

# Benefit Matters

Our newsletter for advisers in Royal Greenwich

Finance Directorate

## Coronavirus - Benefits Update

With the lifting of national COVID restrictions on 19 July, the government is winding down the economic measures which were introduced to assist people who have been financially impacted by the pandemic:

- **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme** (which subsidises employers who are paying the earnings of furloughed workers) and **Self-Employment Income Support Scheme** are both due to end on 30 September.
- **Benefit uplifts (to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit)** are ending in early October. The uplift was originally due to be removed in April 2021 but was then extended to October 2021. Universal Credit claimants are being informed via their online journal from 23 July and the uplift will no longer be included in assessment periods ending on or after 6 October. Many national welfare organisations are concerned about the impact its removal will have on low income families who are already struggling in the aftermath of the pandemic. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation warns that its removal represents the 'biggest overnight cut to the basic rate of social security since World War 2 and the foundation of the welfare state'.
- **Ban on housing evictions** – this ended on 31 May, leaving homelessness charity, Shelter warning that the removal of this 'vital lifeline' signals the 'beginning of the end for many renters with 1 in 4 fearing that they will lose their home.
- **Overpayment recovery resumes** - claimants have begun receiving letters informing them that their benefits will be reduced to recover overpayments or asking them to make contact to make a payment arrangement. Claimants needing help to arrange an affordable repayment arrangement should contact our [Universal Support Team](#) for advice.
- **Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme** - Test and Trace Support Payments are for people who are employed or self-employed and receiving qualifying benefits who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace. Local authorities also have the discretion to award payments to claimants not on a qualifying benefit who will face financial hardship because of having to self-isolate. Claimants who are eligible will receive the £500 payment in addition to any benefits they already receive. The scheme has been extended until 30 September 2021.

### Useful links

Shelter: [Press release](#) and [COVID-19 and housing page](#)

Joseph Rowntree Foundation: [Press release](#)

*Continued on next page*

#### Welfare Rights Service

##### Advisers Advice Line

020 8921 6376

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

Weekdays: office hours

#### Welfare Rights Service

##### Public Advice Line

020 8921 6375

Mon, Wed, Thurs: 10am – 1pm

[Via online contact form on website](#)

#### Universal Support Team

020 8921 3333

Mon to Fri: 10am - 4pm

[Via online contact form on website](#)

## Tax Credit renewals - people who have missed the 31 July deadline

The tax credits renewals process aims to finalise entitlement for 2020/21 and compare it with what has been paid, and to renew claims for 2021/22. Some people will have received an auto-renewal form, others were required to renew their claims by 31 July (by post or telephone).

Claimants who were required to contact HMRC and have missed the 31 July deadline should receive a statement (TC607) from HMRC advising that their payments have stopped and of the need to repay the tax credits they have received since 6 April 2021.

Please remind residents that it's not too late to restore their claim, but they must act quickly. If their claim ends as a result, they will not be able to reclaim tax credits (unless an exception applies) and would have to claim Universal Credit instead.

Special rules allow claims to be restored provided they renew within 30 days from the date on the statement advising that their payments will stop. Claimants renewing outside the 30-day period (and by 31 January 2022) can only have their claims restored if HMRC accepts that they have good cause for missing the 31 July deadline and the 30-day deadline. Payments will be reinstated from 6 April if the claimant has already claimed UC and will run up to the day before the start of the UC claim.

Claims can be renewed by phone or post – visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) for details.

### Useful links

[Low Incomes Tax Reform Group website](#)

## ESA claimant commitments reintroduced from 28 June

The DWP have reintroduced claimant commitments and action plans and began phasing them in for all ESA claimants from 28 June. These measures were suspended last year due to the coronavirus pandemic. Remember that claimant commitments should be reasonable and tailored to claimants' individual circumstances. For example, adjustments should be made to consider caring responsibilities, health limitations and so on.

