

Advice Bulletin: Summer 2021

The Advice Shop

We've put together this bulletin to help spread awareness of welfare rights and debt matters relevant to people in Edinburgh so that we can assist individuals, households and communities to prevent and alleviate poverty and promote social inclusion.

Over the past 12 months, our team in the Advice Shop has assisted around 4000 people to make 1800 claims for benefits, dealt with 600 disputes about benefit decisions, carried out nearly 700 benefit checks, dealt with £500,000 of personal debt and achieved over £8.5m in financial gains for clients as well as providing information and advice on all aspects of debt and welfare rights, including our specialist Macmillan partnership for people affected by cancer. Email us Advice.shop@edinburgh.gov.uk, call us on 0131 200 2360 or see our website www.edinburgh.gov.uk/advice-shop

EU Settlement Scheme updates

The deadline to apply for Settled Status was 30 June. EU, EEA or Swiss citizens or their family members resident in the UK who have not applied for Settled Status may find themselves facing difficulty not just making new benefit claims, but existing claims may be ended too.

Late applications to the EU settlement scheme can be made in certain situations though a good reason must be provided. You can find [more information](#) on the Free Movement website.

People who have been in the UK for many years may not think they needed to apply and people with significant obstacles to applying, such as those with mental health issues and other difficulties may not be aware, they need to apply.

Citizens Advice Edinburgh is still able to provide advice and assistance with EUSS applications – contact via 0131 510 5510 or contact@caed.org.uk or [CAE website](#).

There is information from the UK Government in their website gov.uk/EUSettlementScheme.

[Other information and formats](#) are available on the Home Office community group pages.

There is also [good information about late applications](#) to the EUSS on the Free Movement website.

Housing costs for under-35s

There has been a slight change to the support for housing costs available to people under the age of 35 which may benefit care leavers and people who are in homeless accommodation. For [an overview of the support available and exceptions](#) to the 'shared accommodation rate' see the Shelter Scotland website.



EEA Nationals – pre-settled status and benefit entitlement

There is currently a legal dispute over what benefits people with pre-settled status are entitled to. The dispute is known as the Fratila case which had been listed to be heard in May 2021 but is now stayed and likely to be heard nearer the end of the year. In the meantime, we would encourage people with Pre-settled Status to claim what they think they are entitled to while at the same time to consider how their status for eligibility can be established other than through PSS. As ever, people should get advice if they are uncertain on any aspect of their entitlements.

CPAG has an [update on the Fratila case](#) and [advice for claimants](#) on their website.

Rollout of video assessments for Disability Benefits

Disabled people could have a video assessment as the technology is rolled out across England, Scotland and Wales.

People who have a Work Capability Assessment for Universal Credit or New-Style Employment and Support Allowance or make a new claim to Personal Independence Payment or the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit could be invited for this type of assessment.

Video assessments will take place alongside existing telephone and paper-based assessments, which have been carried out throughout the pandemic. Face-to-face assessments for disability benefits currently remain suspended, but kept under review, aligned with the latest public health guidance. [More information about the new measures](#).

Scottish Child Payment – tackling child poverty

There has been good uptake of the new £10 per week SCP but not everyone who is eligible has applied. A low-income household with a child under six years old can be eligible for the payment. It is [easy to claim](#) via mygov.scot website or by calling 0800 182 2222.

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

The start of the new financial year in April means that some DHP claims will have expired at the end of March so people could be missing out on valuable financial support for their rent. While the DHP team is contacting people to see if claims need extended, anyone who wants to keep a claim going or to make a new claim should contact DHP straight away. [Go to the Council website for details.](#)

DHP can be used to bridge the gap between what Housing Benefit or Universal Credit pays and your housing costs. It can also be used for other housing matters such as the cost of moving home or paying a deposit on a rented property.

Rent arrears

Recent data shows that nationally, social landlords' rent arrears have reduced – see [Housing Regulator report](#) – however, levels of arrears in Edinburgh are still high and hundreds face potential court action to evict due to arrears. It is essential that all partners work together to support tenants in arrears to get assistance to address this debt and prevent homelessness.

Within the City of Edinburgh Council, new funding has enabled the development of a Multi-Disciplinary Team to focus on tenants at risk of homelessness due to rent arrears. Recruitment is still underway but initial work has achieved great results, for example with a Housing Benefit appeal that enabled a backdated payment of £7000 which totally removed the threat of court action.

While some protections are still in place that mean tenants can't be evicted at present, any rent arrears will be pursued by landlords and in time every tenant will be expected to pay their rent in full or risk eviction



Terminally ill and claiming PIP or Attendance Allowance

If a person has been given a DS1500 form by a cancer nurse specialist or other healthcare professional, then this confirms that the person has a health condition that will mean they are likely not to live beyond six months. This prognosis means that a 'special rules' claim can be made for PIP or AA. To expedite a claim swiftly, the DS1500 can be emailed to the DWP with an electronic copy of the claim form:

PIP pip.e-ds1500@dwp.gov.uk

AA AA.NEWCLAIMSSR@dwp.gov.uk

Special rules claims are usually processed and put into payment within 12-14 days.

Video relay service

DWP has extended the Video Relay Service (VRS) for British Sign Language (BSL) users to connect with all service lines.

This service allows customers to make an inbound call to DWP via a British Sign Language interpreter using a video connection. There is no need for anyone to be in the same location and customers do not have to book the service in advance. [Find out more about using Video Relay Service, watch the video and download the app.](#)

UC £20pw uplift

While millions have benefited from the £1040 p.a. uplift to UC, millions of others on 'legacy benefits' such as ESA - most of whom are disabled or have a health condition - have been left to live on a basic £73pw. There is now a [legal challenge](#), details in Osborne Law's update.

It has been confirmed that the UC £20pw uplift will be phased out in October.

Eviction from private rented tenancy

In the first case of its kind, a tenant has won a pay out from their former landlord who ended their tenancy on the basis of selling the property but who then re-let the property instead. See the [Scottish Housing News article](#).

Feedback

We'd love to hear what you think of the Advice Bulletin. Please drop us an email advice.shop.admin@edinburgh.gov.uk

Contact us

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