenants to varying degrees. During the Councils organisational review, resources were focused on developing teams which would ensure appropriate support is provided to tenants who are affected by welfare reform and dedicated income collection teams to maximise the Councils income streams. This has been enhanced by the addition of a Team Leader post within the HRA Income Team from December 2014 until March 2016. The aim of the role is to provide support and guidance to the HRA Team during the impending Welfare Reform changes, introduce a revised Rent Collection Policy. Align procedures and policies that support the migration to one platform from the existing two separate IT systems.

- 8.4 Resources specifically aimed at supporting tenants have been through the creation of a financial inclusion project, this includes a Five Year Approved Strategy and action plan. This is being delivered via the Project Officer working with a variety of partners. The Project also funds a tenancy support officer (18.5 hours at each Council) to support tenants directly.
- 8.5 Work of the project to date has involved:
- Assisting tenants affected by welfare reform by providing a booklet and roadshows.
 - Three mutual exchange events to assist tenants to find a more suitable property.
 - A financial profiling survey.
 - Energy awareness training for frontline staff and tenants (ongoing).
 - Financial capability sessions, financial and officer support to the credit union and a project with 3 CAB's (ongoing) to deliver benefits and money sessions piloted in 4 areas – to date the benefit and money sessions have been attended by 38 tenants.
 - There have been regular articles in the tenants' magazine about benefit changes, financial products, advice about fuel, free money advice and the local credit union and regular liaison with the tenants forums.
 - Work that has just begun includes working with the employment enabler and the DWP to develop a course to make tenants more "work ready. Discussing with Age UK a project to reduce poverty by ensuring pension credit is claimed where there is entitlement. A food project "cooking on a budget" involving tenants. Working with the CAB to provide money advice appointments for tenants at Needham and Hadleigh and potentially other locations.
- 8.6 Since January 2014 the Tenancy Support Officers have received 150 referrals to support tenants, supported 74 successful claims for Discretionary Housing Payment totalling £30k (to Nov 14) which helped pay for shortfall of Housing Benefit, removal costs, deposits on more suitable properties and arrears cleared to allow a move to a more suitable property. Tenants have also been supported to claim Housing Benefit, other DWP benefits, food parcels, fuel vouchers and supported to make contact with various other agencies.
- 8.7 There is a "provisional planning assumption" that Universal Credit will be introduced in some areas of Suffolk from February 2015. The districts affected are covered by the following Jobcentre Plus offices:
- Forest Heath District (Jobcentre Plus offices in Bury St. Edmunds, Mildenhall and Newmarket)
 - Suffolk Coastal District (Jobcentre Plus offices in Felixstowe, Leiston and Woodbridge)
 - Waveney District (Jobcentre Plus offices in Beccles and Lowestoft)

- 8.8 In these areas, Universal Credit will only be available for new claims from some single jobseekers, if their personal circumstances are not too complicated. Existing claimants and people who make new claims to other benefits (including Income Support, income-based ESA, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit) will not be affected by the introduction of Universal Credit in 2015.
- 8.9 Work is underway in the Councils Rents and Financial Inclusion teams to prepare for Universal Credit by increasing the number of tenants who pay by direct debit, raising awareness of the roll out and encouraging tenants to ensure they have useable bank accounts. Work will also be undertaken to establish how we can record the most vulnerable tenants to ensure that they have a smooth transition to Universal Credit and identify those we may have to seek alternative payment arrangements for. To target our messages in the most meaningful way we will be using our new market segmentation tool Mosaic.
- 8.10 A table of rent collection data is below for your information. The IT systems currently in use by both Councils are not able to divide the arrears into those caused by the impact of welfare reform. Members will be aware that many families, including working families, have been hit by unprecedented challenges and UK national figures show :
- 1 in 5 in UK below the poverty line (Those with less than 60 per cent of median income are classified as poor)
 - 500,000 rely on food parcels
 - 36% In UK are one fuel bill/broken appliance away from poverty
 - Overall the cost of a basket of essential items has risen by 28% over six years, while average wages have increased 9% and the minimum wage 14%.

<u>Year</u>	<u>BDC Total sum outstanding £</u>	<u>% arrears against the debt</u>	<u>% of rent collected including current arrears b/fwd</u>	<u>MSDC total sum of outstanding rent £</u>	<u>% arrears against the debt</u>	<u>% of rent collected including current arrears b/fwd</u>
<u>2014/15</u>	<u>164,990.09</u>	<u>1.62%</u>	<u>98.76%</u>	<u>404,962.76</u>	<u>4.32%</u>	<u>96.75%</u>
<u>2013/14</u>	<u>204598.27</u>	<u>1.27%</u>	<u>98.88%</u>	<u>316446.86</u>	<u>2.06%</u>	<u>98.20%</u>
<u>2012/13</u>	<u>119094.29</u>	<u>0.79%</u>	<u>99.42%</u>	<u>213823.96</u>	<u>1.46%</u>	<u>98.68%</u>
<u>2011/12</u>	<u>114020.96</u>	<u>0.81%</u>	<u>No data</u>	<u>127785.88</u>	<u>0.93%</u>	<u>99.17%</u>
<u>2010/11</u>	<u>No Data</u>	<u>No data</u>	<u>No Data</u>	<u>76008.42</u>	<u>0.58%</u>	<u>99.48%</u>

- 8.11 We are aware that table shows a significant increase in the total sum of rent outstanding within Mid Suffolk over the past four years. There have been many changes to the staffing resource over a long period of time. This is the main reason for the increases shown above. However there is a plan of action introduced since September 2014 to reduce the total amount of arrears over the coming months. Examples of these actions are changes to staffing, integration of policies and procedures i.e. Paperless Direct Debits.

8.12 Relocation of the team to one office, introduction of a revised rent collection policy from April 2016. Along with changes to the supervision and management and the introduction of a team leader post (fixed term until March 2016)

8.13 Change in demand for different sizes of property

- Demand for properties with 3 or more bedrooms has fallen.
- In Babergh the average number of bids for larger properties has fallen from 37 in 2010/11 to 21 so far in 2014/15. In Mid Suffolk the highest point was in 2011/12 when there was an average of 53 bids per property and the lowest is this year when the average is 18. Demand for one and two bedroom vacancies has fluctuated over the period but remained relatively stable.

The number of Council tenants transferring and impact on void numbers

8.14 It has been reported that transfers to smaller properties by existing tenants would cause a rise in properties becoming void and therefore increase costs. This has not been the case in either Mid Suffolk or Babergh. In Babergh the number of transfers was 67 in 2010/11 and 60 in 2013/14. In Mid Suffolk the numbers were 101 and 93.

8.15 This may be due to a change made to the Allocations Policy as a result of welfare benefit reform. Prior to April 2013 a family with children of the opposite sex sharing a bedroom were given priority to move to a larger property when the older child reached 5. Following Welfare Reform this was changed to 10 in order to reflect the bedroom entitlement for Housing Benefit calculations. This resulted in a reduction of existing tenants having sufficient priority on the housing register to move. At the same time people who were overcrowded and living in private rented accommodation were awarded the same priority band as social housing tenants

The number of existing social tenants transferring to a smaller property

8.16 The number of social housing tenants transferring to a smaller property has increased since Welfare Reform.

8.17 All down-sizing moves

Year	Babergh	Mid Suffolk
2010/11	35	32
2011/12	35	29
2012/13	29	37
2013/14	48	45
2014/15 (9 months)	31 (full year estimate 41)	26 (full year estimate 34)

8.18 The numbers moving from a 3 bedroom property

Year	Babergh	Mid Suffolk
2010/11	28	22
2011/12	27	14
2012/13	21	24
2013/14	34	25
2014/15 (9 months)	18 (full year estimate 24)	20 (full year estimate 26)

8.19 The numbers moving from a 2 bedroom property

Year	Babergh	Mid Suffolk
2010/11	7	10
2011/12	8	15
2012/13	8	13
2013/14	14	20
2014/15 (9 months)	13 (full year estimate17)	6 (full year estimate 8)

Effect on waiting times for homeless households

- 8.20 There has been an increase in the waiting times for a permanent home, particularly for 1 and 2 bedroom properties. Applicants who have been accepted for housing under the homelessness legislation are in the same band (Band B) as people downsizing from a 2 bedroom property and in a lower band than people downsizing from a 3 bedroom property who are in a Band A.
- 8.21 The average waiting time for homeless households who need a one bedroom property has increased in Mid Suffolk from 118 days in 2011/12 to 154 days in 2013/14 and in Babergh from 98 to 225 days
- 8.22 The average waiting time for a two bedroom property has increased in Mid Suffolk from 90 days to 120 days and in Babergh from 115 to 150 days in the same period.