See the DWP's newsletter, [Touchbase – 18 June 2021](#) for more information

## Face-to-face assessments resume

Note that face-to-face assessments for health and disability assessments have been reintroduced where deemed necessary. However, most claimants are still being offered telephone or paper-based appointments.

Although the guidance says that claimants should attend face-to-face assessments alone if possible, claimants can still have someone accompany them for support. However, they will need to notify the assessment centre in advance if the person is from another household. Claimant guidance on attending face-to-face assessments is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). Claimants who would find it especially difficult or distressing attending an appointment at an assessment have the option of requesting a home visit. They are likely to need medical evidence to support their request and if the request is accepted may find that the assessment process is delayed.

# EU nationals and the EU Settlement Scheme

## – remind residents that it's not too late to apply

EEA nationals and their family members who were living in the UK before 31 December 2020 had until 30 June 2021 to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) to regularise their status. This legal requirement enables EEA nationals to remain in the UK after 30 June and retain their right to work, housing and so on. Provided EEA nationals applied by the deadline, these protections continue until the EUSS application has been determined (including during any subsequent appeal/s).

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Now that 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 has passed, all EU and EEA nationals require settled or pre-settled status to maintain their position in the UK. EEA nationals who have not applied to EUSS by the deadline and do not have a different form of UK immigration status may be considered unlawfully present in the UK. This affects their ability to access social housing/housing assistance, NHS healthcare, social security benefits (such as Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment) and to continue living and working in the UK. The DWP may also consider benefit paid to EEA nationals who have failed to apply to EUSS after 30 June as having been overpaid and may seek to recover this from them. These restrictions continue to apply until a valid application is made to EUSS.

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Although the deadline has passed, please remind EEA nationals you are working with that it's not too late to apply, but they should do so quickly to ensure that their benefit payments do not stop in the future. The [Brexit Withdrawal Agreement](#) contains a provision allowing the Home Office to accept late applications which are submitted within a reasonable period of time where the EEA national can show they have reasonable grounds for having missed the deadline. Examples of groups who could be said to have reasonable grounds include children whose parents or guardians have failed to apply for them, people who were unable to apply due to physical or mental incapacity, or because they were in an abusive/controlling relationship. Note that these are just examples, any EEA national who has missed the deadline should consider making a late application if they feel they have a good reason.

If an application is refused, for example because it's not accepted that the EEA national had 'reasonable grounds' for the late application, they would need to make an application under the current immigration rules to continue living in the UK.

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Note that separate EUSS applications will need to be made for each child in the family and by family members of EEA nationals (including family members who are not EEA nationals themselves).

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### What types of leave can be granted by EUSS?

EUSS can grant two types of leave:

- **Settled status** – this is a type of indefinite leave broadly following a period of five years residence in the UK that enables EEA nationals and their family members to continue living and working in the UK after 30 June. It also provides automatic access to income-related benefits (subject to satisfying the other eligibility conditions), NHS health costs, social housing and housing assistance.
- **Pre-settled status** – is a type of limited leave (for up to 5 years) for EEA nationals and/or their family members who were living in the UK on 31 December 2020 and have been resident in the UK for less than 5 years. This gives them the right to be in the UK and rent, work and so on beyond 30 June.

People with pre-settled status will need to demonstrate that they are economically active in the same way as under the old-style 'right to reside' rules. For example, they will need to be working or have retained worker status and will need to demonstrate that the work is genuine and effective when needed.

Pre-settled status does not automatically convert to settled status after 5 years. It's vital that EEA nationals with this status note the expiration date and apply for settled status before it expires. They can also apply earlier if they achieve 5 years continuous residence before the expiration date.

As we explained in the [April issue of Benefit Matters](#), the benefit rights of EEA nationals granted pre-settled status is complex and is dependent on various factors. The position is subject to change as it is dependent on caselaw including the outcome of two pending test cases<sup>1</sup>. The latest position is explored in detail in the [City of Wolverhampton's latest Benefit Briefing](#).

