



North East Scotland Advice Forum is a local network for people working in advice services to share information and experiences. The Forum meets quarterly throughout the year.

## June 2023 Newsletter

If you would like an article included in the next bulletin, please contact [admin@nesaf.co.uk](mailto:admin@nesaf.co.uk)

### New posts on our website

- [Poverty Alliance, Challenge Poverty Week Monday 2nd October – Sunday 8th October](#) 24 May 2023
- [Rule changes for international students and dependents to reduce net migration](#) 24 May 2023
- [Cost of Living Payments 2023 to 2024](#) 19 May 2023
- [Access to Higher Education for migrant students is now a real right](#) 16 May 2023
- [UK Nationals arriving from Sudan to have access to benefits](#) 16 May 2023
- [Tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026](#) 16 May 2023
- [Income thresholds to be removed for Best Start Foods](#) 16 May 2023
- [Supporting EU citizens to Stay in Scotland](#) 10 May 2023
- [Ten Days to claim Pension Credit and qualify for £301 Cost of Living Payment](#) 9 May 2023
- [Millions of families miss out on cheap broadband](#) 2 May 2023

Sign up for latest news and information at [www.nesaf.co.uk/contact/](http://www.nesaf.co.uk/contact/)

Register to add and comment on our Message Boards at [www.nesaf.co.uk/wp-login.php?action=register](http://www.nesaf.co.uk/wp-login.php?action=register)

### Benefit calculator



Our benefits calculator will help you Find out what benefits you can claim.

If you are affected by Coronavirus please go through the calculator and we will tell you about your entitlements. Also see our guide To [benefits for people affected by Coronavirus](#).

The calculator is free to use, and the details you provide are anonymous.

Before you start, make sure you have information about your savings, income, pensions and existing benefits (for you and your partner).

If you run out of time, you can save your calculation and come back to it later, and pick up right where you left off.

- ⇒ Should take 10 minutes to complete
- ⇒ Please complete all fields with an asterisk(\*)

**[START >>>](#)**

### Free EUSS support in Aberdeen

24 June 2023, 10:00 - 14:00

We provide fully confidential support to EU citizens and their family members by offering immigration advice about the EU Settlement Scheme.

To book an appointment please email [EUSSreferralsaberdeen@outlook.com](mailto:EUSSreferralsaberdeen@outlook.com)

[citizensrightsproject.org/event/free-euss-support-in-aberdeen-6/](https://citizensrightsproject.org/event/free-euss-support-in-aberdeen-6/)

### Scotland: Universal Credit Local Housing Allowance monthly rates 2023 to 2024

Published 26 May 2023 [View online](#) [Download CSV 1.01 KB](#)

#### UC Monthly rates 2023-24

BRMA	Room	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Aberdeen and Shire	325.00	425.00	595.00	750.00	1000.00

## UK Nationals arriving from Sudan to have access to benefits

From Monday next week those arriving from Sudan, including UK nationals and those with a valid UK immigration status, will be exempt from residency tests to ensure they can access benefits, social housing, and homelessness assistance on arrival in the UK.

Emergency regulations, which come into force on Monday 15 May, will ensure UK nationals, Irish nationals and those with Home Office leave which provides recourse to public funds, who left Sudan as a result of the violence, will be exempt from the residency tests and therefore be able to access benefits and services faster on arrival in the UK.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Mel Stride MP said:

This has been a cross government effort, and we have responded at pace to the fast-changing circumstances so that those arriving from Sudan, including UK nationals, can receive the support they need.

As we turn to the next phase of our response, we stand ready to support those who need help as they arrive in the UK, and these regulations will enable us to provide access to benefits and services as soon as possible to those who are eligible.

Following the escalation of violence in Sudan, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, and His Majesty's Revenue and Customs have been working with other government departments to ensure a consistent approach in supporting those arriving in the UK, including UK nationals.

Some of these individuals may require access to welfare benefits and this urgent legislation exempting those arriving from residence tests will ensure that those who need it can access benefits and, where needed, homelessness assistance without delay.

Most arrivals will be able to move quickly on to their onwards destination, either their own home or that of family and friends. When arrivals do not have immediate accommodation available, the local authority may provide emergency overnight accommodation and then support people to move on. The changes made today will help people access the support they need to secure settled accommodation.

