

# Benefit Matters

Our newsletter for advisers in Royal Greenwich

Directorate of Finance

## Changes for mixed age couples

*Couples set to lose up to £7,000 a year under new rules excluding them from claiming Pension Credit and pension-age Housing Benefit from 15<sup>th</sup> May*

In January, the government announced that pensioners with partners under state pension age will no longer be able to make new claims for Pension Credit (PC) and pension-age related Housing Benefit (HB) from 15 May 2019 – they will have to claim Universal Credit (UC) as a couple instead and will be subject to in-work conditionality.

State pension age is currently 65 and is increasing to 66 by November 2020. (You can use [GOV.UK's calculator](#) to find out when a person will reach state pension age). Currently, pensioners can claim Pension Credit and pension-age related HB regardless of the age of their partner. However, the new section 4(1A) of the State Pension Credit Act 2002 effectively excludes pensioners in mixed age couples from entitlement from 15 May, meaning that they will have to wait until their partner also reaches pension age before they can claim.

The couple rate for a couple on PC is £255.25 compared to the weekly Universal Credit equivalent of £115.13 - representing a loss of over £140 a week or over £7,000 a year.

Existing claimants who were already entitled to either PC or HB or both on 14 May can continue

receiving them after 15 May as long as they remain claiming continuously as part of the same mixed age couple.

**Note:** PC and HB for pensioners can still be backdated for 3 months (they don't have to demonstrate good cause), so effectively this means that that new claims can be made up to 13 August 2019 and backdated to before 15 May when the rules change, subject to the claimant being entitled for the earlier period.

### Changes that WILL require a Universal Credit claim on or after 15 May:

- Single pensioner on PC and HB who forms a couple with someone below pension age – HB and PC will end.
- Couple receiving PC and HB before 15 May, partner starts work on a temporary contract. His earnings lift them off both PC and HB so entitlement ends. When the job ends in August 2019, they are unable to requalify for pension-age HB and PC as there has been a break in entitlement so they will have to claim UC instead.
- Couples who separate, claim benefits separately and then get back together.

*Continued on next page*

#### Advisers Advice Line

020 8921 6376

E: [wrs.ce@greenwich.gov.uk](mailto:wrs.ce@greenwich.gov.uk)

Weekdays: office hours

#### Public Advice Line

020 8921 6375

Textphone

18001 020 8921 6375

Mon, Wed, Thurs:

10am – 1pm

# Benefit changes for mixed age couples

*Continued from front page*

## Changes of circumstances that WON'T require a Universal Credit claim:

Examples include:

- Mixed age couples receiving both PC and HB before 15 May and then moving to a different borough. They can still make a new HB claim because they were entitled to PC before 15 May and are still entitled to it.
- Couple claiming both PC and HB, partner starts work, their earnings mean they no longer qualify for PC, but are low enough for HB to continue. The job ends in August 2019, but they can reclaim PC because they remained on pension-age related HB.

The DWP have issued new guidance and written to mixed age couples currently receiving HB and/or PC notifying about the changes. The new HB Guidance [A3/2019](#) is available on GOV.UK

The rule change has been met with concern by national welfare organisations who fear that this will increase the numbers of pensioners in poverty. Caroline Abrahams, (Age UK, Charity Director),

describes the change as a “substantial stealth cut” which could have a devastating impact on the health and wellbeing of older people. Their response is available [here](#):

We are urging all organisations working with residents in this situation to encourage them to claim Pension Credit and pension-age Housing Benefit before 15 May while they still can. If you need advice about a family you are working with, please contact our Advisers Advice Line (see front cover). Alternatively, residents can contact our Public Advice Line direct.

## Further reading

- New regulations – [SI.No 37/2019](#)  
[www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/37/pdfs/ukxi\\_20190037\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/37/pdfs/ukxi_20190037_en.pdf)
- Decision Maker's Guide - [Memo DMG 01/19](#)  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/779701/dmg1-19.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779701/dmg1-19.pdf)

# Other benefit changes for older people

## Increase in state pension age – impact on age-related benefits

The age limit for claiming age-related benefits such as State Pension, Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and Winter Fuel Payments is changing. These benefits are linked to pension age which reached 65 for women in 2018. Further changes will see pension age rising to 66, 67 and 68 for both men and women by 2023.