## How to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme

[Apply online on GOV.UK](#)

### Further information and advice

If you are unsure of the rights of an EEA national to apply for benefits and need advice, please contact our [Advisers Advice Line](#) or signpost them to our [Public Advice Line](#). We understand that that many EEA nationals are having their benefit claims wrongly refused (particularly Universal Credit claims). The complexity of the rules may be contributing to poor decision-making, it is therefore important to encourage residents in this situation to get advice and to challenge poor decisions when needed.

Please note that the Welfare Rights Service is not accredited to provide immigration advice and can only advise on benefit issues. If a resident needs immigration advice they should be directed to an accredited immigration adviser – use [this link](#) to find an OISC regulated immigration service/adviser.

### Useful links

[The Aire Centre](#) – services include a range of helpful [EUSS Information sheets](#) (available in several other languages).

## Universal Credit Update

### Minimum Income Floor reintroduced from 1 August

The minimum income floor (MIF) rules which limit how much Universal Credit (UC) self-employed claimants can receive is being gradually reintroduced from 1 August. The MIF rules allow the DWP to treat self-employed claimants who are subject to full work search and work availability requirements as having a higher level of earnings than they earn and limits the amount of UC they can receive as a result.

The rules were suspended in April 2020 due to COVID and its reintroduction has been postponed on two occasions (November 2020 and April 2021). The prospect of its return and the impact on self-employed claimants who were already struggling financially was a huge concern and campaigning organisations and groups representing self-employed people had urged the government not to lift the suspension. Although it has been reinstated, the good news is that the rules will not apply in the same way and will operate on a discretionary basis. The Treasury has confirmed that work coaches will have discretion to apply it on case by case basis where claimants' earnings continue to be affected by COVID. If the MIF is not applied, claimants will get more UC as their award will be based on their lower monthly earnings/profit.

### DWP to automate process of identifying claimants who need to have wages assigned to different assessment periods

Universal Credit (UC) claimants who are monthly paid employees and occasionally receive two payments from their employer in one month, will benefit from a change in the rules in response to the judgment in [Secretary of State for Work and Pensions v Danielle Johnson, \[2020\] EWCA Civ 778](#). DWP staff can now reallocate a second monthly payment from a customer's employer into a different assessment period. This means that if, for example, people are paid early by their employer due to their regular monthly pay date falling on a weekend or bank holiday they won't have two wages allocated to the same assessment period. The new rules apply from 16 November 2020.

Currently UC claimants need to tell their work coach either in one of their regular discussions or via their online journal if they think they are affected and ask for their earnings to be reallocated. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions confirmed on 14 June that the DWP expect to be introducing a new process in mid-Summer 2021 which will enable them to automatically identify claimants in this position and '*proactively correct awards before they are paid, without the need for the claimant to raise the issue*'.

**Useful Link:** [Answer to Parliamentary question – 14 June](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Court of Appeal case (R (Fratila & Tanase) v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions [2020] EWCA Civ 1741) and [Court of Justice for the European Union: CG v Department for Communities \(Northern Ireland\)](#).

## Deductions for court fines – DWP reduces recovery rate to 5% of standard allowance

A High Court decision in March ruled that the DWP's deductions policy was unlawful because it fetters discretion and prevents decision makers from considering claimants individual circumstances. The DWP had planned to challenge the ruling but have now decided not to appeal and have limited the amount that can be deducted from UC for court fines to 5% of the standard allowance (see deduction amounts below). Previously the monthly deduction was up to £108.35.