9. Appendices

Title	Location
(1) Welfare Reform Timetable of changes document (FIAS SCC)	Attached
(2) SRP Stats Removal of Spare Room Subsidy including impact on the disabled	Attached
(3) SRP Stats Benefit Cap	Attached
(4) SRP Stats Local Housing Allowance to demonstrate impact of shortfall in HB in private sector.	Attached

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Welfare Reform - timetable of changes

1 January 2012

Housing Benefit – Local Housing Allowance

New claimants who are single and under 35 years old are limited to the single room in shared accommodation rate. There are exceptions for claimants in receipt of Severe Disability Premium, care leavers under 22 and people age 25 or over who have been in a refuge or a hostel for homeless people for three months and received help to resettle or who are offenders deemed a risk to the public.

1 April 2012

Housing Benefit – Local Housing Allowance

The Local Housing Allowance bedroom rate can be increased if the claimant or the claimant's partner receives a qualifying disability benefit, requires overnight care and there is an additional bedroom for the use of a non-resident carer.

1 April 2012

Income Support

Young people eligible to claim Income Support while in full-time non advanced education can continue to receive this until the end of the academic year in which they turn 21. There is no longer any need for them to have started or enrolled on the course before their 19th birthday

6 April 2012

Working Tax Credit

Couples with children must work 24 hours per week between them to qualify for Working Tax Credit, with one of the couple working at least 16 hours per week. When one of a couple is a carer, a hospital in-patient, a prisoner or a disabled person in receipt of a qualifying disability benefit, the other member of the couple is only required to work 16 hours per week to qualify.

From this date, the 50+ Plus Element has been removed and claimants aged 50-59 need to satisfy the normal entitlement conditions to Working Tax Credit. Claimants aged 60 or over can qualify if they work 16 or more hours per week.

Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit

Backdating period reduced from 93 days to 31 days.

Time limit for notifying a change of circumstances reduced from 3 months to one month.

The higher income threshold for the Family Element was removed.

Reductions in income of up to £2500 are disregarded in the calculation of the tax credit award.

- 1 May 2012** **Employment and Support Allowance**
- Contribution based Employment and Support Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance in Youth are time-limited to 365 days for claimants in the Work-Related Activity Group. This change takes immediate effect for existing claimants. Employment and Support Allowance in Youth is abolished for new claimants.
- 8 May 2012** **Administrative penalties for fraud**
- Administrative penalties are financial penalties offered under civil law as an alternative to prosecution for benefit fraud. For offences resulting in benefit overpayments occurring wholly on or after 8 May 2012, the penalty is 50% of the overpayment. There is now a minimum penalty of £350 and a maximum of £2000. If an overpayment would have occurred (but did not), an administrative penalty of £350 can still be applied.
- 15 May 2012** **Housing Benefit - Extra bedroom for children with severe disabilities**
- A Court of Appeal judgement found that local authorities should allow an extra bedroom for children who are unable to share because of severe disabilities, when calculating Housing Benefit under the Local Housing Allowance rules for private sector tenants. In March 2013, the DWP dropped its appeal to the Supreme Court. The Court of Appeal judgement is now legally binding as case law.
- 21 May 2012** **Income Support**
- Lone parents were no longer able to make a new claim to Income Support unless their youngest child was under 5 years old. Lone parents whose youngest child was aged 5 or over were moved off Income Support by October 2012 and invited to claim Jobseeker's Allowance.
- 13 August 2012** **Sure Start Maternity Grants**
- Eligibility conditions changed for women who claim on or after 13 August 2012, who are expecting a multiple birth on or after 29 October 2012. Women expecting a multiple birth will be entitled to a Sure Start Maternity Grant, even if there are other children aged under 16 in the household.
- 1 October 2012** **Civil penalties for overpayments due to claimant error**
- The DWP and local authorities have the power to impose a £50 civil penalty on claimants who are overpaid benefit because they negligently made incorrect statements and failed to take reasonable steps to correct the error or who failed to provide information or to disclose changes in their circumstances.
- 22 October 2012** **Jobseeker's Allowance**
- New three-tier sanction regime introduced for claimants who fail to meet the work-seeking conditions. The length of sanction increases if the claimant commits another sanctionable offence within 52 weeks. The rules for "good cause" and "just cause" are replaced by a new term – "good reason."

Higher level sanctions (13, 26 and 156 weeks in length) for failing to meet the labour market conditions. This includes: losing a job through misconduct, leaving a job or refusing a job without good reason and failing to participate in Mandatory Work Activity without good reason.

Intermediate level sanctions (4 and 13 weeks in length) are applied to claimants who are deemed not to be available for work or not actively seeking work. They can be applied to a new claim if the previous claim was closed for this reason.

Lower level sanctions (4 and 13 weeks in length) are applied when the claimant fails to comply with requirements to improve their chances of finding or preparing for work. This can include: failing to sign on, failing to attend or participate in a work-focused interview, failing to follow a Jobseeker's Direction and failing to attend or participate in a training scheme or employment programme without good reason.

9 November 2012 Housing

Local authorities will be able to end the main housing duty to a homeless applicant by means of a 'private rented sector offer' - a fixed-term assured shorthold tenancy for a minimum of 12 months. There are new regulations setting out why a 'private rented sector offer' may not be suitable accommodation and the factors the authority must take into account if accommodation is to be offered out of borough.

3 December 2012 Employment and Support Allowance

New sanction regime introduced for claimants in the Work-Related Activity Group who fail, without good cause, to engage in work-related activity. Sanctions run indefinitely until the claimant commits to engage in the activity, after which a fixed period sanction is applied. The amount of the sanction has increased – claimants now lose their personal allowance (£71.70 from April 2013) Hardship payments are available to Employment and Support Allowance claimants who have been sanctioned and are experiencing financial hardship.

1 January 2013 Housing Benefit – Local Housing Allowance

Transitional protection ends for private sector tenants who were entitled to more Housing Benefit under previous (more generous) Local Housing Allowance rules. The single room in shared accommodation rate now applies to single claimants under 35 years old. All claims are based on the 30th percentile of local market rents and entitlement is limited to a maximum of the four-bedroom rate.

7 January 2013 Child Benefit

Individuals with taxable income over £50,000 per year will have their Child Benefit reduced by an income tax charge. For individuals with taxable income over £60,000, this charge will equal their Child Benefit entitlement.

20 January 2013 Warm Front scheme comes to an end

No new applications are taken for the Warm Front scheme from this date.

28 January 2013

Green Deal introduced

A new loan scheme to help people make heating, insulation, double-glazing and energy-saving improvements to their home or business without having to pay all the costs up front. The loan and interest is then repaid through the electricity bill.

28 January 2013

Employment and Support Allowance

Changes to the descriptors used for the Work Capability Assessment for: standing and sitting, manual dexterity, understanding communication, continence and getting about. Several minor amendments are also made to the Schedule 3 descriptors used to determine whether a claimant is placed in the Support Group.

The assessment for physical disabilities will now take into account any aids or appliances the claimant normally uses, or could reasonably be expected to use.

Claimants receiving, recovering from or due to receive any type of chemotherapy or radiotherapy for cancer within 6 months, will be treated as having limited capability for work and limited capability for work-related activity.