Given these changes, claimants wishing to claim pension age related benefits will have to check when they will reach state pension age – they can do so via [GOV.UK's online calculator](#).

## Pension Credit includes amounts for children

The Pension Credit rules have been amended to provide for the inclusion of child additions in Pension Credit awards from 1 February 2019 for pensioners who are responsible for dependent children or young people. The changes are in line with the government's plans to eventually abolish tax credits and replace it with Universal Credit (UC). However, given that UC is a benefit for people of working age, it was necessary to have an alternative for older people on low incomes with children.

In order to qualify for a child addition in Pension Credit, the claimant must satisfy the following basic rules:

- the child or young person must 'normally' live with them; and
- they cannot have an existing award of Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit. They will also be excluded during periods when they are 'treated as' having entitlement to tax credits – such as during the renewal period.

# Universal Credit Update

## Two Child Limit

Amber Rudd announced on 11 January that the government had decided to scrap plans to retrospectively introduce the two child limit to Universal Credit (UC) families with a third or subsequent child or children born before 6 April 2017 (the date UC was introduced). The [Universal Credit \(Restriction on Amounts for Children and Qualifying Young Persons\) \(Transitional Provisions\) Amendment Regulations 2019](#) now provides for families in this position to continue receiving child elements for all children born before that date. This welcome change generally aligns the UC two child rules with tax credits. From 1 February 2019, families with two or more children can no longer make new claims for legacy benefits and must claim Universal Credit instead.

## Managed Migration Pilot

In a further announcement made on 11 January, Amber Rudd also confirmed that the government would be changing previous plans to manage migrate all legacy claimants to Universal Credit. Managed migration is the process of moving existing claimants of the six 'legacy' benefits that UC is replacing to UC. At some stage these claimants will be told that they have to claim UC even though their circumstances have not changed. The timescales have already changed several times. There will now be a one-year pilot which will include up to 10,000 claimants, starting in July 2019 for claimants living in Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

In a [written statement](#) to the House of Commons on 12 March, Amber Rudd confirmed that claimants will not have their benefits stopped during the pilot and help will be available to access discretionary payments. The intention is to “effectively assist claimants onto Universal Credit” and “develop processes to deliver that help”, particularly for vulnerable and harder to reach claimants.

The government will use its findings from the pilot to learn how to best facilitate the transition to UC, before returning to Parliament with the legislation which will be needed before extending managed migration. The migration process is still expected to be completed by December 2023.

## High Court rules that DWP's method of assessing earnings under UC is unlawful

A High Court ruling made on 11 January found in favour of 4 single mothers. The case was brought by Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) and relates to the way that earnings from employment are treated and assessed during monthly assessment periods.

UC is paid monthly and is assessed based on the income actually received by the claimant during their monthly assessment period. Problems arise for example, where a claimant gets paid four weekly as there will be at least one assessment period in which they are paid twice and then none in the next one. Because UC takes into account earnings actually received during an assessment period, rather than the payment period covered, claimants in this situation sometimes find that UC entitlement ends because their earnings are too high. The High Court found that the DWP's interpretation of UC regulations and their method of assessing earned income was unlawful, their calculation methods leading to “nonsensical decisions” which were causing “severe cash-flow problems” for claimants. The judgement confirmed that wages should be allocated to the month in which they are earned, rather than to the assessment period in which they are received. See the judgement [\[2019\] EWHC 23 \(Admin\)](#) for full details and a [report](#) from the law firm representing the appellants for a summary.

The DWP has not made any public statement in response to the judgment, but at a further hearing on 26 February, the High Court refused their application for leave to appeal. The DWP had until Wednesday, 20 March to apply directly to the Court of Appeal for permission to appeal. We will keep you updated of developments. It is unclear how the DWP propose to calculate entitlement when claimants are paid twice in the same assessment period – currently claims are being assessed in the same way as before.