	Rates April to Sept 2021	Rates from October 2021
Single under 25	£17.20	£12.87
Single 25 or over	£20.58	£16.24
Couples	£24.53	£20.20
Joint claimants both under 25	£29.83	£25.50
Joint claimants, one or both 25 or over		

[Read Shelter's Blog for further information about the High Court ruling.](#)

## CPAG looking for Universal Credit case studies

CPAG is looking for case studies relating to the following issues:

- **Carers missing out on the carer element of UC following the death of the person they cared for**  
Special rules allow Carers Allowance (CA) to continue for up to 8 weeks after the death of the looked after person and the carers element should also continue to be included in UC. If the person they cared for was their partner and the claim was in their name, a new UC claim will have to be made. CPAG is aware that claimants in this situation are not getting the carer element included even though their UC award is reduced by the CA.
- **Housing costs contribution being wrongly applied to the housing costs element even if an exemption applies**  
Housing cost contributions (£75.53 per month) are the UC equivalent of non-dependant deductions used in Housing Benefit, however there are differences including the list of exemptions. For example, an exemption should apply if the non-dependant is receiving Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Apparently, a housing costs contribution that has been wrongly applied has to be manually overridden every month, so the onus is on claimants to spot incorrect payments and notify UC each month.

If you are working with residents who are affected by either of these issues, CPAG would like to hear from you. Please contact Lynsey Dalton (email [LDalton@cpag.org.uk](mailto:LDalton@cpag.org.uk)).

## Changes to special rules for people who are terminally ill

Following a review, the government has confirmed that the “special rules” which fast track benefit claims from people with a terminal illness where death can be reasonably expected within six months, will be replaced with a new twelve-month definition which aligns with current NHS practice. The change will be implemented across five benefits, starting with Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance in 2022 and Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment “when parliamentary time allows”.

Justin Tomlinson (Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work) said in an 8 July press release:

*“Being diagnosed with a terminal illness is devastating and this change will increase much needed support for people who are nearing the end of their lives. The new 12-month approach will ensure people get the financial help they need as quickly as possible in the most challenging of times...”*

The welcome changes follow an evaluation which considered the views and experiences of terminally ill people and their families, support organisations and clinicians involved in their care.

See the press release on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) for more information.

## Bereavement Benefits – to be extended to surviving cohabitee partners with children

Bereavement benefits (Bereavement Allowance and Widowed Parent's Allowance) are to be extended to cohabiting partners with children who were living with the partner on the date of their death. Currently these benefits are limited to people who were married or in a civil partnership when their partner died. The government estimates that more than 22,000 families will benefit from the change, amounting to £320 million in support for bereaved children over the next five years. The change needs parliamentary approval and is going through the process. Once complete, it will apply retrospectively from 30 August 2018 and backdated arrears will be paid as lump sums.

See [15 July DWP press release](#) for further information.

## Pre-tribunal offers to disabled people – DWP agrees to make changes to its practice

The DWP has agreed to change its practice of making pre-tribunal 'offers' to disabled appellants in response to a judicial review challenge brought by a client of the Public Law Project. This practice involved the DWP pressuring disabled claimants into accepting lower offers than were entitled to, not advising claimants accepting such offers of their appeal rights and repeatedly calling appellants directly instead of via their representatives as requested. The DWP has agreed to rewrite its policies and guidance and retrain staff (including all staff involved in lapsing appeals by the end of October) to ensure that claimants do not feel pressured into making decisions.

### Useful links

[Public Law Project Press Release](#)

## Benefit payments into Post Office Card Accounts to end on 1 December 2021

Post Office card accounts is a service provided by the Post Office (PO) on behalf of the DWP and into which benefits can be paid. The DWP has ended its contract with the Post Office so PO card accounts are being phased out and will close in 2021, leaving these customers possibly without access to banking facilities. The DWP (and in some instances HMRC) have written to everyone affected to notify them that from 1 December 2021, tax credits, child benefit and other DWP benefits will no longer be able to be paid into PO card accounts and of the need to make alternative arrangements. To avoid any interruption to benefits it's vital that people who are affected contact the Tax Credits Helpline (0345 300 3900), the Child Benefit Helpline (0300 200 3100) and/or their relevant benefits office to provide alternative banking details into which their benefits can be paid.