The “exceptional circumstances” rule will now exclude circumstances where the risk to health could be significantly reduced by reasonable adjustments in the workplace or by the claimant taking prescribed medication.

1 March 2013

Universal Jobmatch

The DWP has announced that jobseekers can now be compelled to use Universal Jobmatch, the online job posting and matching service. For Universal Credit, this will be part of the claimant commitment. For Jobseeker’s Allowance this will be achieved by issuing a Jobseeker’s Direction to the claimant. The direction must be reasonable, taking into account all of the claimant’s circumstances.

1 April 2013

New fraud sanctions for benefits and Working Tax Credit

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced new sanctions for benefit fraud, where the offence is committed wholly on or after 1 April 2013. Sanctions remove entitlement for a “relevant period” which is:

Four weeks for claimants who commit a first offence and accept an alternative penalty to prosecution.

13 weeks for claimants convicted of a first offence (called a disqualifying event).

26 weeks for claimants convicted of an offence if they have a previous disqualifying event within five years

A three year sanction for claimants convicted of an offence, if they have two or more previous disqualifying events within five years or if they have been convicted of serious or organised fraud.

The offence does not have to be connected to the benefit or tax credit award affected by the sanction; it can relate to any overpaid benefit apart from Statutory Sick Pay, Statutory Maternity, Paternity or Adoption Pay and Maternity Allowance. Benefit offences committed all or in part before 1 April 2013 are subject to the previous rules for One Strike or Two Strike penalties.

1 April 2013

Benefit uprating restrictions

Most working age benefits and tax credits are uprated by 1%, with the exception of Disability Living Allowance, the Support Component of Employment and Support Allowance, Attendance Allowance and disability elements paid with tax credits, which are uprated in line with inflation. State Retirement Pension is uprated by the highest of the following – Consumer Price Index, national average earnings or 2.5%. Local Housing Allowance rates are increased in line with the Consumer Price Index. From 2014, these will be uprated by 1%.

1 April 2013

Housing Benefit – the “bedroom tax”

The “bedroom tax” - working age claimants in local authority or housing association properties have their Housing Benefit reduced if they are deemed to be under-occupying a property. This is determined by assessing the number of bedrooms required by the household - one bedroom for each couple or single person. Two children of the same gender under 16 are expected to share. Two children under 10 are required to share, regardless of their gender.

If the claimant or partner is on a qualifying disability benefit and requires an overnight carer, an extra bedroom can be included in for the use of that carer.

Adult sons and daughters in the armed forces, but who still live with their parents, will continue to be treated as living at home for “bedroom tax” purposes, while they are deployed on operations.

Claimants deemed to be under-occupying by one bedroom will have their Housing Benefit cut by 14%. Claimants under-occupying by two or more bedrooms will receive a 25% cut.

On 15 May 2012, a Court of Appeal judgement found that local authorities must allow an extra bedroom for children who are unable to share because of severe disabilities. Though this judgement related to Local Housing Allowance, the DWP has stated it also applies to the bedroom tax for council and housing association tenants.

Fostered children are not treated as part of the household when counting the number of bedrooms required. However, people who are approved foster carers are allowed one additional bedroom (regardless of the number of fostered children), whether or not a child has been placed with them, so long as they have fostered a child or become an approved foster carer in the last 12 months.

1 April 2013

Council Tax reduction scheme

Council Tax Benefit was replaced by local Council Tax reduction scheme. Local authorities have set up new schemes to support people in their own areas with a 10% reduction in budget. The authority must ensure the scheme does not reduce existing entitlement for people who have reached Pension Credit age (and are not claiming Income Support, income-based JSA or income-related ESA).

The government has directed that the scheme should protect (unspecified) vulnerable groups. Although some councils in Great Britain have put in place protection for people for people with disabilities, this has not been done in Suffolk.

In Suffolk, all councils apart from Mid-Suffolk District Council have set a maximum reduction of 91.5% for working age claimants. Working age people who receive a means-tested benefit, which previously passported them to full Council Tax Benefit, will be expected to pay 8.5% of their Council Tax bill. Mid-Suffolk District Council has set their maximum reduction at 95%.

1 April 2013

Job Grant

No Job Grant payments can be made from 1 April 2013.

1 April 2013

Abolition of Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants

Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for living expenses (including rent in advance) are abolished. Local Welfare Assistance schemes, administered by county councils, have been set up to help people who cannot access help from any other source. No new applications for Crisis Loans or Community Care Grants can be taken on or after 1 April 2013.

Budgeting Loans will continue until Universal Credit is fully rolled out, when they will be replaced by Budgeting Advances payable via Universal Credit.

1 April 2013

Short-term Benefit Advances

Short-term Advances are available to claimants awaiting a first payment (or increase) of means-tested or contribution-based benefit. These are administered by the DWP and replace Crisis Loans for alignment payments and interim payments.

Where it appears that a claimant would be entitled to a benefit, but the claim has not been determined or it cannot be paid at the appointed time, a Short-term Advance can be made if the DWP is satisfied that the person is in financial need. Short-term Advances must be repaid within 3 months (6 months in exceptional circumstances).

6 April 2013

Tax Credits

Any increase in income above £5,000 in a tax year will be taken into account when calculating the finalised tax credit award. Prior to April 2013, only increases over and above £10,000 would be taken into account.

8 April 2013

Residence rules for Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance and Carer's Allowance

The Habitual Residence Test replaced the ordinary residence test for these benefits. The change took effect from 8 April 2013 for new claimants. Existing claimants will be subject to the stricter residency test from the day following the end of an existing award (when the award comes up for renewal) or on the date of any revision or supersession due to a change of circumstances. This rule does not apply to serving members of the Armed Forces.

The 'past presence' test for these benefits has been changed from this date. Claimants are required to be present in Great Britain for 104 weeks out of the 156 weeks preceding the date of the claim, unless they are terminally ill. Children under 6 months old are required to be present for 13 weeks and children between 6 months and 3 years old are required to be present for 26 weeks.

Changes have also been made to the rules for temporary absence from the UK. Claimants can only retain entitlement for 13 weeks, or 26 weeks if the absence is for specified medical treatment.

8 April 2013

Motability agreements for hospital inpatients

A claimant who becomes a NHS funded hospital inpatient loses entitlement to the mobility component of DLA after 28 days (84 days for children under 16). When Personal Independence Payment is introduced, the PIP mobility component is also removed after 28 days as a hospital inpatient.

People who become hospital inpatients on or after 8 April 2013 and lose their entitlement to the mobility component (after 28 or 84 days) may be asked to return their Motability vehicle after a further 28 days (ie. 56 days after admission for adults). In cases where discharge is expected shortly after the 28 day period, or where the vehicle is heavily adapted, the Motability scheme will consider deferring the return of the vehicle.

Hospital inpatients on or prior to 8 April can retain their mobility component until their Motability agreement ends or 8 April 2016 (whichever is earlier).

8 April 2013

Direct Earnings Attachments

The Department for Work and Pensions is able to use Direct Earnings Attachments (DEAs) to recover debts (including Social Fund loans) from earnings, without the need for a court order. The intention is to use this only when all other efforts have failed. The maximum deduction to repay overpaid benefit will be 20% of net earnings and people will not be left with less than 60% of their net earnings, regardless of the number of DEAs made.

DEAs will not be used for self-employed people, members of the armed forces, merchant seamen, people age 17 or under or people who have reached pension age.

8 April 2013

Armed Forces Independence Payment

Introduced to provide additional financial support to seriously injured Service and ex-Service personnel. It is a benefit paid and administered by the DWP to people in receipt of tariffs 1-8 of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

It is paid at the same rate as Personal Independence Payment with the enhanced daily living and mobility components, but is not reassessed or reduced by periods in hospital or residential care. People in receipt of AFIP are not able to claim DLA or Personal Independence Payment.

