

Your guide to Welfare Reform



The welfare benefits system is changing. This booklet outlines some of the Government's welfare benefit changes that could affect you.



MANCHESTER
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This booklet outlines some of the Government's welfare benefit changes that could affect you. Find out how the changes might affect you by reading this booklet.

If you are affected by housing changes, perhaps in the way your rent is paid or the number of bedrooms you have, talk to your landlord or housing provider. For changes affecting the amount of money/benefits you receive each week and the way this is paid to you, you should talk to someone who can help you plan your budget and manage your money carefully.

All the main Welfare Reform changes are listed in this booklet with advice on where to go for help. At the back of this booklet you will find a list of organisations that can give you advice. For up-to-date information on all the changes visit www.manchester.gov.uk/benefits.

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Timeline of Welfare Reform changes

The main Welfare Reform changes are outlined below.



April 2013

- Introduction of Council Tax Support scheme. This affects all people of working age who used to claim Council Tax Benefit.
- Disability Living Allowance replaced by Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for new claims.
- Housing Benefit cut by 14–25% of rent for working-age people underoccupying social housing. This affects all people of working age who claim Housing Benefit and who live in Council or housing association property and have one or more bedrooms they don't need.



By September 2013

- Introduction of overall Benefit Cap for working-age households, initially just affecting those that claim Housing Benefit. This will affect people of working age who are claiming benefits, limiting the amount of money they can claim each week. Due to start summer 2013.



From October 2013 (to be confirmed by the Government)

- Introduction of Universal Credit. This affects anyone of working age who is claiming benefits. Universal Credit is a new way of paying benefits. Due to start from October 2013.
- Reassessment of existing DLA claims for PIP. This affects people aged between 16 and 64 who currently receive Disability Living Allowance.



By December 2017 (to be confirmed by the Government)

- All claimants of working age transferred to Universal Credit.

Under Occupancy rules

From April 2013, Government changes mean the amount of Housing Benefit paid to working-age tenants who live in Council or housing association properties will be reduced where they have more bedrooms than they need.

A maximum of two children are expected to share a bedroom based on the rules outlined.

If you have one bedroom more than you need, your Housing Benefit will be based on 86% of your rent. If you have two bedrooms more than you need, your Housing Benefit will be based on 75% of your rent.

See opposite page for more details.

For example

- Couples with no children would need only one bedroom
- A single parent with one or two children under 10 would need two bedrooms
- Couples with three children (two boys and a girl) aged 6, 8 and 12 would need three bedrooms
- A maximum of two children are expected to share a bedroom based on the rules outlined

How many bedrooms will my Housing Benefit cover?



If you are pregnant, you will only be able to count your child when it is born.



If you are single, part of a couple, or a lone parent, your Housing Benefit will cover one bedroom.

+



An additional bedroom for a child.

as above

+



Children aged under 10 – one bedroom for two children of either sex.

as above

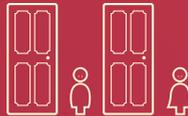
+



Children aged up to 16 – one bedroom for two children of the same sex.

as above

+



Children aged 10 and over – one bedroom for children of the opposite sex.

as above

+



People aged 16+ – one bedroom for person or couple.

as above

+



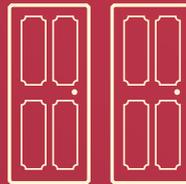
One bedroom for a carer (who does not normally live at the property) if the claimant or their partner receives regular overnight care and needs the use of the extra bedroom.

How much could my benefit be cut by?

If you have more bedrooms than you need, the amount of rent used to work out your Housing Benefit will be reduced by:



14% of the rent for one spare bedroom.



25% of the rent for two or more spare bedrooms.

When do the changes take effect?



The Under Occupancy rules for all social sector Housing Benefit claimants take effect from April 2013.

When Universal Credit is introduced from October 2013, Housing Benefit will become the housing element of Universal Credit and the same size criteria rules will apply.

