

Raise Benefit Bulletin



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What we have seen

Household Support Fund via local authorities

The Household Support Fund was launched by the government in October 2021 and will be available until March 2022. It is intended to help vulnerable households who have been impacted by Covid-19 with essential costs such as food, energy bills, water bills and other essentials over the winter. Help with housing costs may also be available in cases of emergency. 50% of the money is due to be allocated to people with children.

Post Office card account customers to receive letters about their closure

The Department for Work and Pensions has started sending letters to customers who are receiving benefits or pensions payments via their Post Office card account (POCa). This is to inform them the POca service is closing and asking for their bank account details so their benefits and pensions can be paid into their bank account.

Those without a bank account, will automatically be moved to the new system called the new Payment Exception Service (PES) by Summer 2022. This will deliver benefits using a digital voucher. People can choose whether they receive the voucher via a text message, an email or a re-useable plastic card.

Those moved over to the new PES can continue to use the Post Office to collect their money or can access their money from PayPoint outlets.

There is a dedicated DWP customer service centre helpline for those who need help and guidance. Telephone: 0800 085 7133 Textphone: 0800 085 7146

News from our Universal Credit and Technical Lead Helen Oliver

We are identifying clients who are missing certain elements in their UC. Elements such as Housing costs increases due to bedroom needs or they have been awarded additional benefits (for example PIP – Personal Independence Payment or DLA – Disability Living Allowance) bringing further entitlement to UC elements (such as Carer or disabled child elements).

UC are being notified and as a rule the elements are being awarded from the Assessment Period in which it is reported by the claimant or their adviser. However in lots of cases these elements need backdating retrospectively as they are considered “late notifications” and a decision has to be made by a different team. These appear to be taking a very long time and we would urge claimants to be vigilant in pursuing these elements.

We are finding that due to the delays (sometimes up to 6 months) clients who have a SDP – Severe Disability Premium transitional protection element in their UC are having this reduced when a change is made that would increase their usual UC payment. The rules are complex and we would urge anyone with a SDP transitional protection element in their UC award to keep an eye on their amount and be aware of reductions in their payment (although some reductions in their transitional protection element will be correct as such elements will erode naturally over time).

Case Study

Client A

Client situation

The Client lives with his wife and is in receipt of ESA (Employment Support Allowance) and under occupies the property by 2 bedrooms, so is subject to the bedroom tax.

How did we help?

We assisted him with a claim for PIP (Personal Independence Payment) due to his numerous health conditions, including poor mental health and a history of self harming.

What were the results?

His initial claim was refused and he only scored 6 points for Daily Living element of PIP. We requested a Mandatory Reconsideration of this request, which after a lengthy delay was overturned and an award of Enhanced Rate Daily Living element was given (12 points scored). This was backdated to January 2021 and has resulted in back pay of £5050 and a weekly entitlement of £89.15

There are also subsequent benefits that our client is now eligible for, such as Carers Allowance and an overnight carer room exemption to help with the bedroom tax.

Client said 'I am delighted with the result thank you so much for all your help and support, it's going to make a real difference'

Client B

Client situation

Client was in debt due to covid. She was in work but then furloughed off and on over 18 months. The client approached Raise for assistance in managing her debts.

How did we help?

Client was provided advice by Caseworker Rachael West. I made an application to the United Utilities Trust Fund to have the clients water arrears written off.

What were the results?

My application was successful and the amount of £583.79 was written off for the client.

News from Raise

Raise Enable Employment Support

Do you live in Merseyside?

Are you currently unemployed?

If the answer to both of these is YES, you qualify for our **free bitesize workshops** where you can meet like-minded people online, who just like you, are looking to find employment in 2022.

The 2 to 3 hour sessions that we have planned are:

Achieve your career goals - Understand your hopes & career aspirations through a programme of support via our New Horizons and Building Better Opportunities initiatives – guidance to help making your dream job a reality (March 2nd 10am – 13:00pm) Ongoing session - other dates available.