8 April 2013

Mandatory reconsideration and direct lodgement of appeals for Personal Independence Payment and Universal Credit

People who claim Personal Independence Payment and wish to dispute the award or disallowance, will be required to ask the DWP office which made the decision to look at it again (a "mandatory reconsideration"), before they are able to appeal to HM Courts and Tribunals Service. Until a mandatory reconsideration has taken place, the claimant has no right of appeal.

All Personal Independence Payment and Universal Credit appeals will be made directly to HM Courts and Tribunals Service; they will not be made via the relevant DWP office.

29 April 2013

Recovery of overpayments of Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance and Jobseeker's Allowance

For Universal Credit, New (contribution-based) Jobseeker's Allowance and New (contribution-based) Employment and Support Allowance claims made in Universal Credit pathfinder areas on or after 29 April 2013, any amount of paid in excess of entitlement can be recovered from the claimant, regardless of how the overpayment arose.

From this date, recoverable overpayments of Universal Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit can be recovered by deductions from benefits, deductions from earnings (without the need for a court order) or via the County Court.

10 June 2013

Personal Independence Payment

Personal Independence Payment is introduced countrywide, to replace Disability Living Allowance for new claimants aged 16 to 64. No new claims to Disability Living Allowance will be accepted for claimants within this age range. Young people under 16 years old will continue to be able to make claims to Disability Living Allowance.

1 July 2013

Accession of Croatia to the European Economic Area

Croatia joins the European Union and Croatian nationals are able to exercise their right of free movement and their right to work in other member states, including the UK.

Access to benefits and the UK labour market is restricted for an initial period of five years. Croatian nationals in authorised work have the right to reside for means-tested benefits and local authority housing duty. Croatian nationals who are seeking work do not have the right to reside for housing or benefits, including Jobseeker's Allowance, unless there are exempt from worker authorisation or have completed 12 months of uninterrupted authorised work.

15 July 2013

Benefit Cap national roll-out

The Benefit Cap was rolled out in authorities with 275 or fewer capped households. A second tranche for authorities with more than 275 capped households was scheduled to be rolled out from 15 August 2013 or later (depending on clearance of the first tranche).

Working age claimants' combined entitlement to benefits will be limited to a fixed weekly amount. The amount is capped at £350 per week for single claimants and £500 per week for couples and lone parents. The cap will be imposed by reducing the claimant's entitlement to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

Claimants who receive Working Tax Credit, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance, the support component of ESA, Industrial Injuries Benefits or War Widows and War Widowers pension will be exempt from the cap.

People who have previously worked for 50 out of 52 weeks (without claiming Income Support, JSA or Employment and Support Allowance) will be exempt from the Benefit Cap for 39 weeks from their last day of work.

October 2013

Claimant Commitment for Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit

From October, around 100 Jobcentre Plus offices each month will begin using the Claimant Commitment with new job seekers, until it is in place across the country. This is a new form of Jobseeker's Agreement which will set out the work-related requirements for New Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit.

The Claimant Commitment is enforceable using new legislation for Universal Credit and New Jobseeker's Allowance only. Those who fail to comply with their responsibilities risk benefit sanctions. New Jobseeker's Allowance is contribution-based JSA claimed by new claimants on or after Universal Credit has been introduced in their area.

The Claimant Commitment will also be used for existing JSA claimants in non-Universal Credit areas and for "legacy" JSA claimants (those with existing claims under the old rules) in Universal Credit areas. However, for these claimants, the work-related requirements are underpinned by existing JSA law only.

Regardless of the written commitment and the information given to them by Jobcentre Plus staff, most existing "legacy" JSA claimants will only be required by law to show evidence of more than two job seeking activities per week.

1 October 2013

National Minimum Wage and Permitted Work earnings limit increase

The National Minimum Wage increases from £6.19 to £6.31 per hour from 1 October. The earnings limit for Higher Limit and Supported Permitted Work increases from £99.50 to £101.00 per week for ESA and new Housing Benefit claimants to reflect this. This change takes effect from 7 October 2013 for existing Housing Benefit claimants.

1 October 2013

In-Work Credit

No new claims to In-Work Credit will be accepted from lone parents who start work. People who claim before this cut-off date must have been in receipt of a qualifying benefit before 2 October 2012.

1 October 2013

Return to Work Credit

No new claims to Return to Work Credit will be accepted from people with illnesses or disabilities who start work from this date. People who claim before this cut-off date must have been in receipt of a qualifying benefit before 2 July 2013.

7 October 2013

Personal Independence Payment

Transitional arrangements for existing Disability Living Allowance were scheduled to be introduced from this date. The date has been put back to 28 October 2013 (see next page).

28 October 2013 Phased roll-out of Personal Independence Payment in East Anglia

From this date, existing Disability Living Allowance claimants in pilot areas (including IP postcodes in Suffolk) will be invited to claim PIP if:

- They report a change in their care or mobility needs or
- They have an existing fixed-term DLA award, due to expire on or after 17 March 2014 (DLA claimants with a current award ending before 17 March 2014 will be asked to complete a DLA renewal claim instead) or
- They are a young person receiving DLA who reaches the age of 16 on or after 7 October 2013. Young people receiving DLA under the Special Rules for terminal illness will remain on DLA until the end of their award period (or October 2015, whichever is earlier)

From 28 October 2013, existing DLA claimants in pilot areas will be able to make a claim to PIP if they want to. PIP and DLA cannot be paid at the same time. Making a PIP claim will bring their award of DLA to an end, regardless of whether the PIP claim is successful or not.

However, a person who claimed DLA before this date will not be able to claim Personal Independence Payment until the DLA claim has been decided.

Before the rules were amended, the effective date of these changes was 7 October 2013 and the changes applied countrywide.

28 October 2013 Mandatory reconsideration and direct lodgement of appeals

The appeals process will be revised for all benefits administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (this does not include Housing Benefit, Child Benefit and tax credits). When a claimant wishes to dispute an award or disallowance, they will be required to ask the DWP office responsible for the decision to look at it again (a “mandatory reconsideration”) before they are able to appeal to HM Courts and Tribunals Service. Until a mandatory reconsideration has taken place, the claimant has no right of appeal.

All benefit appeals will be made directly to HM Courts and Tribunals Service; they will not be made via the relevant DWP office

5 November 2013 Community Work Placements and Traineeships introduced for JSA claimants

Two new schemes have been introduced for JSA claimants, both of which are subject to lower level sanctions if the claimant gives up a place on the scheme or fails to attend without good reason or loses a place due to misconduct.

Community Work Placement – a scheme lasting up to 30 weeks for claimants whose barriers to employment are “lack of work history and/or lack of motivation.” It consists of a work placement, with supported job search of 4-10 hours per week, delivered by an external provider and lasting up to 26 weeks. The work placement must be “of community benefit.”

Traineeships – a scheme for claimants age 16-23 (or 16-24 if assessed as having learning difficulties) lasting up to 6 months, consisting of work preparation training, work experience and English and maths tuition where required. Traineeships are voluntary, but become mandatory once started and are subject to lower level sanctions if the claimant then fails to comply with requirements. Claimants undertaking the work experience element of a traineeship can only be sanctioned if they lose their place due to gross misconduct.

4 December 2013 Housing Benefit and Universal Credit size criteria

Following the Court of Appeal ruling on 15 May 2012, the regulations have been amended to allow an extra bedroom for a child who is entitled to the middle or high rate of the care component of DLA and is unable to share because of a disability. This applies to the “bedroom tax” and to Local Housing Allowance. The addition requirement that the child qualifies for DLA could impact on some families who have been entitled to additional Housing Benefit since the Court of Appeal ruling. Local authorities have been instructed to consider Discretionary Housing Payments in these cases.

An additional bedroom is allowed for the overnight carer of a joint tenant. Previously, this rule applied to the claimant and their partner only.

An approved foster carer under the age of 35 is no longer subject to the single room in shared accommodation rate of Local Housing Allowance if they have exclusive use of two or more rooms.