People who do not already have another account are being advised to speak to their local bank, building society or credit union about opening a new bank account. Advice on choosing the right kind of accounts is available from the [Money Helper website](#) (previously known as the Money Advice Service).

### Useful links

[Post Office](#)

**UPDATE:** the DWP has confirmed that claimants who have not yet been in contact with new account details or who are unable to do so will be moved to a voucher-based [Payment Exception Service](#) from the end of August. The service will provide access to payments via the PayPoint or Post Office networks. See the [13 August issue of Touchbase](#) for more information.

## Greenwich Foodbank

Please note that the Shooters Hill branch of Greenwich Foodbank is a distribution and delivery centre only and residents should not be referred there for food parcel collections.

Greenwich Foodbank have also confirmed that food vouchers are universal across the whole Trussell Trust system and can be accepted at any food bank. This is helpful for those in temporary accommodation or on the boundary of the borough.

Please visit the [Foodbank website](#) for further information.

## Breathing space

Breathing Space is a new government scheme to assist people struggling with debt. As the name suggests the scheme provides a respite to enable people to receive debt advice and find a solution to resolve their debt problems. There are two kinds: Standard Breathing Space and Mental Health Crisis Breathing Space.

### Standard Breathing Space

Standard Breathing Space is for people who cannot pay their debts when they fall due, and:

- are not undischarged bankrupt,
- do not already have a debt relief order (DRO) or individual voluntary arrangement (IVA).

This breathing space suspends collection and enforcement of debts and freezes interest and charges on debts. Most debts can be included, such as arrears on essential bills (including rent arrears) and non-priority debts. However, note that some debts are excluded, such as court fines, maintenance payments/arrears, budgeting/crisis loans and secured debts (but arrears of secured debts can be included). Universal Credit advances are also currently excluded, but the government says it recognises the importance of including all Universal Credit debts in Breathing Space and has confirmed its commitment to include these in the scheme as soon as possible.

Claimants who are having third party deductions taken from their benefits (for example for fuel arrears) should find that their deductions stop if the debt is included in Breathing Space. However, deductions will continue for UC claimants even if it is an eligible debt for Breathing Space.

Applications must be made through an approved debt adviser who agrees that time is needed to get debt advice and a debt solution is likely to be entered.

### Mental Health Crisis Breathing Space

Mental Health Crisis Breathing Space is a debt respite scheme for people struggling with debt who are receiving mental health crisis treatment (such as detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 or receiving treatment in any setting from a specialist mental health service).

People can apply themselves or third parties (such as carers, mental health professionals, care co-ordinators, social workers or debt advisers) can apply on their behalf. If the application is successful, the mental health breathing space will last while they are receiving mental health crisis treatment and for a further 30 days.

Unlike with the standard breathing there is no requirement to receive debt advice or find a debt solution, nor is there a limit on the number of times you can apply.

To apply, an approved mental health professional will need to certify that the person is receiving mental health treatment. The form is available [here](#).

### Useful links

- [National Debtline website](#) – includes detailed factsheet on Breathing Space.
- [Money and Pensions Service](#)

## Schools out for the summer...

### Free school meals during the summer holidays

In December, the council ran the [Greenwich Together for Winter](#) campaign. This brought together businesses, community groups, faith groups, schools and volunteers from across the borough to support one another. As part of this, using Department for Work and Pensions funding, extra financial support was provided towards food and utility costs throughout the school holidays to all children who were claiming Free School Meals (FSM). The scheme was extended throughout spring whilst COVID restrictions remained in place.

Royal Greenwich is continuing the scheme throughout the summer holidays. Families with qualifying child/ren who have received free school meals during the last school year have had a one-off payment of £80 per child. Eligible families should have received a text message containing a payment code towards the end of July, which can be redeemed at the Post Office. Separate codes have been sent to families with more than one child on free school meals. Note that **all codes need to be redeemed by 31 August 2021**.

