



Winter Fuel Payments

The UK Government recently announced changes to the Winter Fuel Payments which are paid to people who are over state pension age by the third Monday in September (16/09/2024). The benefit is worth £200 to pensioners aged between 66 & 79, and £300 if you are 80 or over on that date.

Winter Fuel Payments have had additional eligibility rules put in place, and now, in addition to being of pension age and resident in Great Britain, you also need to be receiving to one of the following benefits:

- pension credit,
- universal credit,
- income support,
- income-based jobseeker's allowance, or
- income-related employment and support allowance



Unfortunately, HOUSING BENEFIT is not one of the qualifying benefits as we had hoped. The Scottish Government have confirmed that the Pension Age Winter Heating Payment- which was going to replace Winter Fuel Payments in Scotland- will be deferred to 2025/2026. The Scottish Government have also confirmed that the new devolved benefit will have the same entitlement criteria as the UK Government payments.

If you, or someone in your household, will be 66 years or older on 16th September 2024, please contact the Welfare Rights Service for a benefit check. Policy in Practice have estimated that there is £23 billion pounds of unclaimed benefits in 2024 alone! Many people don't think that they'll be entitled, but it is always worthwhile to have a benefit check carried out. Even a small award of pension credit can mean someone is entitled to full housing benefit, help with their council tax, dental care, glasses and so much more. Morag & Heather are here to help make sure that people are not missing out on what they are entitled to. Please contact the Welfare Rights Service on 0141 578 0200 to make an appointment to check your entitlement.

More Help to Keep Warm

Low Income Winter Heating Assistance from Scottish Social Security, is paid if you are in receipt of income-based JSA/ESA, Income support, UC or Pension Credit and there is a period of cold weather. The date for which the one off payment of £50 has not yet been announced for this year.

Scottish Social Security also pay £251.50 to children in receipt of the highest rates of the care component of disability benefits- such as PIP, DLA, Child Disablement Payment or the new ADP. This is called **Child Winter Heating Assistance** and is paid automatically to qualifying families.

In September, many fuel suppliers also open applications for the **Warm Home Discount** which is worth £150. Each supplier sets their own criteria, and you will need to apply. It is not awarded automatically.

Back to School!

With the schools now back, if your child is 16 or over, you will need to notify the relevant agencies if your child is staying or leaving education.

Child Benefit stops when you are no longer considered responsible for your child. That can be:

On 31 May, 31 August or 30 November after your child's 16th birthday when they leave school, **or** start work at 24 hours per week or more, **or** start to get Universal Credit **or** when they start further education like a HNC or HND course and above.

However, you can continue getting Child Benefit until your child's 20th birthday if they stay in full-time non-advanced Education e.g SVQ level 3 or below. You need to tell HMRC that your child is staying on at school after they are 16 otherwise your Child Benefit will automatically stop. The Child Benefit helpline 0300 200 3100 can be contacted for any changes in circumstances!

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is a £30 per week allowance paid fortnightly in arrears to children aged 16-19 who are continuing in full time higher or further education. To qualify, the household earned income of the child must be less than £24,421 per year if there is only one child, and households with more than one dependent child must be earning £26,884 or less, before tax.

Free School Meals

If you get free school meals you may also be able to get help during the school holidays. Children in P1-5 automatically get free school meals regardless of your income. But if you are in receipt of certain benefits, you need to apply for free school meals to be able access the school clothing grant.

The qualifying benefits are available from the council's website.

You can apply as soon as you start to get one of these benefits, even if this happens during school holidays. You do not need to wait until the school terms starts again to apply.

Clothing grant

You may be able to get financial help with your child's school clothing and shoes. This help is called a 'school clothing grant'. You apply to your local council. It's normally a cash grant paid directly to your bank account.

Who can apply and the amount of money you'll get depends on your local council. Everybody who gets a school clothing grant will get at least: £120 per child of primary school age & £150 per child of secondary school age. You apply for the School Uniform Grant using the same form as applying for Free School Meals!

Contact the Welfare Rights Service if you'd like more help on any of these issues!

Scottish Carer's Assistance



The Scottish Government has been rolling out Carer's Support Payment in certain areas throughout Scotland, and will be Scotland-wide by 4th

November 2024. Carer's Support Payment is replacing Carer's Allowance for people in Scotland.

Before 04/11/2024, if you become a carer for someone on a disability benefit (DLA/PIP/ADP/AA) then you'll need to claim Carer's Allowance from the DWP. If you claim *after* the 4th November, then you'll need to claim Carer's Support Payment from Social Security Scotland. If you are already in receipt of Carer's Allowance, then you will be transferred over to the new Scottish version in the near future. Carer's Support Payment is worth £81.90 per week (the same as carer's allowance). Contact the WROs to find out more!

Carer's Supplement

Carer's Allowance Supplement is an extra payment, administered by Social Security Scotland, for people already getting Carer's Allowance from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The payment recognises the important contribution of unpaid carers across Scotland.

The eligibility dates to receive Carer's Allowance Supplement for 2024 are 8th April and 7th October.