Further reading

[Child Poverty Action Group](#)

[Low Income Tax Reform Group](#)

## New gateway condition for claimants receiving severe disability premium

Some disabled people claiming qualifying income-based benefits, such as Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance can receive an extra £65.85 a week in their benefits if they meet certain criteria. Universal Credit (UC) doesn't include a similar premium, so claimants in this position stood to be significantly worse off on UC.

The government has introduced a new gateway condition to UC from 16 January 2019 which prevents claimants who are (or were recently) receiving a severe disability premium with an existing benefit from claiming (or naturally migrating to) UC. They will be able to remain on and make new claims for legacy benefits until they are managed migrated to UC, when they will be entitled to receive transitional protection. SDP is not always included automatically, so anyone on a qualifying disability benefit should get advice.

This topic was explored in more detail in the [January 2019](#) and [October 2018](#) issues of 'Benefit Matters' – click on the links to read more.

## Consultation on the claimant commitment

Benefits, like UC have work-related requirements which are usually included in the claimant commitment which is agreed with the work coach at the jobcentre at the start of the claim. Claimants who fail to meet these requirements may be imposed with a benefit sanction. Work coaches should make reasonable adjustments to reflect claimants' specific needs or circumstances (such as caring responsibilities or ill health/disability).

The Social Security Advisory Committee has launched a consultation on how effective the claimant commitment is in terms of supporting UC claimants into work or progressing in work and in helping to build trust in the welfare system. **The deadline for responses is Tuesday 16 August at 11pm.** Visit [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK) for more information, to view the consultation paper and to find out how to respond.

## Getting the right support with Universal Credit claims

Universal Credit can result in big challenges for some claimants. However services are available to ensure claimants get the support that they need.

The online nature of the UC claim process, and the need to sustain the claim online, can be challenging for claimants without digital skills. The transition to monthly payments with housing costs being paid direct to clients, and the need for monthly budgeting can also be a difficult adjustment to make. Some claimants also find themselves subject to significant deductions from their UC because of debts and sanctions and these can be hard to manage.

### Help to claim

Some people can be worse off on UC, so it's important to get advice about whether a UC claim is necessary. Claimants needing a benefits check or advice about whether they should claim UC can call our Public Advice Line\*. Advisers needing advice about residents they are working with can call our Advisers Advice Line.\*

*\*See front page for details.*

### Citizens Advice Bureau's UC "Help to claim service"

From 1<sup>st</sup> April, the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) are providing a "Help to Claim" service for UC. Phone 0800 144 8444 to access the service, or visit [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/helptoclaim](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/helptoclaim) Claimants can also meet with advisers face to face at different locations in the borough. For example, CAB are now providing a daily 'help to claim' drop-in from 10am to 3pm at Woolwich Jobcentre. Call the above number or visit the website for more information.

### Royal Greenwich Universal Support Team – Personal Budgeting Support

Claimants may still need help and support to budget their monthly UC payments once a claim has been made. This may include help with prioritising essential bills such as rent and utilities and with managing their UC claim. Royal Greenwich has a dedicated Universal Support Team which provides face to face support around personal budgeting for borough residents.

The support the team offers includes helping claimants to:

- understand their UC award;
- maximise their income by assisting them to apply for other benefits such as Council Tax Support;
- apply for alternative payment arrangements where necessary;
- renegotiate deductions where they are struggling to manage;

- work out monthly income and outgoings;
- complete and maintain a budgeting plan;
- obtain a bank account;
- set up direct debits for priority payments;
- link in with appropriate support services (such as specialist debt advice).

To access the service, phone 020 8921 3333 or email [universal-support@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:universal-support@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)



**HM Courts &  
Tribunals Service**

## Tribunal Reform Programme

### Tribunal Reform Programme – launch of ‘continuous online resolution’ pilot

HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) is piloting a new process enabling claimants to avoid the need for an oral hearing by accepting a preliminary view instead. It will enable appellants to track the progress of their appeals online and to receive text and email updates.