If individuals need to access benefits upon arrival they can apply through [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

### Further Information

The government has legislated to ensure it can provide support for those arriving in the UK from Sudan as quickly as possible. Those arriving in the UK from Sudan in connection with the violence which escalated on 15 April 2023 in Khartoum and across Sudan will be exempt from the residency tests for:

- DWP means-tested benefits, including Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, and Pension Credit
- Disability and Carer benefits
- Child Benefit
- Homelessness assistance
- Social housing

This means that individuals will be able to access these benefits and services when they arrive in the UK, where they meet all other eligibility requirements.

[www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-nationals-arriving-from-sudan-to-have-access-to-benefits](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-nationals-arriving-from-sudan-to-have-access-to-benefits)



## Disability Cost of Living Payment schedule

More than six million disabled people in the UK will receive their one-off £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment from 20 June.

Those being paid a disability benefit that qualifies them for the payment will receive it automatically during a two-week window starting on 20 June and finishing on 4 July.

Benefit recipients that qualify for the Disability Cost of Living payment are those who receive:

- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- Attendance Allowance
- Scottish Disability Benefits (Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment)
- Armed Forces Independence Payment
- Constant Attendance Allowance
- War Pension Mobility Supplement

Recipients must have received a payment (or later receive a payment) of one of these qualifying benefits for 1 April 2023 to get the Disability Cost of Living payment.

For those who were awaiting confirmation of their entitlement to disability benefits on 1 April, or who are waiting to be assessed for eligibility to receive disability benefits, the process may take longer, but payments will still be automatic.

Please share this information within your organisation and update your channels to reflect the payment window.

More information at [www.gov.uk/government/news/payment-window-for-150-disability-cost-of-living-payment-announced](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/payment-window-for-150-disability-cost-of-living-payment-announced)

Millions to receive  
**£150** Disability  
Cost of Living Payment

From **20 June**

Help for  
Households

## 'In-Work Poverty' One in Five DWP Staff Claiming Benefits, Survey Finds

One in five civil servants at the Department for Work and Pensions claim in-work benefits, according to a union survey.

Of the more than 5,600 staff who responded to a PCS poll, 20% said they were receiving benefits such as Universal Credit to supplement their wages.

In comparison, 9% of civil servants across all departments answered "yes" to the same question in September in a [previous questionnaire carried out by the union](#).

[www.abc.org.net/item/3879-in-work-poverty-one-in-five-dwp-staff-claiming-benefits-survey-finds](https://www.abc.org.net/item/3879-in-work-poverty-one-in-five-dwp-staff-claiming-benefits-survey-finds)



## The Disability Assistance (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2023: scrutiny report



Scottish  
Commission  
on Social  
Security

The Scottish Commission on Social Security's scrutiny report on the draft Disability Assistance (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2023

The Scottish Commission on Social Security (SCoSS) has recommended that Social Security Scotland should issue clearer guidance to claimants transferring to adult disability payment (ADP) from other disability benefits.

- **Recommendation 1:** The Scottish Government should ensure that guidance to decision-makers clearly explains how the dates for the last payment of CDP and the first payment of ADP are established. Communications to individuals moving from CDP to ADP should state the expected dates at the earliest opportunity.
- **Recommendation 2:** Social Security Scotland should advise individuals transferring from CDP to ADP of the potential for additions to UK benefits payable to the individual, their parent or a carer to be affected. The Scottish Government should work closely with the DWP to explore how take-up of increased entitlements in the UK system can be maximised and how the risk of overpayments can be minimised where the move to ADP results in reduced entitlement in the UK system.
- **Recommendation 3:** The Scottish Government should explain what steps it is taking to ensure individuals still in receipt of DLA or PIP receive the correct guidance on where to report a change of circumstances and that the Department for Work and Pensions and Social Security Scotland follow the correct processes when changes of circumstances are reported.

[Download report](#) or [View this document online](#)

## Supporting EU citizens to Stay in Scotland

Continued funding announced on Europe Day.

More EU citizens will be supported to remain in Scotland, thanks to renewed funding for the Stay in Scotland campaign.

In partnership with the Citizens' Rights Project, COSLA and Settled - an independent charity helping EU citizens to stay in the UK – over £200,000 will help vulnerable people apply to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS).

