



News in Brief

Hello all. A few more updates to get our heads around, as well as a reminder about our upcoming Forum meeting for advisers in North Yorkshire and York. It will take place via Zoom on Thursday 19 November, from 10-11.30 am. We will be hearing from Rebecca Walker on Benefit entitlement for EEA nationals post Brexit, as well as our normal Benefit update (please do spare a thought for us trying to prepare this with the rules changing almost daily).

To confirm your place and receive the Zoom details, please register at www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/wbu-forum-19-november-2020-tickets-126059512395 by Thursday 12 November 2020.

Job Support Scheme postponed, Furlough extended and SEISS changes

Just as we were beginning to get our heads around the end of furlough and the introduction of the Job Support Scheme, we find ourselves back in lockdown, with furlough firmly back in place. To reflect the progress of the pandemic, Rishi Sunak has now extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to March 2021. The fine print gives us a sense of déjà vu, as we are back to where we started – employees will receive 80% of wages capped at £2,500, with employers only having to contribute NI and pension contributions. The ratio of government and employer contributions will be reassessed in January.

Alongside this, the third payment of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant has been bumped up – from 55% of average trading profits to 80% for the November to January grant payment. The grant is capped at £2,500 per month (£7,500 in total as the grant is a lump sum covering 3 months).

Another important update for self-employed Universal Credit claimants is that the suspension of the minimum income floor, which was due to end on 12 November 2020 has now been extended to 30 April 2021.

Following all of these changes, our Coronavirus Factsheet has been updated: www.welfare-benefits-unit.org.uk/resources/

www.gov.uk/government/news/government-extends-furlough-to-march-and-increases-self-employed-support

www.gov.uk/government/news/government-extends-extra-welfare-support-for-self-employed-for-further-six-months

New regulations to solve two wages in one-month problem

It has been a painful process to get to this point, but we finally have new regulations which aim to solve the problem of two wages in one month for UC claimants. In force from November 16, the new regulations provide for the following:

‘Where a person is engaged in an employment where they are paid on a regular monthly basis and more than one payment in relation to that employment is reported in the same assessment period, the Secretary of State may, for the purposes of maintaining a regular pattern, determine that one of those payments is to be treated as employed earnings in respect of a different assessment period.’

It is difficult to overstate how significant this is – a fundamental shift to the way that UC has been set up, which will positively impact many claimants who found themselves penalised and in extreme financial hardship simply due to their date of claim.

The regulations and explanatory memorandum can be accessed here:
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/1138/made

Update on ‘untidy tenancies’

Universal Credit has had a longstanding issue with what it calls ‘untidy tenancies’ – cases where a claimant has a joint tenancy but the joint tenant has left. The remaining tenant would often be left with only a proportion of the housing costs due to them, rather than the full amount, simply because technically they still had a joint tenancy.

The DWP has announced that it has a new system for dealing with these cases and has published guidance to give details.

‘On 23 June 2020 a new ‘Record a change in joint tenancy costs’ to-do was introduced to Universal Credit Full Service, which ensures cases are automatically correctly paid each month without the need for manual payments or continued claimant intervention. New guidance has been issued to Work Coaches and Case Managers to make them aware of the changes.

The new to-do allows agents to record how many tenants live in the property and the amount of rent/service charge the claimant pays. This ensures that both absent joint tenancies (Untidy Tenancy) or unequal apportionment of rent within a housing costs support claims are paid correctly. A claimant can report this in their journal or phone.’

For more details visit www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/news/new-advice-dwp-universal-credit-calculations/

Video Relay Service

DWP has now extended Video Relay Service (VRS) for British Sign Language (BSL) users across all service lines.

You can find out more about using Video Relay Service, watch the video and download the app here: www.signvideo.co.uk/downloads/



 Advice  Publications  Training