

Raise Benefit Bulletin

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What we have seen

Immediate help and support for those fleeing the invasion in Ukraine

The DWP has put in place emergency regulations to enable those who come to the UK from Ukraine, due to the Russian invasion, to access Universal Credit and employment support on entry. They may also be eligible for other benefits if they meet the criteria for these, such as; Housing Benefit, Pension Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance, Child Disability Living Allowance and Carers Allowance. The DWP will have interpreters to support phone claims and work coaches to support online applications, as well as additional face to face employment support and benefits advice.

Spring Budget Statement

The Chancellor announced the following;

Changes to national insurance contributions (NICs) that will see a typical employee saving over £330 a year from 6 July 2022. However, planned increases to NIC rates, announced last September, will continue from 6 April 2022. Rates will rise by 1.25 percentage points.

Workers will see the basic rate of income tax fall by 1 percentage point from 20% to 19% from April 2024. This tax rate is currently paid on earnings between £12,571 and £50,270 a year. This means someone earning £25,000 a year will pay roughly £125 a year less in income tax.

A temporary UK-wide 12-month cut to duty on petrol and diesel of 5p a litre.

An additional £500 million will be put into the 'Household Support Fund' from April.

News from our Universal Credit and Technical Lead Helen Oliver

Some UC Claimants will have an additional payment in their UC award called Severe Disability Premium Transition Payment (SDP TP). This is because at the point of moving to UC they were entitled to the same premium in their legacy benefit and the DWP decided to protect these claimants by giving them an SDP TP payment. This means they wouldn't lose out on this money when they changed to UC.

However

SDP TP is not permanent and will be eroded over time, i.e. if a claimant's UC is due to increase for whatever reason e.g. a rent increase, April uprating, additional premium eligibility then their overall UC won't increase and their SDP TP payment will be reduced until such a time as it has been eroded away completely.

Some errors are occurring due to DWP decision making taking so long and people are seeing their SDP TP reduced incorrectly.

The rules can be complex and we would ask clients who have any SDP TP in their UC to be vigilant and seek advice.

Case Study

Client A – Welfare Benefits Team

Client situation

The Client had multiple health conditions and needed support to apply for PIP. The clients previously had no recourse to public funds.

How did we help?

We supported her to apply for PIP which was initially unsuccessful only scoring 6 points for the daily living element. We supported the client with a Mandatory Reconsideration request and she was awarded Enhanced rate of the daily living element of PIP. There are also subsequent benefits that the client was now eligible for, such as, Carers Allowance and an overnight carer room exemption to help with the bedroom tax. We supported the client to apply for these additional benefits. However, when we supported the client to claim Carers Allowance this was refused. We provided proof of residency via a Residence Permit however the DWP did not accept the proof provided. This was ongoing for 14 months acting on the client's behalf. We made a complaint and eventually the proof was accepted and Carers Allowance was awarded and backdated

What were the results?

This resulted in a maximisation of their income reducing the burden of financial hardship. The PIP was backdated and the clients received back pay of £5050 and an additional weekly payment of £89.15 per week. They also now have a payment of Carers Allowance and the full rent is covered due to the overnight carer room exemption that is now in place.

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 – Enable Team

Client situation

The client got involved with the project via Plus Dane Housing, and wanted to support people who needed help and use their life experiences in order to do this. They were hoping to get involved in some financial work for Raise in an administration capacity as they were studying part-time for an accountancy qualification, but needed first hand industry experience of using these skills. They had been on an employment support programme with Plus Dane but felt they were now ready to go to the next level by enrolling on a programme of employment support with New Horizons

How did we help?

They were involved with helping Raise's clients by contacting local boroughs and councils to follow up enquiries. They also supported the organisation with some finance tasks. The most challenging of these was analysing phone patterns and engagement calls caseworkers at Raise made in order to identify emerging patterns of call duration and feed those back in the form of a graphical analysis to the senior management team. They worked with Raise's Finance Officer to process incoming invoices in accordance with Raise's financial procedures. They then switched over to working with the general volunteer team to support caseworkers with their ongoing cases via a variety of administrative tasks.

Throughout all of this time they received one-to-one support from the employment coach at Raise – this gave them vital insight into how they might better structure their CV in order to present their work history and skill set in a more professional manner so that they might attract offers of employment.

What were the results?