1 January 2014 Ending of restrictions on Romanian and Bulgarian nationals

A2 nationals (citizens of Romania and Bulgaria) have unrestricted access to the UK labour market from this date. They are no longer limited to “authorised work” and do not require a worker authorisation card in order to work in the UK. Also, from this date, Romanian and Bulgarian nationals have the same entitlement to benefits as other European Economic Area nationals. Romanian and Bulgarian work seekers no longer need to have worked in authorised work for 12 months before they are entitled to claim income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance.

1 January 2014 New residence requirement for income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance

For new claims to income-based JSA made on or after this date, claimants are required to have lived in the Common Travel Area (UK, Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands and Isle of Man) for at least three months before they can pass the Habitual Residence Test. Although designed to limit EEA migrants’ access to JSA, the new requirement also applies to British citizens returning from living abroad. A new Habitual Residence Test questionnaire has been rolled out to support this change, with more detailed questions designed to investigate evidence of seeking work prior to arrival in the UK and whether there are barriers to employment, such as limited English skills.

1 January 2014 New restrictions on EEA job seekers and former workers

From this date, regulations restrict the time an EEA national can be treated a job seeker to six months, unless they can provide “compelling evidence” they continue to seek work and have a genuine chance of being engaged.

Former workers, who were involuntarily unemployed and claimed JSA can only retain their worker status for six months if they worked for fewer than 12 months. If they worked for 12 months or more, they retain worker status for six months and longer if they can provide compelling evidence they continue to seek work and have a genuine chance of being engaged. EEA job seekers will be required to attend a “Genuine Prospect of Work” assessment.

March 2014

Employment and Support Allowance conversion process

The conversion process is scheduled to end. All existing claims to Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support claimed on the basis of incapacity for work should have come to an end by this date. All claimants should have been through the conversion process to Employment and Support Allowance. At the time of writing, we are aware of claimants still in receipt of SDA, who have yet to be converted.

1 March 2014

Guidance introduced for a minimum earnings threshold for EEA workers and former workers

New guidance has been issued, setting out a minimum earnings threshold to help decision makers determine whether previous or current work (or self-employment) by European Economic Area nationals is genuine and effective for the purposes of the Habitual Residence Test. The guidance states that an EEA national earning £149 per week for 3 or more months should be treated as in genuine and effective work.

There has been no change to the legislation - there is no earnings threshold in law. Workers (and self-employed people) earning under this threshold should be assessed using the broader conditions established by case law – hours of work, pattern of work, nature of employment contract etc. Detailed guidance, including a summary of case law, has been issued to decision makers.

1 April 2014

Restricted access to Council Tax reduction schemes for EEA job seekers

EEA job seekers and their family members are excluded from entitlement to Council Tax reduction starting from the year 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. This exclusion does not apply to EEA nationals who are entitled to income-based JSA. It does not apply to EEA nationals who retain their worker status, having been made involuntarily unemployed and claimed JSA or started vocational training.

1 April 2014

No entitlement to Housing Benefit for new EEA job seekers

EEA jobseekers and their family members are already excluded from Housing Benefit, unless they receive income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance. From 1 April 2014, EEA job seekers who have not worked in the UK will be unable to make a new claim to Housing Benefit, even if they are entitled to and receiving income-based JSA. This exclusion also applies to their family members.

This change does not apply to EEA nationals who retain their worker status, because they have been made involuntarily unemployed and have claimed JSA or started vocational training. It does not apply to people claiming JSA, who have the right to reside as the family member of a worker or self-employed EEA national.

EEA nationals who are entitled to both income-based JSA and Housing Benefit on 31 March 2014 will retain their entitlement to Housing Benefit, until there is a break in their JSA or Housing Benefit claim.

- 1 April 2014** **New entitlement condition for Maternity Allowance**
- Women who help out in their husband or civil partner's business on an unpaid basis may be entitled to 14 weeks of Maternity Allowance, if their expected week of childbirth falls on or after 27 July 2014.
- 1 April 2014** **End of the Mortgage Rescue Scheme**
- The extension to the Mortgage Rescue Scheme has come to an end and the scheme is not accepting new applications from the start of April 2014.
- 3 April 2014** **Zero-hours contracts**
- In response to a written Parliamentary question, Work and Pensions Minister Esther McVey stated that no sanction will be applied to jobseekers who refuse to apply for a vacancy with a zero-hours contract or to claimants who leave a job with a zero-hours contract voluntarily or lose such a job due to misconduct.
- 6 April 2014** **Mandatory reconsiderations for HMRC benefits and tax credits**
- Claimants wishing to appeal against a Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Guardian's Allowance or Working Tax Credit decision made on or after 6 April 2014, must first ask for a mandatory reconsideration. The dispute process for challenging a tax credit overpayment remains unchanged.
- 9 April 2014** **Removal of interpreting services for new jobseekers**
- The Jobcentre Plus will no longer be routinely providing interpreting services to new jobseekers at job centres. There will be an expectation that people looking for work should have a basic grasp of English. Interpreting services will still be provided to claimants deemed to be vulnerable. The restriction will not be applied to existing claimants, Welsh speakers, people with hearing or speech impairment or claimants who are subject to fraud investigations.
- From 28 April 2014, claimant's spoken English will be tested at job centres.
- 28 April 2014** **New requirements for jobseekers**
- New conditions are being phased in between 28 April and October 2014, including Day One Conditionality, a mandatory English language requirement, quarterly work search interviews and weekly work search reviews. Claimants will be expected to take steps to find work from the first day of their claim, including preparing a CV and registering on Universal Jobmatch. Claimants with English below Entry Level 2 may be required to attend training to improve their English language.
- There is no change in the law, so it is likely these requirements will be enforced by issuing Jobseeker's Directions.

28 April 2014

Work-related activity for lone parents

Lone parents claiming Income Support will be expected to attend Work-Focused Interviews if their youngest child is at least one year old. Lone parents whose youngest child is age three or four will be required to undertake Work-Related Activity. This must be flexible and tailored to the parent's needs. Claimants cannot be required to work or apply for jobs.

Sanctions apply to lone parents who do not attend and participate in Work-Focused Interviews. At the time of writing, there is no sanction regime for failure to undertake Work-Related Activity.

28 April 2014

Mandatory Intervention Regime and Community Work Placement for jobseekers

JSA claimants who have exited the Work Programme will be subject to a more intensive regime, designed to help them into employment. Depending on the assessed needs of the claimant, this will be either

Mandatory Intervention Regime (MIR) – *“An intensive offer of flexible and personalised adviser based support for up to six months, delivered by Jobcentre Plus through increased adviser interventions.”* This can include daily signing.

Community Work Placements (CWP) – *“A mandatory scheme delivered by providers where claimants participate in a work placement of community benefit for 30 hours a week, for up to six months, alongside additional provider-led supported jobsearch of between 4 and 10 hours per week.”* This will be delivered by external providers. At the time of writing, the result of the tendering process has not been made public.

19 June 2014

EEA workers who cease work due to pregnancy entitled to Income Support

The European Court of Justice ruled that EEA nationals with worker status are entitled to Income Support for up to 26 weeks if they stop work or stop seeking work due to the constraints of pregnancy. This applies if the EEA national was in work or retained worker status as a jobseeker *and* states at the outset of the Income Support claim that she intends to return to work within the 15 week period following the birth. It is not necessary to remain under contract of employment or to have a job to go to.

This ruling does not apply to self-employed EEA nationals or to women who cease work or work seeking for reasons other than the constraints of pregnancy.

1 July 2014

Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit for EEA jobseekers

EEA jobseekers will have to be resident in the UK for three months, before they are able to claim Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit. The regulations amending the existing “ordinary residence” test have yet to be published.