CV workshop – learn how to successfully put together a CV that will impress any employer! (March 9th 10am – 13:00pm) Ongoing session - other dates available.

How to effectively complete **online job applications** & the best ways to get feedback - (March 16th 10am – 13:00pm) Ongoing session - other dates available.

Interviews & resilience – learn how to be successful at virtual and face to face interviews (March 23rd 10 am – 13:00pm) Ongoing session - other dates available.

We deliver these sessions in a fun and engaging way, so everyone can relax and enjoy exploring ideas about the best ways to find your ideal career. Bored searching job websites? Join us on this interactive online course to grow your network and meet new people who can support you to help build a new career and consider alternative ways to find work. We understand it is not always easy job-hunting by yourself, so these fun online sessions are an opportunity to meet like-minded people who want to take confident steps towards securing employment in 2022.

Please note this is a rolling programme of support, so these sessions are available on a constant basis – missed a session? Can't make that date? Tell us and we can support you at the next available session throughout 2022.

You will need access to a laptop / tablet / phone, so that you can use the Microsoft Teams app for these online sessions – never used this before? Let us know and we can show you how.

The course is delivered by staff at Raise who have over 30 years combined experience of delivering support to people, so we're really keen to support anyone who may just need that little extra bit of guidance to launch their career in 2022!

To register please contact the Enable team at Raise on 0151 459 1556 (choose option 4) or email us at enable@raiseadvice.org.uk **Feedback on the courses, Karen Says**

"I've really enjoyed this session. I was nervous as it was my first time on a Zoom call. But everybody put me at ease. I liked the way everyone bounced off each other and gave each other tips and advice. My favourite part was just listening to other people's journeys and how they'll achieve it in the future!"

More from the Enable Team

We are hoping to run outreach community-based employment support at various locations very soon, more details will follow when we have confirmed venues, days and times.

We are ready to take referrals to the Enable Projects – we can help unemployed clients through Building Better Opportunities or New Horizons projects, this includes access to free training and dedicated support from one of our team.

We can also help employed people (working for small employers with less than 250 staff).

We can help people to access free training delivered by the Women's Organisation. Here's the courses that are running in March if any clients/tenants are interested contact Enable@raiseadvice.org.uk 0151 459 1556 option 4. These courses are open to men and women who live within the Liverpool City Region aged 18 – 65. You will need to provide proof of employment to sign up, so payslip or contract of employment, plus ID (birth certificate or passport) and proof of address dated within last 3 months.

Course	Time	Dates
Women on Boards	3pm- 4.30pm	1st March
Are you ready to start your social enterprise?	11.30am -12.30pm	4th March
Building Resilience in the Third Sector	10am - 1pm	8th March
Women in Leadership Skills	4.30pm - 6.30pm	9th March
Managing a project	3pm - 5pm	10th March
Are you ready to start a business?	4.30pm -5.30pm	7th March
Get Started with Switch On and Learn	10am - 11am	11th March
Women in Leadership Skills	4.30pm - 6.30pm	16th March
Wellbeing in the Workplace	2pm - 4pm	22nd March
Women in Leadership Skills	4.30pm - 6.30pm	23rd March
Start your Sustainable Business	2pm - 3pm	24th March
Are you ready to start your Business?	12pm - 1pm	28th March
Unconscious Bias	10am - 12.30pm	Session 1 24th March, Session 2 31st March, Session 3 7th April
Stepping into Management	10am - 12.30pm	Session 1 30th March, Session

A day in the life of a University Student on Placement with Raise

Hi, my name is Nicole Mason, and I am a mature student from Edge Hill University in Ormskirk. I am studying Mental Health Nursing and Social Work. It is an Integrated Masters and I am currently in the second year of a four year course. My social work placement is with Raise and I am really enjoying it so much.

My main responsibilities are helping people with applications for PIP and Universal Credit. This is conducted over the telephone by a prearranged appointment. The call can last two hours and then involves using in-house systems to record the application, which is then sent to the DWP. I also ask people about their benefits to ensure our Welfare Benefits Advisers can check if they are on the correct benefits. I call local councils to ensure that this information is correct.