The ‘continuous online resolution’ process is being piloted in selected Personal Independence Payment (PIP) appeals which are deemed to be appropriate from April. Appellants will be invited to respond to a series of questions formed by an online tribunal panel and will be able to upload evidence. Responses will be reviewed within one week and will be shared with the DWP (they will ask further questions if necessary). The claimant has the option of either accepting the preliminary view, in which case this will become the final decision (unless the DWP objects) or opting for an oral hearing.

There is concern that this move will affect claimants' prospects of success given that the success rate for paper hearings is significantly lower than for oral hearings and will simply introduce another hoop for claimants to jump through before they can get to an oral hearing. Visit [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK) for more information about the reform programme and for updates.

### Social Security Appeals – success rate increases to 70%

The latest March 2019 statistics published by the Ministry of Justice reveal that 70% of cases cleared at hearing were found in favour of the claimant in the period from October to December 2018 (up from 65% in 2017). The success rate varies by benefit type, with ESA at 74% and Personal Independence Payment at 73%. The statistics are available on [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK)

### Launch of online appeals for ESA claimants

HMCTS has launched an online appeals service for Employment and Support Allowance claimants. The service began in January and follows on from the introduction of online appeals for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claimants. The new service is hosted on the [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK) website. Once the appeal is submitted, the user is invited to participate in a satisfaction survey. HMCTS welcomes feedback from users and stakeholders about how the service could be improved or developed.

# PIP Update

## Delayed PIP rollout

Eventually most existing Disability Living Allowance claimants aged 16+ will be invited to claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP). This process was originally to have been completed by early 2020, but the timescale has now slipped. According to the Budget of Economic Responsibility's March 2019 ['Economic and Fiscal Outlook'](#), full rollout to existing claimants will not now be complete until February 2021.

## New integrated service for carrying out ESA and PIP medical assessments

Amber Rudd (Work and Pensions Secretary), announced in a [written statement](#) to Parliament on 5 March, that ESA work capability assessments and PIP health assessments will be carried out by an integrated service, called the 'Health Transformation Programme' from 2021. The tests will remain two completely separate tests. The government hopes that this "... integrated approach will allow for a more joined-up claimant experience across these benefits, which takes account of the multiple interactions an individual may have with DWP" and "enable a greater range of assessment providers to compete" to help deliver the service in future.

In the same statement, the minister also announced that the government will stop regularly reassessing PIP awards for claimants who have reached state pension age.

## Greenwich Advice Network (GAN)

Greenwich Advice Network is open to all local providers of free legal information and advice, any sector. It focuses on advice issues in the field of social welfare and has a light touch on benefit issues. Following a temporary suspension, we are pleased to confirm that the next GAN meeting will be on **Thursday 16 May, from 10am to 12pm** and will focus on housing issues. More information will be circulated nearer the time.

## Greenwich Advisers Forum (GRAF)

GRAF usually meets twice a year and has a focus on welfare benefits. The meetings provide an opportunity for local advisers to meet to discuss benefit issues and share knowledge and experience. Attendees are typically people whose work includes a significant amount of welfare benefits or benefits related advice. There are guest speakers plus updates about recent/forthcoming benefit changes, an information exchange and liaison with Greenwich Advice and Benefits Service (about Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support issues).

Given the rollout of Universal Credit in the borough and the difficulties it is throwing up for both claimants and advisers, GRAF meetings will take place more frequently this year. Our last meeting on 25 February focused on UC issues including: natural migration, the new severe disability premium exception, and how to make the claims process easier.

The next meeting will be on **Thursday 9 May, 2 to 4pm, Room 6, Town Hall, Wellington Street**. Details of the main discussion topic will be circulated nearer the time, but it is likely to focus on benefit changes for pensioners and UC-related issues.