Anyone affected is likely to have been contacted by their landlord and the Council's Benefits Service.

For more information and advice:

Contact your landlord or contact the Council's Benefits Service – details on page 13.

Anyone affected by this change who is a foster carer or whose property has been adapted should contact the Council's Benefits Service.

There is a discretionary scheme for the vulnerable and those under extreme hardship.

Is my Disability Living Allowance affected?

From April 2013, people aged between 16 and 64 in receipt of Disability Living Allowance will be reassessed for a new benefit called **Personal Independence Payment**. A PIP is a tax-free benefit for disabled children and adults to help with the extra costs they may have because of their disability.

To receive a PIP you must be aged between:



You must also:

Satisfy the daily living and/or mobility activities test for three months prior to claiming and satisfy this test for at least a further nine months after claiming. The tests are set by the Department for Work and Pensions and carried out by ATOS Healthcare.

When do the changes take effect?



From April 2013 all new claims will be for Personal Independence Payment.



From October 2013 reassessment will start for all those on fixed-period DLA.



From October 2015 existing DLA claimants will be reassessed for PIP.

For more information and advice:
Department for Work and Pensions
www.gov.uk/pip

What is the Benefit Cap?

The Government has stated that there will be a cap on the amount of benefits a working-age single person or family can receive. This means there will be a limit on the total amount of all benefits people can claim.

For a single person
(no children)



The cap will be:

£350

a week.

For single parents and couples
(with or without children)*



The cap will be:

£500

a week.

* The cap remains the same regardless of how many children are in the household.

When do the changes take effect?



The Benefit Cap takes effect from summer 2013.

If you are expected to be affected by the Benefit Cap, you will have already been contacted by the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Council's Benefit Service. People living in social housing may also have been contacted by their housing provider/landlord.

For more information and advice:

- Contact your local Jobcentre Plus office or visit www.gov.uk/benefit-cap
- Benefit Enquiries 0161 234 5003
- Contact the Council's Benefits Service – see page 13.

What benefits come under the cap?

If you are already getting more than £500 (family) or £350 (single person) a week in benefit, your Housing Benefit will be reduced.

The benefits that count towards the cap are:

Employment and Support Allowance	Jobseeker's Allowance
Guardian's Allowance	Housing Benefit
Widowed Mothers Allowance	Widowed Parent's Allowance
Child Benefit	Child Tax Credit
Incapacity Benefit	Income Support
Maternity Allowance	Widow's Pension
Bereavement Allowance	Carer's Allowance
War Disablement Pension	

And the exemptions?

There are some exemptions and the Benefit Cap does not apply where any household member receives any of the following benefits:

Disability Allowance (or PIP) from April 2013	Attendance Allowance
Working Tax Credit	The support part of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
War Widow or Widower's Pension	Industrial Injuries Benefit

Within these groups there are some technical areas.
If you are not sure, please ask.

Can I still get help with my council tax?

In April 2013, the national Council Tax Benefit scheme will be abolished by the Government and be replaced by a council-determined scheme and with less money from the Government.

The new Council Tax Support scheme will affect people who currently claim Council Tax Benefit, and any new claims for help with council tax from April 2013.

The new scheme means:

- All working-age residents will be required to pay at least 8.5% of their council tax bill
- People of Pension Credit age can continue to receive 100% Council Tax Support where applicable (one of a couple needs to have reached this age)

When do the changes take effect?



The new scheme will take effect from April 2013.

People affected by these changes will have been directly contacted by the Council's Benefits Service.

What do I need to do?

You will get your bill at the end of March. Please open this, check it and give us a ring if you want to make a different payment plan or set up a Direct Debit.

For more information and advice:

- Contact the Council's Benefits Service – see page 13.

There is a discretionary scheme for the vulnerable and those under extreme hardship.



What is Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)?

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) replaces Incapacity Benefit.