The difference New Horizons made for the client was them finding part time employment in the finance field. They are now Head of Finance at Signature Aftercare.

Client said 'This was a position I could only dream of doing 6 months ago. Participating in New Horizons has given me the confidence to apply for the type of jobs that I believe a person with my skillset should be going for.'

Raise Enable Employment Support

The Enable Team are still looking for referrals from clients who require support with job search, applying for jobs, and finding suitable training to enhance their career and CV. They are running Shine Interview sessions. [Click here for more information](#) If you have any clients who are interested please send details over to our admin team of Jamie, Aidas and Adam on Enable@raiseadvice.org.uk

To see more courses available [Training Courses - Raise Advice](#)

Raise Achievements, Successes and Client Feedback

(Helen Oliver – Benefits Technical Lead) I've been dealing with a Housing Benefits (HB) appeal for approximately 18 months now. The client had fled their property due to fear of violence and claimed HB elsewhere. He retained the tenancy as his main home but no HB was paid for some time and rent arrears reached around £7000 and the client was due to be evicted. Last year our appeal was partially successful with around £4500 HB being paid to the housing association, however I continued with the remainder of the appeal which was also successful and the council have paid a further lump sum of £2700 bringing total arrears of HB paid £7619.

(Mike Summers – Welfare Benefits Adviser) I supported a client to successfully claim Employment Support Allowance and she was awarded the support group element. I am also supporting her to appeal her PIP decision. " **thank you so much for all you've done for me. Your team is great and I can sleep at night.**"

Debt and Money Advice Team

(Christine Brookfield - Money Advice Caseworker) I supported a client to apply for a Debt Relief Order (DRO) as they were in financial hardship and couldn't afford to pay their debts. That meant they didn't have to pay certain kinds of debt for a specified period (usually 12 months). At the end of the DRO period, the debts included in it will be written off. **'Thankyou for your support at a time I was so vulnerable you walked me through it and I want to again thank you'**

(Diane Crompton – Advice Assistant) Just did a quick tot up on the recent awards in grants gained. I have 7 DRO fees, and 7 debt reductions via United Utilities totalling £5442.49 and a further £350.00 from another small charity to help clear some rent arrears.

Enable Team

(Justina James - Employment and skills advisor & ENABLE team leader) After attending employability sessions with Phil & Justina

"I had my interview for maths and English with Donna Smith at B Skills. I'm enrolled on the next course which starts in April. Thanks Karen"

After having a mock interview for NHS bank admin post.

"YES!!! I got it. Thank you for all the help. I have a made a note off all the questions they asked so I can share with you.

After securing a free tablet for a Torus tenant, so she can access some online courses, so she can boost her self-esteem and confidence, the tablet just happened to coincide with her birthday.

"Hi Justina aww thanks so much for my birthday message and assessment. That is wonderful news thanks ☺," Louise.

News from Housing Systems

Claimants who were underpaid ESA on transfer from incapacity benefits may have also been underpaid Housing Benefit.

DWP is now looking at whether these claimants were underpaid HB as a result of the error - as if the ESA had been in place, they would have been entitled to passported HB at the maximum rate. Local Authorities will be notified of these cases between 14-18th March and are expected to pay any arrears due by 30th June. [Read more here](#)

Lack of support for low-income families in Spring Statement will push 1.3 million families pushed into absolute poverty next year.

The Resolution Foundation says;

'... faced with an unprecedented squeeze on family's household finances and a significant boost to the public finances, the Chancellor opted for a big but poorly targeted policy package focused on partially offsetting some of the big tax rises he'd previously announced, rather than on supporting those families hit hardest by the cost of living crisis.' [Read more here](#)

News from Rightsnet

DWP launches campaign aimed at 'encouraging' tax credit claimants to check if they might be financially better off on universal credit

The DWP advises that the new campaign will be promoted through digital, social and radio advertising, and as part of the tax credit renewals process. It highlights that people on tax credits will be moved to universal credit 'by 2024'. They do warn that those choosing to apply sooner should get independent Specialist advice before they do so. [Read more here](#)

News from CPAG

Second benefits cut is unthinkable - organisations call for minimum 7% benefits rise

Benefits must keep pace with the rising cost of living. Child Poverty Action Group joins forces with over 50 organisations to call for benefits to be increased by at least 7 per cent in April to match inflation. [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