I have also been on two training courses with Liverpool Child Safeguarding Partnership (LSCP), and they were Domestic Abuse Awareness and Working Together To Safeguard Children and I have more of these courses in the future. I have been to the Unity Theatre for a training event on Children and Parental Incarceration: Eight Hours There and Back. It was a play about the experiences children endure when a parent goes to prison. It made me reflect considerably.

I have also played a part in helping someone who has mental health problems, by arranging for a charity to provide her with a fridge. We provided food vouchers, but she did not have a fridge to put the food in and I really wanted to help her. I am nearly halfway through this placement and I could not have asked for a better placement. All the staff are very welcoming and have gone out of their way to help me on many occasions and I feel part of the team.

News from Rightsnet

The National Housing Federation (NHF) has expressed concern about the DWP's decision to require landlord verification of all 2022 rent changes on the universal credit portal.

The NHF says -

'We are currently seeking further clarification on this year's process and will update members as and when we receive more information from the DWP. The NHF will continue to make the case for a long term, practical and sustainable solution to annual rent changes within the universal credit system and the DWP have committed to addressing this through their current sector engagement channels.' [Read more here](#)

Not-for-profit specialist advice sector facing £17.5 million funding deficit in 2022/2023

New Access to Justice Foundation (ATJF) research finds that funding deficit will result in almost 37,000 vulnerable people losing access to specialist advice.

'Depending on the area of law, access to specialist advice can save the government and public sector in excess of £8,000 per person, which could add a cost to society of well in excess of £295 million - for the sake of an investment of just £17.5 million. Even if this deficit is closed, the sector will remain significantly under-resourced and unable to meet the demands for its services. Specialist advice providers are already having to turn away thousands of people each week who are in desperate need of their services, creating a massive cost burden for society and significant harm for those individuals.' [Read more here](#)

News from Housing Systems

Discretionary help for those have difficulty paying their Council Tax Bill

Every Local Authority has to have an exceptional hardship fund. This is a statutory fund to alleviate hardship by reducing the Council Tax bill in exceptional cases. It is financed by the Local Authority themselves. These funds are not always very well advertised and awareness of them is low. Where awarded, the claimant will not receive a cash payment; instead it is an adjustment to their Council Tax Bill and can reduce the bill to zero.

[Read more here](#)

Raise Website & Social Media

Raise has a website! You can find us at www.raiseadvice.org.uk where you can find all the relevant information about Raise. We will also be publishing our monthly bulletin on our new site, however if you prefer a PDF copy, let us know and we can arrange it.

Raise Socials. Give us a follow and share on the links below.

[Raise Advice | LinkedIn](#)

[@RaiseAdvice | Instagram](#)

[@RaiseAdvice | Twitter](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/RaiseAdvice>

Further support, information and training

Find all **Raise Benefit Bulletins** on our website <https://www.raiseadvice.org.uk/>

CPAG produce useful updates for professional in [Welfare Rights Bulletin](#). You can also sign up to receive the paper version at a cost.

The **DWP** produce useful items for professionals in [Touchbase](#): DWP news about work, working-age benefits, pensions and services.

Newcastle Welfare Rights provide [benefit bulletins](#) for professionals.

Housing systems also provide an [newsletters](#) for Housing Association professionals.

Citizens Advice produce useful updates via [Advisor](#).

About Raise Advice

We are a charity covering Liverpool and the surrounding areas. We receive funding from Registered Social Landlords to provide welfare rights, debt and financial capability advice to their tenants. To make a referral please visit our [Referral Portal](#)

About Raise Training

We have provided Welfare Rights training to Housing Associations since 2008. Please see our [website](#) for a list of training available. Our training is written with Housing Association tenants in mind and we use our clients to inform the content of all our training material. All of our training can be tailored to meet the learning requirements of your staff. If you wish to speak to us about bespoke training, please email us at training@raiseadvice.org.uk