



## ***News in Brief***

Along with the roundup of the latest news, we are pleased to announce that we have a new resource available on our website – a Benefits Checklist. The checklist breaks benefits down into different types and also groups benefits together according to life situation. We hope that this will prove useful as a quick reference guide for experienced and new advisers alike.

[Resources | Welfare Benefits Unit \(welfare-benefits-unit.org.uk\)](https://welfare-benefits-unit.org.uk)

### **Two wages in one month – process not automatic**

Following on from our update about the regulations that have been brought in to address the problem of two wages in one month, we have a development regarding what affected clients actually need to do in order to benefit from the new rules.

Neil Couling (Senior Responsible Owner for Universal Credit) admitted in a tweet on 11<sup>th</sup> November that the application of the new rules will not be automatic to start with and affected claimants may need to ask the DWP to look at their claim. If you work with clients who have been affected by this problem or who you think will be, please make sure that they are aware of the action that they need to take.

'Not able to discern salary pattern from Real Time Information data, so fully automated solution a way off. We have a list of cases where this has happened, which we will use, but it's bound to be incomplete and will get new claims too. So will also need to rely on folk coming forward.'

[twitter.com/NeilCouling/status/1326602549064032256](https://twitter.com/NeilCouling/status/1326602549064032256)

### **Attendance Allowance renewal process to restart**

The DWP have announced that they are resuming the pre-COVID renewal process for Attendance Allowance claimants – if their claim is due to expire after 8 March 2021. 'Attendance allowance review processes are reverting to previous arrangements, after changes were made in response to COVID-19.'

The first customers to be affected will be those whose attendance allowance awards expire on or after 8 March 2021. These customers will receive renewal packs in the coming weeks and will have the normal 20-week period to complete and return their packs prior to their award expiring.'

Awards that are due to end prior to 8 March 2021 will be automatically extended.

For more information see [Touchbase - 27 November 2020 \(dwp.gov.uk\)](https://www.dwp.gov.uk/touchbase-27-november-2020)

## Call for Test and Trace payment to be extended

Shadow Chancellor Anneliese Dodds has called for the eligibility criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment to be expanded, highlighting that people in the following categories are not currently entitled:

- low-paid workers who are not in receipt of specific means-tested benefits;
- those told to self-isolate by the NHS COVID-19 app;
- those whose benefits are paid to their partner;
- people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF); and
- parents and carers whose child is self-isolating.

We will keep you informed of any developments with this.

## Benefit cap grace period heads up

The benefit cap, which limits the total amount of certain benefits that any household can receive, has a number of exemptions. One of these is where the claimant(s) fall under a 'grace period'. The cap will not apply if all of the following are true:

- You are claiming Universal Credit because you stopped working or your earnings went down
- You are now earning less than £604 a month
- In each of the 12 months before your earnings went down or you stopped working, you earned the same as or more than the earnings threshold (this was £569 up to 31 March 2020 and is £604 from 1 April 2020)

This exemption, called a grace period, lasts for 9 months. The reason we are drawing your attention to this now is because the 9-month grace period for claimants whose income was affected in March when the pandemic hit is due to expire in December. Mims Davies, Minister for Employment, has stated that the DWP has no intention to extend the grace period, and that there are currently over 160,000 households within a grace period which will expire in December (although not all of these households will then be subject to a cap).

[questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-16/115677](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-16/115677)

## Universal Credit child element - CPAG calling for evidence

If you work with young people or families, you may be aware that the UC child element expires on 1st September following the young person's 19th birthday – even if the 19 year old is still in full-time, non-advanced education. This is a huge difference to the rules for Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit, where benefits remain in place until the young person turns 20 as long as they remain a qualifying young person. CPAG are appealing this and are also asking for further evidence with a view to campaigning further. If you have come across cases where this has happened, please do get in touch with the CPAG on the website below.



 Advice  Publications  Training