### Background

The *Stay in Scotland* campaign was launched in 2019 to help EU citizens understand and secure their rights through the uncertainties presented by Brexit.

Throughout the campaign, more than £2 million has been provided to community organisations to help people apply for settled status. Funding of £216,850 will be given for 2023-2024.

More information about how to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme: [EU citizens living in Scotland - mygov.scot](#)

The Independent Monitoring Authority recently won its judicial review against the Home Office, with the court agreeing that EU citizens should not lose their rights if they fail to re-apply to the EUSS before the expiry of their pre-settled status.

<https://www.gov.scot/news/supporting-eu-citizens-to-stay-in-scotland/>





## Income thresholds to be removed for Best Start Foods

Published 12 May 2023 Part of [Cost of living crisis](#), [Children and families](#), [Equality and rights](#)

An estimated 20,000 additional people will become eligible for additional help to buy healthy foods when income thresholds are removed for Best Start Foods payments.

The Scottish Government benefit provides help to pregnant women or their partners as well as families with children aged up to three years old, so they can buy healthy food, milk or baby formula.

It is currently paid to people who receive qualifying benefits, so long as their incomes are not above set thresholds. The Scottish Government will introduce regulations that remove those thresholds increasing eligibility for Best Start Foods to around an additional 20,000 people from February 2024.

Social Justice Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville said:

“Tackling poverty and protecting people from harm is one of the Scottish Government’s three critical missions. Rising food prices disproportionately hurt those on the lowest incomes, so removing the threshold for qualifying benefits means around 20,000 people will now get vital help to buy healthy foods.

“Best Start Foods is one of our five family payments, including the Scottish Child Payment, which together could be worth more than £10,000 by the time a first child turns six and more than £20,000 by the time an eligible child is 16.

“As set out in our tackling child poverty plan, we will use all the resources available to provide immediate support to families, while seeking more powers to enable us to truly tackle poverty.”

### Background

The Scottish Government replaced the UK Healthy Start Voucher scheme in Scotland with Best Start Foods on 12 August 2019

Best Start Foods is delivered via a prepaid card and provides £19.80 every four weeks throughout pregnancy, £39.60 every four weeks from birth until a child turns one, then £19.80 every four weeks until a child turns three.

Applicants over 18 need to be in receipt of a qualifying benefit (Universal Credit, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit with Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Pension Credit, income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). At present [income thresholds](#) also apply for some of these qualifying benefits.

[Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods – mygov.scot](#)

[Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026](#)





## 'Education is supposed to be free for all' – Research briefing

In Scotland, we believe that asylum seekers are currently being denied their right to education. Here we share the experiences of asylum seekers calling for an education system that provides a ladder of hope to build a brighter future.

This research was carried out as part of the [Rights in Action](#) project being conducted by the Poverty Alliance. Rights in Action is working with communities across Scotland to raise awareness of how human rights can be used as a tool in the fight against poverty, to increase their capacity to address human rights issues and create a supportive community of practice and to support participatory research projects on human rights issues in Scotland.

As part of Rights in Action, the Poverty Alliance have worked with a group of four community researchers with experience of the asylum system on a participatory research project examining barriers to education faced by asylum seekers in Scotland.

We would like to thank the participants who took part in this research for their time and for sharing their experiences and knowledge.

Rights in Action is funded by the [Scottish Government's Equality and Human Rights Fund managed and supported by Inspiring Scotland](#).

You can [download the research briefing from here](#)

## Access to Higher Education for migrant students is now a real right

JustRight Scotland has been [campaigning](#) – together with [Maryhill Integration Network](#) and [JustCitizens](#), to extend the right to access education for migrant students in Scotland for over two years.

Today we welcome the Scottish Government's [announcement](#) that tuition fees will be extended to migrant students in Scotland allowing more young people to access higher education, following the publication of the [consultation analysis](#) on the Residency criteria for access to financial support in Further and Higher Education.

This impactful change wouldn't have been possible without the outstanding work of [#OurGradesNotVisas](#) campaign team and the [successful legal challenge](#) achieved by our legal team when deciding to take our client's case to court as there was a clear "issue of fairness and human rights at stake" on access to financial support for college and university funding regarding the '[long-residency](#)' requirement.