1 July 2014

Genuine Prospects of Work test for EEA jobseekers

EEA jobseekers who claimed on or after 1 January 2014 and who have been unemployed and claiming JSA for a “relevant period” will lose their EU right to reside in the UK, unless they provide compelling evidence that they are continuing to seek employment and that they have a genuine chance of being engaged. Jobcentre Plus guidance states that compelling evidence is:

- Reliable evidence that they have a genuine offer of a specific job, which will be genuine and effective work, due to start within 3 months and 1 day (which will extend entitlement until the job is due to start) **or**
- A change or circumstances which will give them genuine prospects of employment (which will extend entitlement by two months from the date of the change).

From 1 July 2014, this will be assessed at Jobcentre Plus offices using a Genuine Prospects of Work (GPOW) test.

1 July 2014

The “relevant period” for EEA jobseekers (see previous page)

For EEA jobseekers the relevant period is 182 days, minus any earlier periods of job seeking. Job seeking periods prior to 1 January 2014 are not counted.

For EEA nationals who retain their worker status while on JSA, the relevant period is 6 months.

EEA nationals who have been absent from the UK for a period of more than 12 months will be entitled to a fresh period of residence as a jobseeker. However, if the absence from the UK is for fewer than 12 months, a person who has previously exhausted their relevant period of job seeking will be required to provide, from the outset, compelling evidence that they have a genuine chance of being engaged.

14 July 2014

Rise in minimum pension age to 67

The Pensions Act 2014 comes into force on 14 July 2014 and brings forward the date at which both men and women are affected by the increase in minimum pension age. People born after 5 October 1954 but before 6 April 1960 will reach minimum pension age on their 66th birthday. People born after 5 March 1961 but before 6 April 1977 will reach minimum pension age on their 67th birthday.

For those born between 6 April 1960 and 5 March 1961 inclusive, pension age is linked to the date of birth.

18 July 2014

Supervised Jobsearch pilot scheme

The East Anglian district has been chosen as a pilot area for the Supervised Jobsearch scheme. Claimants age 18+, who are not taking part in the Work Programme, may be randomly selected to participate in the scheme. Participants are mandated to attend a jobcentre for up to 35 hours per week for 13 weeks, in order to receive support with interview preparation, creating a CV, applying for jobs and accessing training. Claimants who fail to participate without good reason will be subject to a lower level sanction. The regulations allow for the scheme to be outsourced to private contractors.

27 July 2014

Homeless jobseekers treated as available for work

A claimant who has recently become homeless and suffers a domestic emergency as a result must be treated as available for employment. They are to be treated as available for employment for as long as they take reasonable steps to find living accommodation and as long as is required to deal with the emergency.

27 October 2014 Increase in waiting days for Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance

Claimants are not entitled to JSA or ESA for the first seven days of a claim (called "waiting days") if the first waiting day falls on or after 27 October 2014. This is an increase from the previous three waiting day period. Waiting days do not apply when:

- The claim links (within 12 weeks) to a previous claim to JSA, Income Support, ESA, Incapacity Benefit or Carer's Allowance or
- The claimant is 16 or 17 and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance under the Severe Hardship rules

Hardship Payments cannot be made during the waiting day period. Short-Term Benefit Advances can be made to claimants within the waiting day period if they are in financial hardship. The payable amount of a Short-Term Benefit Advance will not include any days for which payment is not due, so the change to the waiting day rule will reduce the amount of money claimants receive when they are paid a Short-Term Benefit Advance.

October 2014 Pension Credit

Changes will be made to Pension Credit to include additional amounts for children or qualifying young people in education.

10 November 2014 Further restrictions on EEA jobseekers

From this date, the "relevant period" EEA nationals can retain the right to reside in the UK as jobseekers is reduced from 182 days (6 months) to 91 days.

EEA nationals who come to the UK to look for work must be resident for 3 months to satisfy the residence test before they are entitled to income-based JSA. They are then entitled to JSA for a relevant period of up to 91 days.

EEA jobseekers who had acquired the right to reside for another reason (for example, as a family member) and have been resident in the UK for 3 months or more, are entitled to income-based JSA for a relevant period of up to 91 days.

EEA who retain their worker status, remain entitled to JSA for a relevant period of up to 182 days.

In all instances, the relevant period may be extended if the claimant can provide compelling evidence that they are seeking employment and have a genuine chance of being engaged.

See 1 July 2014 for more information about the relevant period and genuine prospects of employment.

This change does not affect EEA jobseekers who have been in receipt of JSA since 31 December 2013.

2015 New debt collection company for DWP and HMRC

A new company - Integrated Debt Services Limited - jointly owned by the government and TDX Group, has been set up to recover debts owed to six government agencies, including the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Revenues and Customs. The contract will start at some point in early 2015.

February-April 2015 Universal Credit arrives in Suffolk

There is a “provisional planning assumption” that Universal Credit will be introduced in some areas of Suffolk from February 2015. The districts affected are covered by the following Jobcentre Plus offices -

- Forest Heath District (Jobcentre Plus offices in Bury St. Edmunds, Mildenhall and Newmarket)
- Suffolk Coastal District (Jobcentre Plus offices in Felixstowe, Leiston and Woodbridge)
- Waveney District (Jobcentre Plus offices in Beccles and Lowestoft)

In these areas, Universal Credit will only be available for new claims from some single jobseekers, if their personal circumstances are not too complicated. Existing claimants and people who make new claims to other benefits (including Income Support, income-based ESA, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit) will not be affected by the introduction of Universal Credit in 2015.

The government has published a time table of projections for the further expansion of Universal Credit.

1 March 2015 New provider for ESA Work Capability Assessment

Maximus Health and Human Services Ltd replaces Atos Healthcare, with a contract to deliver the Work Capability Assessment of Employment and Support Allowance for an initial period of three years.

1 April 2015 No entitlement to Council Tax Reduction for new EEA jobseekers

From this date, EEA nationals in receipt of income-based JSA, whose only right of residence is as a jobseeker, are not entitled to Council Tax Reduction. This change does not affect EEA nationals who are in receipt of a Council Tax Reduction on 31 March 2014, unless their income-based JSA claim comes to an end or they make a new application for a Council Tax Reduction.

1 April 2015 Local Welfare Assistance

The Local Government Finance Settlement does not include renewed funding for Local Welfare Assistance from 2015 onwards. The expectation is that local authorities will fund schemes from within their existing budgets. In a statement to the Commons on 18 December 2014, local government minister Kris Hopkins confirmed that, “*Local authorities will continue to be able to offer local welfare assistance from within existing budgets*” and that “*there is no additional money in this.*” The government has yet to respond to its consultation on local welfare assistance funding from 2015/16. The final settlement is expected in February 2015.

1 April 2015

Recovery of tax credit overpayments by DWP

From this date, the DWP has the power to recover tax credit overpayments, penalties and interest using the same methods that are available to recover benefit overpayments, including recovery from benefits and Direct Earnings Attachments.

30 June 2015

Independent Living Fund

The government is to press ahead with its plan to close the Independent Living Fund and devolve funding to local authorities, with national eligibility criteria. The original attempt to close the Fund in 2012 was put on hold following a Court of Appeal decision that the government had not given proper consideration to issues raised by the Equality Act.

21 September 2015 Restricting Winter Fuel Payments for people living abroad

People who live in a European country with an average winter temperature higher than that of the warmest part of the UK will no longer be entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment. Residents of Cyprus, France, Gibraltar, Greece, Malta, Portugal and Spain will be affected by this change.

October 2015

Personal Independence Payment

The main phase of reassessments begins for existing DLA claimants who live outside the initial pilot areas. From October 2015, claimants who reach the age of 16, report a change of circumstances or reach the end of their current DLA award will be asked to claim Personal Independence Payment instead.

Claimants who live in pilot (IP postcode) areas in Suffolk have been subject to these rules since 28 October 2013.

No claimant receiving an indefinite award of DLA will be reassessed until this date.

The original aim was to have contacted and started the reassessment process for all DLA claimants by 2018.