The text message from “RBGreenwich” looked like this:

*“Dear Parent/Carer, here is your Post Office code [RELEVANT CODE] for £[RELEVANT VALUE]. Please take this SMS to any Post Office branch to collect your payment.”*

Eligible parents who have not already received a payment code to claim their money should email: [wintergrantpayment@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:wintergrantpayment@royalgreenwich.gov.uk) providing their child's/children's name, date of birth, name of school they are attending and their contact details. This will enable the council to undertake a security check on their individual code and get back to them.

As the summer holiday period is in full swing, remember that families may also be eligible for a free holiday club place for their child through the council's Holiday Food and Fun programme. Visit the [Royal Greenwich website](#) for details.

### Free summer lunch club from July

CAC Living Word Centre has launched a TLG<sup>2</sup> Make Lunch club during the summer holidays at their venue (RCCG Victory Centre, 59 Plumstead Common Road SE18 3AS).

The lunch club (which started in July) aims to provide support to families with primary school-aged children struggling in the community. It is run by volunteers and provides a hot, healthy meal and activities free of charge to struggling local families who are facing food insecurity. They would like to invite eligible families to make use of the lunch club during the school holidays. If you have a family who is interested, please email Margaret Adebisi [faltoymarg@yahoo.com](mailto:faltoymarg@yahoo.com) (or call 07984433143) so they can plan in terms of numbers. Please see the brochure attached to this mailing for further information.

### Help with childcare costs

Childcare is expensive and is a significant barrier for low income working households. The summer holiday period is a particularly challenging time for parents with the prospect of increased childcare costs. The main sources of help include:

- The childcare costs element in benefits (including Universal Credit and Housing Benefit) and tax credits;
- Free early years childcare for 2-4-year olds;
- Tax Free Childcare.

Help with childcare is a complicated area because each scheme has different rules and processes. Parents will need to get advice about which scheme is best for them, because some of them (such as tax credits, Universal Credit and Tax-Free Childcare) cannot be used in combination with others and applying for help through one scheme can stop support provided through another. The Commons Library Briefing Paper, [Childcare: Support with costs](#), provides a useful summary of the various forms of help available.

### Useful links

- For more information about free early years childcare and other sources of help with childcare costs – visit the [Royal Greenwich website](#) or contact the [Families Information Service](#)
- [Low Incomes Tax Reform Group \(LITRG\) - Childcare](#).

## Warm Home Discount Reform Consultation

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is seeking views on proposals to extend, expand and reform the Warm Home Discount Scheme. Proposals include extending the scheme to 2026 and ensuring that more low-income households and vulnerable groups automatically receive help with their energy bills. Proposals include increasing the spend on the scheme to £475 million and replacing the 'Broader Group'<sup>3</sup> with a new Core Group 2, who would also receive the rebate automatically. Criteria for the new group would redistribute the rebate to those living in the deepest fuel poverty and eligibility would be linked to receipt of means-tested benefits and having high energy costs which would mean that some people who currently qualify may be ineligible under the new proposals. The full Warm Home Discount consultation is available [here](#). If you would like to comment, please email your response to questions in the consultation paper to [warmhomediscount@beis.gov.uk](mailto:warmhomediscount@beis.gov.uk) (include 'WHD reform consultation' in the subject heading). The deadline for responses is **22 August 2021**.

<sup>2</sup> TLG is a national charity that supports and equips churches across the UK to bring hope and a future to struggling children, and TLG's Make Lunch programme does this through locally run holiday lunch clubs.

<sup>3</sup> Broader Group – participating energy providers must also provide this discretionary discount to households who are at risk of fuel poverty. The government sets mandatory criteria which energy suppliers can expand on. Funding is limited and administered by suppliers on a first come, first served basis. The onus is on customers to know that they may be eligible and apply.