[www.justrightscotland.org.uk/2023/05/access-to-higher-education-for-migrant-students-is-now-a-real-right/](http://www.justrightscotland.org.uk/2023/05/access-to-higher-education-for-migrant-students-is-now-a-real-right/)

## SCARF—EVENTS

We will be attending a range of events this coming month including:

- RGU TechFest (3rd/4th June),
- Scottish Self-Build & Renovations (17th June), and
- Aberdeen Highland Games (18th June).

Check out our social channels for more info on these!

Scarf can arrange and attend both face to face and online events. We aim to support other organisations by delivering advice and information to their customers, staff, or the general public.

If you are interested in having an advisor attend your event, get in touch with us by completing the form below.

[Event Request Form](#)





## Rule changes for international students and dependents to reduce net migration

In a written statement to parliament today, Suella Braverman **announced** that the government intends to tighten the rules for international students in an attempt to bring down net migration figures, which are due to be published this Thursday, 25 May. The government have also **published** a news story to confirm the plans announced in the written statement.

The government plans include:

1. Removing the right for international students to bring dependants unless they are on postgraduate courses currently designated as research programmes.
2. Removing the ability for international students to switch out of the student route into work routes before their studies have been completed.
3. Reviewing the maintenance requirements for students and dependants.
4. Steps to clamp down on unscrupulous education agents who may be supporting inappropriate applications to sell immigration not education.
5. Better communicating immigration rules to the higher education sector and to international students.
6. Improved and more targeted enforcement activity.

The government intends to consult with the higher education sector and key stakeholders before introducing any changes, but equally hopes these plans can be implemented as soon as possible, estimating that changes will come into force in January 2024.

<https://freemovement.org.uk/rule-changes-for-international-students-and-dependents-to-reduce-net-migration/>

## Age Scotland response to Ofgem price cap announcement



Age Scotland's Chief Executive, Mark O'Donnell, said:

"On the surface, it's welcome news that prices are set to drop from July, but today's announcement will bring no real relief to older people struggling with unmanageable bills.

"When you consider the current price cap is still over 60% higher than that of two years ago, it's no wonder so many households have faced increasing challenges in trying to make ends meet.

"For the 4 in 10 older households living in fuel poverty, energy bills will remain unaffordable, especially as there is no financial support currently available to ease the strain.

"While there may be a brief respite during the summer months when people tend to use less energy, we will find ourselves repeating the same vicious cycle again come winter without sufficient preventative action, with hundreds of thousands of older people at further risk of being pushed into poverty.

"The **Warmer Homes Scotland scheme** is also closed to new applications for 6 months. There is a risk of a massive influx when it reopens in October, likely leading to a backlog and making it difficult for people to plan in advance of the colder weather.

"As the UK Government look at how they reform the energy market, they should develop a social tariff for households on low incomes which would give longer term relief to those who need it most."

[www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/latest-news/2023/may/age-scotland-response-to-ofgem-price-cap-announcement/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/latest-news/2023/may/age-scotland-response-to-ofgem-price-cap-announcement/)



## Bankruptcy and Diligence (Scotland) Bill

A new Bill aims to change the laws around bankruptcy in Scotland – the Bankruptcy and Diligence Bill. The Economy and Fair Work Committee in the Scottish Parliament wants to know what you think about the proposed changes.

The Committee particularly wants to hear from people with experience of severe financial difficulties. If you have lived experience of these issues, your views will be important in shaping how the Bill is scrutinised.

Some of the changes include:

- Adding a “mental health moratorium” – meaning debt enforcement can be frozen for someone with serious mental health problems
- Requiring creditors to give a debtor information about debt advice before enforcement
- Requiring those responsible for seizing a debtor’s assets to tell creditors when this has not been successful, and why

To read more about the detail of the Bill, visit the [Bill information page](#).

### Sharing your views

The Economy and Fair Work Committee is responsible for scrutinising the Bill in the Scottish Parliament. The Committee would like to hear your views on the changes that are proposed by the Bill.

You can let us know what you think by answering the questions outlined below.

Please answer any questions that are of interest to you. You don’t need to answer all of them.

[Click here to read the questions](#)

### How to submit your views

Please submit your views using the online submission form, linked to below. We welcome written views in English, Gaelic, Scots or any other language. This call for views closes on Friday 21 July 2023.