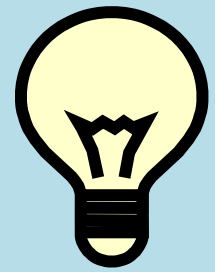
**Are you interested in getting details of and attending GRAF (or Greenwich Advice Network) meetings?**

Please email Sandra Pierre: [sandra.pierre@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:sandra.pierre@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)

## Benefit Changes Timeline

Date	Benefit	Change
16 Jan 2019	Legacy claimants receiving severe disability premium – (SDP)	Claimants receiving SDP are unable to naturally migrate to UC from this date. Claimants who have already migrated and were previously receiving SDP and are still eligible will receive a lump sum payment and ongoing monthly payments ( <a href="#">see page 4</a> ).
1 February	Child Tax Credit Universal Credit  Pension Credit (PC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families with more than 2 children are no longer able to make new claims for Child Tax Credit and must claim UC instead (<a href="#">page 2</a>).</li> <li>Plans to retrospectively apply the two child limit to UC families with third or subsequent child/ren born before 6/4/17 scrapped (<a href="#">page 2</a>).</li> </ul> PC includes child additions for eligible claimants without an existing tax credits award ( <a href="#">page 2</a> ).
April 2019	All	Benefits uprating – most working age benefits remain frozen at 2015/16 rates (exceptions for carers and disability benefits/element. <b>Earnings Limit increases (weekly figures):</b> Carers Allowance - £123; Permitted Work £131.50.
April 2019	Universal Credit	Work allowances increased by £1,000 for households with children and people with disabilities enabling more to keep more of their earnings.
1 April 2019	National Living Wage	Increased to £8.21 an hour for workers aged 25 and over. <a href="#">National Minimum Wage increases</a>
15 May 2019	Pension Credit Pension-age Housing Benefit	Mixed age couples, where one has reached state pension age and the other is of working age, will be unable to claim and must claim UC instead ( <a href="#">page 1</a> ).
July 2019	Legacy Benefits Universal Credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beginning of <a href="#">managed migration</a> pilot to transfer 10,000 claimants to UC (<a href="#">page 3</a>).</li> <li>Minimum income floor will not apply for 12 months to self-employed claimants who are managed migrated.</li> <li>Discretionary hardship payments introduced for claimants who appear to be in hardship following managed migration process.</li> </ul>
16 July		
Oct 2019	Universal Credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reducing the maximum rate for debt reductions to from 40% to 30%;</li> <li>Increasing the recovery period of advance payments from 12 to 16 months.</li> </ul>
1 April 2020	Universal Credit	The surplus earnings rules allow UC to treat employed and self-employed earners as having additional earned income. The threshold reduces from £2500 to £300 from April 2020 and is likely to affect significantly more people.
July 2020	Income Support income-based JSA income-related ESA	Two week run-on introduced for claimants whose awards have ended as a result of claiming UC
Sept 2020	Income Support income-based JSA income-related ESA Universal Credit	Minimum income floor will not apply to self-employed IS, ibJSA and irESA claimants who are naturally migrated to UC and to all existing UC claimants who become newly self-employed.
October 2020	Pension-age related benefits	State pension age becomes 66 for both men and women ( <a href="#">page 2</a> ).

# Spotlight on Council Tax Discounts



With residents continuing to feel the financial pinch, the role of income maximisation in advice work is more important than ever. Council Tax is a priority debt and is a significant expense, so this spotlight focuses on council tax discounts and exemptions that residents may be missing out on. It does not cover [Local Council Tax Support](#) for people on low incomes.

Council Tax bills are based on a property valuation system dating back to 1991. There are 8 bands, starting from band A (the lowest) up to band H (the highest). How much council tax you pay depends on which of these bands you come under and on how many adults live in the property. An important concept to remember is that council tax bills are worked out assuming that there are at least two adults living in the home. Bills can be reduced if there are less than two adults in the home, or if there are more than two adults, but some of them can be ignored (or disregarded) which then leaves less than two remaining. If all residents in the home can be disregarded, a 50% discount may apply.

