



News in Brief

September is upon us, and with it comes the latest round-up of benefit news.

Self-isolation payments

From 1 September, self-isolation payments will be available for some people who are affected by Covid-19. To begin with, payments will be limited to eligible individuals who live in Blackburn with Darwen, Pendle and Oldham. Once the process has proved itself to be robust, the payments will roll out to other areas.

To be entitled to the payments, claimants must:

- be employed or self-employed;
- be in receipt of Universal Credit or Working Tax Credit;
- have tested positive for COVID-19 or have been told to isolate by NHS Test and Trace;
- have agreed to self-isolate;
- have provided contact details to their local authority;
- be unable to work from home and face a loss in income as a result; and
- live in a high-risk area subject to a local lockdown.

Eligible claimants who have tested positive will receive £130 for the 10-day period of isolation. Other members of the same household who have to self-isolate for 14 days will receive a payment of £182, and non-household contacts will receive a payment of up to £182 (£13 per day), adjusted to match the length of time that they have been told to isolate by NHS Test and Trace. The payment will not affect any other benefits that the claimant receives.

For more information, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-payment-for-people-self-isolating-in-highest-risk-areas>

Shared accommodation rate exemption

The DWP has issued guidance regarding an exemption from the shared accommodation rate (SAR) for those between 25-35 who moved into hotels and B&B's during the Covid-19 outbreak as part of the 'Everyone In' initiative. An exemption from the SAR is already in place for those over 25 who have formerly resided in a homeless

hostel, and the new guidance confirms that in most cases, the hotels and B&B's used for the 'Everyone In' initiative will fall under the definition of hostel.

The guidance is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/la-welfare-direct-bulletins-2020/la-welfare-direct-82020>

Statutory Sick Pay extended...again

From the 26 August, eligibility for Statutory Sick Pay has been extended to include people who are self-isolating prior to going into hospital for planned or elective surgery.

The full details are available here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/892/made>

Local Housing Allowance uplift

In April 2020, the Local Housing Allowance rates were reset to the 30th percentile in each broad rental market area. At the time, it was not clear whether this was a temporary uplift due to the pandemic (such as the £20 per week increase in Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit), or whether it was a permanent increase. During a Select Committee meeting, Therese Coffey (the current Secretary of State for Work and Pensions) indicated that it is a 'permanent uplift'. We will keep you updated with any further developments.

The transcript of the meeting is available here:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/447/html/>

DWP Health Transformation User Research

We have been approached by a group of user researchers who work for the Health Transformation Programme at the DWP. They are specially focused on understanding and improving claimants experience of PIP and would like to hear from claimants as well as organisations that support claimants.

If this sounds like something that you would like to get involved with, then please contact them directly on health.userresearch@dwp.gov.uk