## Training news

Included in this mailing is our autumn training programme covering the period from September to December. This remains a fully virtual programme as we're currently unable to deliver face-to-face courses. All courses are being delivered via Zoom. Our one-day courses are spread over two half-days. The programme includes our popular range of **Universal Credit** and **Personal Independence Payment** courses.

September courses include:

- Introduction to Benefits – 13 & 14 September
- Benefits for Non-EEA nationals – 28 & 29 September
- Housing and Homelessness – 30 September

Places are limited, so book soon to avoid disappointment!

### How to book a place

Currently bookings can be made by emailing [WRS.training@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:WRS.training@royalgreenwich.gov.uk). Bookings must be for a named person and must be agreed and authorised by your manager, training co-ordinator, or equivalent person. Our courses are free to Greenwich Council staff, Health Service staff and to local community groups/voluntary sector advice services who work with Greenwich residents. If you work for a voluntary sector/community organisation and would like to check if you are on our list for free training or would like to be added to the list, please email [wrstraining@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:wrstraining@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)

### Coming soon - new online booking form

We have developed a new online form for training bookings which we hope will make the booking process easier. We will let you know once it is available.

## Projects Update

### Live Well Greenwich Project raises over £1 million for vulnerable residents

Greenwich Public Health and Greenwich Welfare Rights Service (WRS) has been working together to ensure that residents are supported to live longer, happier, healthier lives. WRS provides specialist advice and support to residents referred to us for benefits advice by the Live Well Greenwich Line and health coaches based within GP surgeries. Over the course of 2020/21, the Universal Support Team and Welfare Rights Service received 1642 referrals for specialist benefits advice and support. To date, we have assisted residents advised under the project to claim over £1,030,000 in benefits they were missing out on. These gains will increase as results continue to come in.

Other services provided by Live Well Greenwich include a Live Well Greenwich Line (0800 470 4831) for signposting and help with:

- Eating well
- Moving more
- Stopping smoking
- Drinking less
- Free money and debt advice
- Employment and training
- Support with housing needs
- Social and community activities
- NHS health checks and support for managing your long-term condition (eg exercise referral scheme)
- a Stay Warm Stay Safe scheme which provides extra services for residents who may be at risk in the winter.

Visit the [Live Well website](#) for more about the partnership programmes, services and public health campaigns.

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## Universal Credit (UC) claimants affected by the Benefit Cap

The Universal Support Team completed some targeted take up work of UC claimants who were affected by the Benefit Cap to ensure that it had been correctly applied and to assist them to claim Discretionary Housing Payments where necessary.

We wrote to 150 households and 24 got in contact with us to check their entitlement and discuss their options. This has allowed us to engage with and target families who up to this point had not contacted the service.



### A success story...

An elderly resident was referred to us by Live Well Greenwich. Her sole income was State Pension and she was struggling to cover her bills and essential outgoings. We carried out a benefit check for her and helped her to claim Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance and Council Tax Support. The claims were successful, and the Attendance Allowance award meant that her linked benefits also increased because she was entitled to additional premiums. Her total annual income increased by over £10,000 a year.

## Publicity update

We are working on updating our factsheets – these will be uploaded to the [Royal Greenwich website](#) as they become available. Note that the [online advice centres directory](#) is also being updated and includes up to date information about advice services.

**Remember – if you need advice about a resident or family you are working with, call our [advice line for advisers and staff \(020 8921 6376\)](#)**

If you would like this information in another format (for example in large print), please email [VRSTraining@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:VRSTraining@royalgreenwich.gov.uk).

### Next issue: October 2021

Royal Greenwich Welfare Rights Service produces 'Benefit Matters'. If you would like to contribute in any way, please email Sandra Pierre ([sandra.pierre@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:sandra.pierre@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)).



#### Welfare Rights Service

The Woolwich Centre  
35 Wellington Street  
Woolwich SE18 6HQ  
Telephone 020 8921 6375  
Textphone 18001 020 8921 6375

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