31 March 2016

Disability Living Allowance

All existing claims to Disability Living Allowance for people age 16 to 64 were originally scheduled to end by this date. This has now been rescheduled to 2018.

2017-2018

Housing Credit for pensioners

The Housing Credit, scheduled to be introduced to replace Housing Benefit for people who have reached Pension Credit age on October 2014, will not now be introduced until the 2017/2018 financial year at the earliest. This is subject to consultation with Local Authority Associations and other key stakeholders. The original plan was for Housing Credit to be administered by the Pension Service.

6 December 2018 Disability Living Allowance

The upper age at which Disability Living Allowance can be claimed will be changed to “pensionable age” rather than 65, to reflect the equalisation of pensionable ages for men and women. As Personal Independence Payment will have been introduced by this stage for all new claims, the change will be more relevant to the age at which Attendance Allowance can be claimed.

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Appendix (2)

Cases affected by Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy as at 31 Dec 14			
Council	Babergh	Ipswich	Mid-Suffolk
Working Age HA Cases	846	2477	578
HA 1 Bed Excess	142	354	140
HA 2 or more Bed Excess	24	48	19
Working Age LA Cases	925	3177	776
LA 1 Bed Excess	268	692	170
LA 2 or more Bed Excess	47	170	43
Total Working Age Social	1771	5654	1354
Total 1 Bed Excess	410	1046	310
Total 2 or more Bed Excess	71	218	62
Total affected	481	1264	372
Sick/Disabled HA Cases	405	1241	289
Sick/Disabled HA 1 Bed Excess	84	199	77
Sick/Disabled HA 2 Bed Excess	13	32	12
Sick/Disabled LA Cases	507	1739	456
Sick/Disabled LA 1 Bed Excess	159	386	100
Sick/Disabled LA 2 Bed Excess	27	109	24
Total Sick/Disabled Social	912	2980	745
Total Sick/Disabled 1 Bed Excess	243	585	177
Total Sick/Disabled 2 Bed Excess	40	141	36
Total Sick/Disabled Affected	283	726	213
% All HA affected	19.62%	16.23%	27.51%
% All LA affected	34.05%	27.13%	27.45%
% Social affected	27.16%	22.36%	27.47%
% Sick/Disabled HA affected	23.95%	18.61%	30.80%
% Sick/Disabled LA affected	36.69%	28.46%	27.19%
% Sick/Disabled Social affected	31.03%	24.36%	28.59%
% Affected who are Sick/Disabled	58.84%	57.44%	57.26%
% Social Tenants who are Sick/Disabled	51.50%	52.71%	55.02%

Appendix (2)

BDC	04-Mar-13	23-May-13	07-Nov-13	12-Dec-13	31-Dec-13	31-Jan-14	28-Feb-14	31-Mar-14	30-Apr-14	31-May-14	30-Jun-14
Working Age HA Cases	783	798	855	820	848	862	874	836	839	830	834
HA 1 Bed Excess	155	162	148	155	149	149	148	155	147	147	142
HA 2 or more Bed Excess	33	28	21	22	22	24	25	24	23	21	21
Working Age LA Cases	983	994	997	961	999	999	998	934	930	929	927
LA 1 Bed Excess	311	292	276	282	279	281	266	274	270	274	269
LA 2 or more Bed Excess	67	65	56	53	55	56	54	52	51	47	44
Total Working Age Social	1,766	1,792	1,852	1,781	1,847	1,861	1,872	1,770	1,769	1759	1761
Total 1 Bed Excess	466	454	424	437	428	430	414	429	417	421	411
Total 2 or more Bed Excess	100	93	77	75	77	80	79	76	74	68	65
Total affected	566	547	501	512	505	510	493	505	491	489	476
% HA 1 Bed Excess	19.80%	20.30%	17.31%	18.90%	17.57%	17.29%	16.93%	18.54%	17.52%	17.71%	17.03%
% HA 2 or more Bed Excess	4.21%	3.51%	2.46%	2.68%	2.59%	2.78%	2.86%	2.87%	2.74%	2.53%	2.52%
% LA 1 Bed Excess	31.64%	29.38%	27.68%	29.34%	27.93%	28.13%	26.65%	29.34%	29.03%	29.49%	29.02%
% LA 2 or more Bed Excess	6.82%	6.54%	5.62%	5.52%	5.51%	5.61%	5.41%	5.57%	5.48%	5.06%	4.75%
% Total 1 Bed Excess	26.39%	25.33%	22.89%	24.54%	23.17%	23.11%	22.12%	24.24%	23.57%	23.93%	23.34%
% Total 2 or more Bed Excess	5.66%	5.19%	4.16%	4.21%	4.17%	4.30%	4.22%	4.29%	4.18%	3.87%	3.69%
% Working Age Cases Affected	32.05%	30.52%	27.05%	28.75%	27.34%	27.40%	26.34%	28.53%	27.76%	27.80%	27.03%

BDC	31-Jul-14	31-Aug-14	30-Sep-14	31-Oct-14	30-Nov-14
Working Age HA Cases	843	849	843	845	845
HA 1 Bed Excess	142	141	147	149	144
HA 2 or more Bed Excess	21	23	22	21	23
Working Age LA Cases	929	953	944	939	927
LA 1 Bed Excess	265	267	265	262	269
LA 2 or more Bed Excess	44	44	45	45	42
Total Working Age Social	1,772	1,802	1,787	1,784	1,772
Total 1 Bed Excess	407	408	412	411	413
Total 2 or more Bed Excess	65	67	67	66	65
Total affected	472	475	479	477	478
% HA 1 Bed Excess	16.84%	16.61%	17.44%	17.63%	17.04%
% HA 2 or more Bed Excess	2.49%	2.71%	2.61%	2.49%	2.72%
% LA 1 Bed Excess	28.53%	28.02%	28.07%	27.90%	29.02%
% LA 2 or more Bed Excess	4.74%	4.62%	4.77%	4.79%	4.53%
% Total 1 Bed Excess	22.97%	22.64%	23.06%	23.04%	23.31%
% Total 2 or more Bed Excess	3.67%	3.72%	3.75%	3.70%	3.67%
% Working Age Cases Affected	26.64%	26.36%	26.80%	26.74%	26.98%

MSDC	04-Mar-13	23-May-13	07-Nov-13	12-Dec-13	31-Dec-13	31-Jan-14	28-Feb-14	31-Mar-14	30-Apr-14	31-May-14	30-Jun-14
Working Age HA Cases	523	545	545	564	564	565	560	568	568	579	570
HA 1 Bed Excess	117	128	134	139	136	134	138	142	138	141	136
HA 2 or more Bed Excess	22	20	18	20	21	20	19	19	18	18	18
Working Age LA Cases	794	787	898	886	802	799	794	764	768	762	767
LA 1 Bed Excess	229	193	178	171	173	174	178	181	174	171	169
LA 2 or more Bed Excess	41	46	44	50	50	52	50	54	51	45	46
Total Working Age Social	1,317	1,332	1,443	1,450	1,366	1,364	1,354	1,332	1,336	1,341	1,337
Total 1 Bed Excess	346	321	312	310	309	308	316	323	312	312	305
Total 2 or more Bed Excess	63	66	62	70	71	72	69	73	69	63	64
Total affected	409	387	374	380	380	380	385	396	381	375	369
% HA 1 Bed Excess	22.37%	23.49%	24.59%	24.65%	24.11%	23.72%	24.64%	25.00%	24.30%	24.35%	23.86%
% HA 2 or more Bed Excess	4.21%	3.67%	3.30%	3.55%	3.72%	3.54%	3.39%	3.35%	3.17%	3.11%	3.16%
% LA 1 Bed Excess	28.84%	24.52%	19.82%	19.30%	21.57%	21.78%	22.42%	23.69%	22.66%	22.44%	22.03%
% LA 2 or more Bed Excess	5.16%	5.84%	4.90%	5.64%	6.23%	6.51%	6.30%	7.07%	6.64%	5.91%	6.00%
% Total 1 Bed Excess	26.27%	24.10%	21.62%	21.38%	22.62%	22.58%	23.34%	24.25%	23.35%	23.27%	22.81%
% Total 2 or more Bed Excess	4.78%	4.95%	4.30%	4.83%	5.20%	5.28%	5.10%	5.48%	5.16%	4.70%	4.79%
% Working Age Cases Affected	31.06%	29.05%	25.92%	26.21%	27.82%	27.86%	28.43%	29.73%	28.52%	27.96%	27.60%