Anyone claiming Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, Income Support due to being unfit for work, or people of working age who are claiming Sickness Benefit will be invited by the Department for Work and Pensions to have a Work Capability Assessment. Entitlement to ESA is based on a person's functional ability rather than the condition itself.

The Assessment will be carried out by ATOS with a healthcare professional, and the Department for Work and Pensions will use this to decide which of the following benefits you are entitled to:

- Paid Employment and Support Allowance with a Support element
- Paid Employment and Support Allowance within the Work Related Activity Group
- The option to claim Jobseeker's Allowance if deemed fit for work.

When do the changes take effect?

By March 2014 all existing claimants of the above benefits will have been invited to a Work Capability Assessment. You may have already had an Assessment. The Department for Work and Pensions will write to people when their Assessment becomes due.

For more information and advice:

- Contact your local Jobcentre Plus office
- www.gov.uk/employment-supportallowance/overview
- DWP Benefit Enquiry Line
0800 88 22 00
- DWP Benefit Enquiry Textphone
0800 24 33 55.



What is Universal Credit?

The Government is going to introduce a new way of paying benefits called Universal Credit. It combines a number of out-of-work benefits and in-work benefits into one. Universal Credit will be paid monthly in arrears as a single payment to one person in each household.

The single payment replaces the individual benefits of:

- Income Support
- Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Related Employment Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit.

To receive the payment you will need a bank/building society account (or similar banking service). Claims will normally need to be made online.

The single monthly payment means you will be more financially independent and the monthly payment imitates a monthly wage. If you pay rent, you will need to make arrangements to pay your weekly or monthly rent from your Universal Credit payment.

When do the changes take effect?

Between October 2013 and April 2014 all new claims from couples, owner-occupiers and jobseekers with children will be treated as claims for Universal Credit.



Between April 2014 and 2017 existing claimants will be moved to Universal Credit on a phased basis.



For more information and advice:

- The Department for Work and Pensions will be contacting all benefit claimants who will be affected by Universal Credit
- visit www.dwp.gov.uk

Where can I get more information?

Visit the website for further information on Housing Benefit, help with council tax changes, to check what you are entitled to, and to make a claim online: www.manchester.gov.uk/benefits

To contact the Benefits Service:

- Make an appointment online – follow the links at: www.manchester.gov.uk/benefits
- benefit.enquiries@manchester.gov.uk
- Call 0161 234 5003. Textphone for customers with hearing difficulties who have textphones: 0161 953 8301
- The Benefits Service, PO Box 3, Manchester M15 5BA
- See an adviser at the Council's Customer Service Centre at Number One First Street (junction of Whitworth Street West and Albion Street) in the city centre, or at a local office or library near you. You will need to make an appointment first, so please call the number above or make an appointment online.

From 1 July 2013, the Customer Service Centre will be located on the ground floor of the Town Hall Extension.

To get a benefit claim form:

- You can download a form to print out and fill in at: www.manchester.gov.uk/benefits
- Pick up a claim form from your local library, from our Customer Service Centre, or by calling at a reception point in your local area – please visit the website or call our number to find out where your nearest reception point is. You don't need an appointment to do this.

Support in your local library

Residents can visit their local library, where staff can offer advice on sources of further support. Certain libraries have trained staff who can check and validate benefit claim forms, and some also host benefits advice sessions.

All libraries have free-to-use computers with internet access for library members, and Digital Champion volunteers may be able to help those who are not confident using computers, including beginners.

Visit www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries or call 0161 234 1991 to find out what is available at your library.

Where can I find help?