Examples of people who are disregarded include: full-time students, hospital inpatients, people who are severely mentally impaired, students who are under 19 and have just left school, people caring for someone with a long term health problem or disability (other than a spouse, partner or child under 18), prisoners (including on remand), apprentices earning up to £195 gross a week.

**Note:** *this is not a complete list – check the Royal Greenwich website for details*

## Council Tax Discounts

There is a range of discounts to help reduce CT bills, so it's worth checking if your client may be eligible. Discounts include:

- Single Person Discount – a 25% discount for people living alone regardless of how much money or savings they have.
- Carers Discount – this discount allows carers in specified circumstances to be disregarded when CT bills are calculated. The carer must be looking after an adult (other than their partner or a dependant young person) for at least 35 hours a week and the person who is being looked after

must be receiving a qualifying disability benefit.

- Severe Mental Impairment (SMI) Anyone who has a permanent condition that severely affects their intellectual or social functioning may qualify for a council tax exemption/discount.

Conditions that can lead to SMI include Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, severe learning difficulties, stroke and other forms of dementia. To qualify:

- the person must be receiving certain disability or incapacity-related benefits such as ESA or the Universal Credit equivalent, Attendance Allowance, PIP daily living component or DLA care component); and
- a medical professional will need to certify that they are severely mentally impaired.

People who live alone or only with others who are severely mentally impaired will be exempt from CT. People who live with one other adult will receive a 25% discount.

- Disability Relief Scheme – a band reduction is applied where someone in the home is 'substantially and permanently disabled. For example, a band D property will be charged at a band C rate. '

To qualify:

- the home must have a second bathroom or kitchen to meet their needs; or
- a room (other than a bathroom, kitchen or toilet) is used to meet their needs; or
- there is enough space in the home to use a wheelchair indoors.

## Exemptions

Some properties are exempt which means that council tax is not charged. For example, an exemption may apply because:

- the property is empty (eg because the former occupants now live permanently in hospital or in a care home); or
- the property is occupied solely by people who can be disregarded (eg by full-time students or people who are severely mentally impaired – see previous page). There is also an exemption for Royal Greenwich care leavers who are under 25, live in the borough and are liable for council tax.



### Other sources of help for residents on low incomes

Second Adult Rebate (2AR) - this may be payable if one or more people aged 18 or over live in the property and are on a low income. They cannot be the spouse or partner of the person who is liable for council tax and cannot be liable for council tax themselves. Entitlement to 2AR should be assessed simultaneously with CTS. If the claimant is entitled to both, they will be awarded the higher amount.

### For further information or to apply

Check the [Royal Greenwich website](#) for more information about discounts and exemptions and to download a form. Discounts can normally be backdated to the date it should have first applied.

### For advice about a family you are working with

Contact our Advisers and staff helpline on 020 8921 6376 (weekdays during normal office hours) or email [wrs.ce@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:wrs.ce@royalgreenwich.gov.uk). Royal Greenwich residents wishing to contact us direct can call our Public Advice Line (020 8921 6375, Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays; 10am to 1pm) or visit [www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk](http://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk) to send us an online enquiry or to download our information online.

## Projects Update

### Social Prescribing Pilot, Live Well Project raises over £500,000 for vulnerable residents

We advised 330 clients in 2018/2019 and have identified over £570,000 so far in income gains for residents in the borough. These gains will increase as results continue to come in.

We are also continuing to explore using new tools to identify those who may be under-claiming benefits in the borough and considering benefit uptake projects in the advance of the UC rollout in the borough. This work will expand on some of the work already completed as part of the identification of underpayments of ESA, which can result in large arrears being paid.

The **Stay Warm, Stay Safe Project** (SWSS) from Live Well Greenwich also resulted in an increase in referrals for income maximisation.

### Emergency Support Project raises over £400,000

We advised 162 clients in 2018/19 and have identified over £460,000 so far in income gains for residents in the borough with results still coming in. The rollout of Universal Credit means it is crucial that residents receive accurate and timely advice.