People who are getting Carer's Allowance on the qualifying dates will automatically receive Carer's Allowance Supplement. Eligible carers will receive two payments of £288.60 as the supplement is paid as a six-month sum. The next payment of £288.60 will be paid in December for those in receipt of Carer's Allowance/Assistance on 7th October.

People do not need to apply separately as it will be paid automatically to eligible carers.

Having an underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance/Supplement, or the carer's element only on your UC is not enough to qualify for the twice-yearly supplement payments.

Best Start Grants

Pregnancy and Baby Payment

The UK Government's Sure Start Maternity Grant has been replaced with the Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment in Scotland. Social Security Scotland began taking applications from December 2018.

The Pregnancy and Baby Payment replaces and expands on the UK Government's Sure Start Maternity Grant by providing eligible families with £754.65 the birth of their first child and £377.35 on the birth of any subsequent children not putting a limit on the number of children that are supported extending the application window from 24 weeks pregnant to 6 months after the birth, giving clients longer to apply.



Early Learning Payment

The Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment is a £314.45 payment to help with the costs of early learning when a child is between 2 and 3½ years old.

Your child does not have to be in nursery to qualify, and is automatically paid once your child is the correct age, and you are getting the Scottish Child Payment of £25 per week per child.

School Payment Age

School Age Payment is a one-off payment of £314.45 per child. It helps with the costs of preparing for school when your child is first old enough to start primary school. You can get the payment for multiple children, if each child is the right age when you apply.

<u>Your child's DOB</u>	<u>Application Date</u>
01/03/19-29/02/20	01/06/24-28/02/25
01/03/20-29/02/21	01/06/25-28/02/26

More info can be found at:

[Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods - mygov.scot](https://www.mygov.scot)

Household Help Packs

Hillhead HA's Welfare Rights Service were fortunate enough to be awarded £20,000 by the BIG Lottery's Community Fund to help struggling households in the Hillhead area.

We have been using the funding to provide much needed support to households who have been experiencing financial hardship by providing emergency food and fuel vouchers. Many families were able to benefit from this funding over the school holidays when they had their kids around eating them out of house and home, and always having their phones on charge!

Similarly with what we did last year, we have also used the money to make up 'Household Help Packs' that contain essential household staples such as washing up liquid, laundry tabs, body wash, soap etc as we're aware that these items can take up a large bulk of someone's weekly shopping budget.

If you'd like a pack, please bring a bag for life (or any bag!) and the Welfare Rights Staff will make you up a pack to take away! If (like us!) your house is filled with carrier bags, then we'll gladly take any unwanted bags off your hands to make packs up for other households to take away.

We are aware how many people are struggling with the cost of living, and how many people are living hand to mouth. The Welfare Rights Service are continuing to apply for funding from other charities to continue to provide this emergency support to Hillhead tenants and residents, especially now that winter is drawing in, and people will be spending more to keep the lights on.



Move to UC Update



Universal Credit is replacing legacy benefits (Income Support, income-based ESA & JSA, Tax Credits and Housing Benefits). Since April 2023, households who receive tax credits have been getting 'migration notices' from HMRC telling them that their tax credits are coming to an end, and they need to claim Universal Credit. Now that the majority of tax credit claimants have been moved onto UC, the DWP are now inviting more benefit claimants to claim UC.

From April 2024, claimants in receipt of Income Support, Income-based Employment & Support Allowance with child tax credits, housing benefit only claims and tax credit claims with housing benefit have been sent migration notices.

From September onwards, pensioners in receipt of tax credits, and income-based Jobseekers Allowance claimants will be invited to claim Universal Credit.

Households have three months to make a claim from the date the Migration Notice was sent to ensure that you do not receive less benefits on UC than you would have on your old-style benefits. To make sure that you are not worse off on universal credit when you move over from your old benefits, the DWP will include a Transitional Protection Element- but only if you apply before the ultimate deadline date. If you do not claim Universal Credit after your deadline date, your existing benefits will stop regardless.

The Transitional Protection Element will gradually be eroded overtime- for example, if you have another child, are awarded a new element (like carers or a disability) and when your rent is increased each year. Once the Transitional Protection element has been eroded in full, or you must make a new claim- for example, you've moved in with a partner- then there is no way to get it back.

Once you've received your migration notice, do not ignore it! You can speak to the Welfare Rights Officers to work out your UC entitlement, and when would be the best time to claim.

Unlike legacy benefits, Universal Credit is a monthly benefit paid in arrears. You will be paid on the same day each month. Many claimants, their first payment includes their rent, so you will need to check your online journal and make sure that your rent is paid, otherwise, you'll fall into arrears.

You can ask for your rent to come straight to your landlord under Scottish Choices, as well as ask for your UC to be paid twice a month, if you feel that this would help you with budgeting.

Moving to Universal Credit can be scary and complex, but the Welfare Rights Service are here to help. If you've had your migration letter, or have any questions about UC, please reach out for help!

Alternatively, if you've received your migration notice, you can call the DWP's Migration helpline on: 0800 169 0328
Or you can call the Welfare Rights Service on 0141 578 0200 to make an appointment.

UC *Universal
Credit*