**The call for views closes on 21 July 2023.**

Give us your views - [Click here to complete the submission form](#)

<https://yourviews.parliament.scot/efw/bankruptcy-bill/>



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Energy Advice to Suit You

Watch our Co-chief Executive, David Mackay, talk about our work and the impact it's having in the North East.

[Watch Here!](#)

## Soft Measures

Free energy efficiency measures are available to householders across the North East - delivered directly to your door! Subject to location, eligibility, etc.

Households could have free energy efficient lightbulbs, draught -proofing measures and more delivered by Scarf advisors

[Contact us here](#)



 energy-efficient lighting

 draught-proofing

 water tank insulation

 heat reflector panels



# Tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026

The second tackling child poverty delivery plan due under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. Outlining action for the period 2022 to 2026.

**Best Start, Bright Futures sets out how we will work together to deliver on Scotland's national mission to tackle child poverty. It is not solely a plan for the Scottish Government, it is a plan for all of Scotland, recognising the contribution all parts of society must make to deliver the change needed for children and families.**

Successfully tackling child poverty requires our approach to evolve, to focus on outcomes rather than inputs, and to deliver evidence-informed wide ranging action across Scotland, which works together to wraparound and support families. It will require the transformation of our economy, further investment in key infrastructure such as child-care and transport, and provision of the right high-quality support at the right time in order to help families to move out of poverty.

No one action in isolation can make the change needed. It is the cumulative impact of action across sectors, by all partners, in all parts of Scotland, which will make the difference for children and families.

**Best Start, Bright Futures sets out a vision for Scotland, the changes that are needed to achieve this, and the actions we will take with partners to deliver that change. The plan outlines Scotland's offer to families in order to tackle child poverty head on.**

This plan is built on the foundations of the work we have undertaken together over the last four years, since the publication of '**Every Child, Every Chance**'. That includes new and improved supports such as those delivered through Social Security Scotland, including the Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grant, Scotland's unique approach to employability through the No One Left Behind, our commitment to deliver more warm and affordable homes and action to strengthen the impact of public sector spend through Fair Work First.

Importantly, it also builds on the work we have taken through our response to COVID-19, which has seen us work together in new ways – breaking down barriers to progress, and putting people at the heart of decision making. Throughout this plan we highlight the progress we have already made, and what more is needed.

In delivering our national mission we are building on the available evidence of what works and focusing efforts on the three drivers of child poverty reduction and the six priority family types at greatest risk of poverty. Focusing in this way will ensure that our actions make the difference needed.

**We do not underestimate the challenge in front of us. When the child poverty targets were set by the Scottish Parliament in 2017 they were ambitious. Since then, the impacts of EU Exit and COVID-19, compounded by the current cost of living crisis and rising inflation, make these targets even more challenging.**

But these challenges have not reduced our ambition, rather, they have strengthened our resolve to work together to make an even greater impact on the lives of children and their families.

To provide the immediate support families need, and to deliver further progress against the interim targets, we will further enhance investment in social security support over the coming year. This includes increasing the Scottish Child Payment to £25 per week per child by the end of 2022 and taking steps to mitigate the Benefit Cap as fully as we can within the scope of devolved powers, taking immediate steps to support as many families as possible in 2022.

We will also take immediate steps to significantly scale up employment support for parents, with the aim of supporting up to 12,000 parents to ultimately enter and sustain employment.

**In large part due to the actions we have taken to date, together with those set out in this plan, using current projections we anticipate that around 17% of children will live in relative poverty in 2023, with over 60,000 fewer children living in poverty since the Act was passed in 2017. Whilst economic modelling cannot precisely account for what may happen, particularly in the context of the cost of living crisis, inflation rises and increasing international instability, we anticipate on the basis of current information that over 50,000 fewer children will live in absolute poverty compared to 2017, with around 16% of children projected to live in absolute poverty in 2023. However, as the impact of the economic situation becomes clearer, this Government will continue to consider further actions required over the lifetime of this plan to achieve these targets, to support families, and break the cycle of child poverty.**

In addition to their direct impact on the child poverty targets, the actions set out in this plan will lay the foundation for the transformation in our economy and public services that will be required to meet the 2030 targets, and to set Scotland on a path for sustained poverty reduction.

**We recognise the challenge in front of us, and call on all of our partners, and all of Scotland to get behind these actions, and to take further steps to contribute to tackling child poverty.**

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-start-bright-futures-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2022-26/pages/3/>

