



Benefits Newsletter July 2017

1. Stoke-on-Trent City Council Impact of Welfare Reform

The city council has published a ward-level analysis on the impact of welfare reform. The Council estimates that by 2020:

- 19,110 households will be impacted by welfare reform by more than £30 a week and 3,698 of these will lose over £100 a week. A total of £84m will be lost by 2020/
- In Bentilee and Ubbertley ward - 1,424 households will lose a total of £115,779 per week
- In Abbey Hulton ward 1,186 household will lose a total of £93,414 a week.
- 326 households living in the retirement villages in Berryhill, Abbey Hulton, Hanley and Stoke will be affected by welfare reforms.

To read the report click [here](#). To read the Sentinel article click [here](#).

2. Citizens Advice Universal Credit Campaign

Citizens Advice has launched a new campaign urging the DWP to pause the roll-out of UC to deal with many of the problems that have arisen in areas where the full digital version UC has been introduced.

- 39% of people who sought help from Citizens Advice with the new benefit had to wait more than the allocated six weeks to receive their first payment
- 11% are waiting over 10 weeks without the benefit.
- 57% are having to borrow money while waiting for their first payment.
- 30% of people said they had to make more than 10 calls to the Universal Credit helpline during their application process, often having to wait over 30 minutes to get through
- 40% reported they were not aware they could get an advance payment to help with the initial waiting period for their first payment, and more than half borrowed money whilst waiting; and
- clients on Universal Credit are nearly one and a half times more likely to seek advice on debt issues compared to those on other benefits

Citizens Advice is calling for the DWP to

Reduce how long people have to wait for their first payment

- Remove the 7 waiting days at the start of a claim.
- Make sure everyone moving to Universal Credit is told they can get an Advance Payment.

Improve the support available to people so they can make ends meet

- Introduce an online system for people to book their initial Jobcentre appointments.
- Make the Universal Credit helpline free of charge, at least until the roll-out is complete.
- Allow people to adjust to Universal Credit by offering everyone options in how they would like the benefit to be paid.
- Put in place a comprehensive support package before Universal Credit roll-out accelerates, to make sure people get advice to manage their money.

To read the report click [here](#).

3. Universal Credit

Statistics

The [latest statistics](#) published by the DWP show that 540,000 people were on the Universal Credit caseload across the UK as of 8th June 2017 (an increase of just 10,000 over last month). Of these 210,000 (39%) were in employment. In North Staffordshire the numbers on the UC caseload increased slightly from 2,426 to 2,487.

Local Authority	New Claims 18 th May – 8 th June 2017	Caseload 8 th June 2017		
		Total	Not in emp	In emp
Stoke-on-Trent	134	939	655 (41.1%)	1,592
Newcastle	48	408	258 (39.1%)	660
Staffs Moorlands	15	130	102 (43.4%)	235
Total*	197	1,476 (59.3%)	1,016(40.8%)	2,487

42% of claimants on the UC caseload in North Staffordshire are under 25.

under 25s	Not in employment	In employment	Total*
Stoke-on-Trent UA	405	252	658
Newcastle-under-Lyme	178	102	281
Staffordshire Moorlands	57	41	102
Total*	646	398	1,046

In June 2017, 191 claimants (7.7%) had in-work conditionality and were expected to be looking for better paid work and 573 claimants (23%) were working with no conditionality applied to their claim.

Conditionality Regime	Searching for work	Working with requirements	No work requirements	Working no requirements	Planning for work	Prep for work	Total*
Stoke-on-Trent	1,078	125	33	349	5	7	1,592
Newcastle	431	42	20	159	..	9	660
Staffs Moorlands	143	20	7	64	235
Total*	1,655	191	55	573	5	17	2,487

**Figures in these tables have had statistical disclosure control applied to avoid the release of confidential data. Totals may not sum due to the adjustments.*

4. Personal Independence Payment

Case Law – Recent Upper Tribunal Decisions

Ability to understand body language and visual cues is relevant when assessing whether a claimant with severe visual impairment can engage with others

[CPIP/3707/2016](#)

Inability to read instructions or use timers may be relevant when considering PIP activity1 - Preparing Food [CPIP/3739/2016](#)

Use of incontinence pads on more than 50% of days, including days where their use was only precautionary, can be counted as an 'aid or appliance' when assessing toilet needs. The UT decided it was wrong to count only days when harmful events occur.

[CPIP/387/2017](#)

5. State Pension Retirement Age – Breaking News

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, David Gauke has [announced](#) that the Government is raising the state pension retirement age for people born between 6th April 1970 and 5th April 1977. This increase will be phased in raising the retirement age from 67 to 68. Those born on or after 6th April 1977 already have their retirement age set at 68, but they should also expect their retirement age to rise further. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-40658774>

6. Other News

- The Minister for Employment, Damian Hinds has [announced](#) that sanctioned Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants who are homeless or have a mental health condition will have immediate access to hardship payments from October 2017.
- Frank Field has been [elected](#) as the new chair of the Work and Pensions Select Committee.
- New [regulations](#) have been issued that make provision for loans for mortgage interest to replace support for mortgage interest for owner-occupier housing costs from 6 April 2018.
- 73% of local authorities in England and Wales underspent their central government allocation of discretionary housing payment (DHP) funding in 2016/2017, according to new [statistics](#) from the DWP.