



News in Brief

The first edition of News in Brief for 2024 is a budget round up – bringing you the latest benefit announcements from Jeremy Hunt's speech on 6 March.

We are hard at work updating our Advisers Guide – get your preorder in here: www.welfare-benefits-unit.org.uk/publications/advisers-guide/

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Child Benefit

Following high profile campaigning from several organisations, the government have announced that they will change the eligibility criteria for Child Benefit. This will come in two stages:

- **From April 2024**, those earning up to £60,000 will be eligible for Child Benefit (up from £50,000). The rate of the High-Income Child Benefit Charge will also be halved so that those earning above £60,000 will not repay Child Benefit in full until they earn £80,000 (up from £60,000).
- The government also announced their intention to change Child Benefit eligibility **from April 2026** from an individual assessment to a household assessment. This is in order to combat the current disparity that a single person earning £50,000 would attract the High-Income Child Benefit Charge but a couple both earning £49,000 would receive Child Benefit in full.

Universal Credit Budgeting Advances

From December 2024, the repayment term for Universal Credit Budgeting Advances will increase from 12 months to 24 months. Note: the repayment term for Universal Credit Advances (at the beginning of a claim or after a significant increase in entitlement) is already 24 months.

Household Support Fund

The Household Support Fund will be extended for a further six months in England to September 2024. For updates in your area, see your local authority website.

Disability claim processing

Additional funding to increase system capacity for disability benefit claim processing was announced as part of the budget in order to meet increased demand and improve timescales for claimants.

Additional Jobcentre Support pilot

The Additional Jobcentre Support pilot, which is currently live in 90 Jobcentres across England and Scotland, will be extended by a further 12 months. Under the Additional Jobcentre Support pilot, work coaches spend more time with claimants in order to get them into work. As part of the extension, claimants will be asked to agree to revised claimant commitments at 6, 13 and 26 weeks, or risk their claims being terminated.

Other announcements

- **Debt Relief Orders:** from 6 April 2024, the £90 administration fee will be abolished.
- **National Insurance:** from 6 April 2024, the main rate of Class 1 contributions will reduce to 8% and Class 4 contributions will reduce to 6%.
- **Prepayment Meters:** following the end of the Energy Price Guarantee in March 2024, the standing charge on prepayment meters will be permanently removed to end the inequality between those paying by prepayment meter and those paying by direct debit.