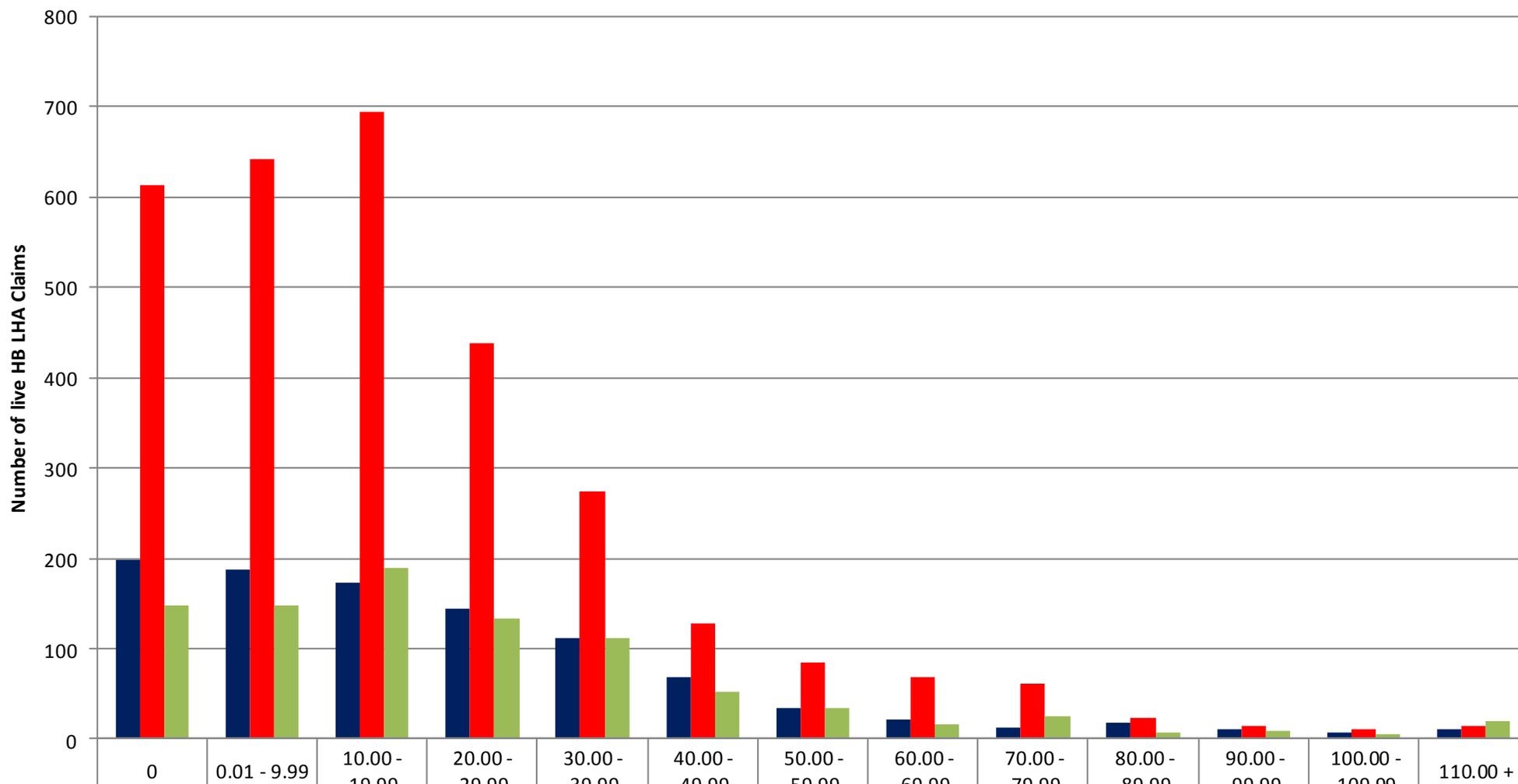
MSDC	31-Jul-14	31-Aug-14	30-Sep-14	31-Oct-14	30-Nov-14
Working Age HA Cases	579	585	584	585	576
HA 1 Bed Excess	135	138	139	142	141
HA 2 or more Bed Excess	17	19	19	20	19
Working Age LA Cases	774	785	778	768	767
LA 1 Bed Excess	166	168	167	165	166
LA 2 or more Bed Excess	47	46	45	42	44
Total Working Age Social	1,353	1,370	1,362	1,353	1,343
Total 1 Bed Excess	301	306	306	307	307
Total 2 or more Bed Excess	64	65	64	62	63
Total affected	365	371	370	369	370
% HA 1 Bed Excess	23.32%	23.59%	23.80%	24.27%	24.48%
% HA 2 or more Bed Excess	2.94%	3.25%	3.25%	3.42%	3.30%
% LA 1 Bed Excess	21.45%	21.40%	21.47%	21.48%	21.64%
% LA 2 or more Bed Excess	6.07%	5.86%	5.78%	5.47%	5.74%
% Total 1 Bed Excess	22.25%	22.34%	22.47%	22.69%	22.86%
% Total 2 or more Bed Excess	4.73%	4.74%	4.70%	4.58%	4.69%
% Working Age Cases Affected	26.98%	27.08%	27.17%	27.27%	27.55%

Appendix (3)

SRP Capping Cases as at 18th September 2013				
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	6	28	4.67	£52.96
MSDC	7	37	5.29	£66.86
SRP Capping Cases as at 1st October 2013				
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	7	33	4.71	£47.74
MSDC	7	37	5.29	£64.54
SRP Capping Cases as at 1st November 2013				
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	13	58	4.46	£53.75
MSDC	8	43	5.38	£65.11
SRP Capping Cases as at 1st December 2013				
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	12	49	4.08	£40.50
MSDC	8	43	5.38	£65.11
SRP Capping Cases as at 1st January 2014				
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	13	56	4.31	£44.94
MSDC	8	43	5.38	£65.11
SRP Capping Cases as at 1st February 2014				
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	13	57	4.38	£44.94
MSDC	10	52	5.20	£56.79
SRP Capping Cases as at 1st March 2014				
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	12	53	4.42	£43.95
MSDC	9	47	5.22	£59.90
SRP Capping Cases as at 1st April 2014				
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	12	53	4.42	£44.79
MSDC	10	52	5.20	£54.99

SRP Capping Cases as at 1st May 2014				
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	11	52	4.73	£47.01
MSDC	10	52	5.20	£54.99
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	10	49	4.90	£52.74
MSDC	10	52	5.20	£56.38
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	10	43	4.30	£44.30
MSDC	10	50	5.00	£46.87
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	10	47	4.70	£43.13
MSDC	10	49	4.90	£44.22
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	11	52	4.73	£41.12
MSDC	10	48	4.80	£44.22
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	11	53	4.82	£46.67
MSDC	12	58	4.83	£49.20
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	14	67	4.79	£38.68
MSDC	15	72	4.80	£52.61
Council	No Cases	No Children	Avg Child per case	Avg Cap
BDC	13	61	4.69	£36.58
MSDC	11	68	6.18	£50.70

Number of LHA claims with weekly shortfall in £ between LHA and actual Rent 30 Nov 2014



■ BDC	199	187	174	144	111	68	35	22	12	18	10	7	11
■ IBC	613	642	694	438	274	128	85	69	61	23	14	11	15
■ MSDC	147	148	189	134	112	53	35	17	26	8	9	6	20