**Success story:** Ms Y is an EU national with significant health problems who contacted the Welfare Rights Service because she was destitute. Through determined advocacy and by liaising with DWP, we were able to establish a claim for contribution-based ESA on the basis of her previous work history. She was placed in the support group, so also received an income-related ESA top-up. Plus a successful Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim resulted in an award of the enhanced rates of both components. Her benefit income has increased from zero to £335 per week which has had a dramatic impact on her quality of life.

## Training News

Our latest April to July training programme which was circulated recently, includes new dates for our most popular courses (for example **Introduction to Benefits** and **Personal Independence Payment**) and new one-day courses on:

- Tax Credit Problem Areas – Tuesday, 21 May, 10am to 4pm**
- Challenging Benefit Decisions – Tuesday, 18 June, 10am to 4pm**
- Representing at Tribunals – Tuesday, 25 June, 10am to 4pm.**

Given the continued rollout of Universal Credit Full Service in the borough, the programme also includes a range of UC-related courses. If you are working with people who need to claim UC, check out our **UC: The Migration and Claims Process** course on Monday, 15 April and Tuesday, 11 June).

Other one-day UC courses include:

- UC in Detail – Thursday 18 April and Friday, 28 June;**
- UC, HB and Housing Costs – Wednesday, 29 May**
- UC, ESA and the Work Capability Assessment – Monday 15 July.**

*All of these courses run from 10am to 4pm.*

For organisations supporting claimants with more complex needs, there are also courses on **Benefits for people subject to immigration control** (7 May) and **Benefits for EEA nationals** (8 May).

Check out [our programme](#) for full details.

**Places are going fast, so book early to avoid disappointment!**

If you have any questions regarding any of our courses, contact Rebecca Lough on 020 8921 2517.

Please note that attending the course is often free, depending on your organisation. There is a charge however if you do not attend or leave early, please check the terms and conditions before you apply for a place. Completed booking forms should be sent directly to [wrs.training@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:wrs.training@royalgreenwich.gov.uk).

## Publicity and information

### Updated Benefit Rates cards

The 2019/20 Benefit Rates cards will be available shortly. We will contact you by email to confirm when they are in stock. Please use the form provided to order copies for your organisation or contact Pansy Turpin if you would like to arrange to collect your order in person. Royal Greenwich staff based in the Woolwich Centre will be able to collect their orders direct from Pansy (Monday to Wednesday - 9am to 3pm). Remember that the card is for advisers and staff only.

### Updated factsheets

We are currently updating our factsheets and these will be uploaded to the [Royal Greenwich website](#) as they become available.

If you would like to order 'Claiming Benefits – Useful Addresses' or don't have internet access, please use the order form included in this mailing.

Royal Greenwich staff – our entire range of adviser and public factsheets are available on the [intranet](#) for Royal Greenwich staff. Just click on the link and select factsheets.

### Redevelopment of the Royal Greenwich Website

We have been working with Royal Greenwich's Webteam to review our content on the website. Part of this work has included reducing and streamlining our content and publishing our full range of factsheets online. This work is almost complete and our factsheets are now available online for external advisers and the public. Shortly, there will also be a separate page for advisers and professionals on which you'll be able to view back copies of Benefit Matters. We will update you once this has gone live.

Remember – if you need advice about a resident or family you are working with, call our dedicated advice line for advisers and staff on 020 8921 6376 (Monday to Friday, anytime during usual office hours).

If you would like this information in another format (for example in large print), please contact Pansy Turpin on 020 8921 6376 (or 18001 020 8921 6375 for textphone users).

## Next issue: July 2019

Royal Greenwich Welfare Rights Service produces 'Benefit Matters'. If you would like to contribute in any way, please contact Sandra Pierre on 020 8921 6378.



### **Welfare Rights Service**

The Woolwich Centre

35 Wellington Street

Woolwich SE18 6HQ

Telephone 020 8921 6376

Tex [www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefits)

Textphone 18001 020 8921 6375