Help with rent

Online, face-to-face and over-the-phone advice for tenants of social housing and private landlords within Greater Manchester who claim Housing Benefit.

www.helpwithrent.org.uk
0845 120 2093

Mind Your Money

A free service available for tenants living in social housing in Manchester who are out of work. They can help you manage your money, deal with debts, open a bank account, and deal with some of the benefit changes taking place.

citysouthmanchester.co.uk/mind-your-money
0800 840 1444

Manchester Citizens Advice Bureau

Manchester CAB can help you understand your rights on a range of issues, including benefits, housing, employment and debt, as well as consumer and legal issues.

www.manchestercab.org
08444 111222 (One Stop Advice Line)

Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES)

MAES offers support that could help you get back into work. As well as offering a wide range of courses, the service gives advice on how to write a CV, interview techniques, and on the best ways to access potential employers.

www.manchester.gov.uk/adulted

The Manchester Credit Union

Manchester Credit Union is a not-for-profit financial co-operative. It offers savings, affordable loans, and a range of financial services, including money guidance sessions.

www.manchestercreditunion.co.uk
0161 231 5222

South Manchester Credit Union

South Manchester Credit Union is a not-for-profit financial co-operative for people who live or work in south Manchester. It offers savings schemes and affordable loans to members.

www.smcreditunion.co.uk
0161 448 0200

Gingerbread – support for single parents

Gingerbread provides support for single parents.

www.gingerbread.org.uk
0808 802 0925

National Debt Line

A free confidential and impartial service offering advice on how to deal with debt problems.

www.nationaldebtline.co.uk
0808 808 4000

Money Advice Service

A free unbiased service set up by the Government to give money advice to anyone in the UK.

www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk
0300 500 5000

Work Clubs

At a Work Club you can meet other people looking for work, find out about local jobs and get help to apply for jobs or training.

www.manchester.gov.uk/workclubsmap

Jobcentre Plus

Check out current job vacancies advertised by Jobcentre Plus or you can visit your local Job Centre Plus office.

www.gov.uk/jobsearch

0845 6060 234

The National Careers Service

The National Careers Service can help anyone over the age of 13 who is looking for careers advice or work, or who would like to change their career.

www.direct.gov.uknationalcareersservice

0800 100 900

Volunteer Centre Manchester

The Volunteer Centre Manchester offers advice on getting into volunteering, which can help you gain new skills and experience and meet new people.

www.volunteercentremanchester.co.uk

0161 830 4770

Discretionary Housing Payment and Discretionary Council Tax schemes

Help if you are struggling to pay your rent or council tax and you have unusual circumstances that are causing you extreme hardship or mean you are at risk of becoming homeless.

Contact the Benefits Office

The National Apprenticeship Service

The National Apprenticeship Service can help you find out if a job with training is right for you, and where there are opportunities in your area.

www.apprenticeships.org.uk

0800 0150600

The Blue Orchid – starting a business

The Blue Orchid provides a flexible programme of one-to-one support and workshops for anyone living in Manchester who is interested in starting their own business.

www.theblueorchid.co.uk

0161 341 0245

The Prince's Trust

The Prince's Trust supports 13 to 30-year-olds who have struggled at or been excluded from school, have been in care, are long-term unemployed, or have been in trouble with the law.

www.princes-trust.org.uk

0161 763 5111

Breakthrough UK

Breakthrough UK supports disabled people in Manchester to find employment and training.

www.breakthrough-uk.co.uk

0161 273 5412

Remploy

If you have a disability or health condition and want to start work or return to work, Remploy can help you.

www.remploy.co.uk

0845 155 2700

This booklet is available in other languages, Braille and large print. Please contact us on 0161 234 5003 if any of these would be useful to you.

For information in your language call 0161 234 5003

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আপনার ভাষায় তথ্যের জন্য টেলিফোন করুন 0161 234 5003 এই নম্বরে।

Za informacije na vašem jeziku, nazovite 0161 234 5003

如欲索取用閣下語言編制的資料，請致電 0161 234 5003

आपनी भाषाમાં माहिती मेलववां माटे, 0161 234 5003 नंवर पर होल 520

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Đề có thêm thông tin bằng ngôn ngữ của bạn, hãy gọi 0161 234 5003

If you are African or African Caribbean, call 0161 234 5003

www.manchester.gov.uk



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