



News in Brief

Welcome to the October News in Brief – keeping you up to date with all the latest benefit changes and news.

There are still places available on our upcoming **Benefits for Disabled Young people including Students** course. Taking place on **Tuesday 5 November 2024** between **10.00 – 4.00**, this course will look in detail at what happens to parent claims as young people approach key ages (such as 16, 19 or 20) or leave education. Benefits available to disabled young people are also covered, including how disabled students can claim Universal Credit while in education. **Book here:** <https://www.welfare-benefits-unit.org.uk/training/apply-for-training/>

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Labour Party conference

At the Labour Party conference, the Prime Minister has outlined several of his benefit priorities.

- ‘We will get the welfare bill down because we will tackle long-term sickness and support people back to work. We will make every penny work for you because we will root out waste and go after tax avoiders’
- Securing the triple lock State Pension
- ‘We will legislate to stop benefit fraud. Do everything we can to tackle worklessness’.
- Introducing a ‘youth guarantee that will eradicate inactivity and unemployment for our young people – once and for all’

Following the conference – the government announced that it would bring forward a ‘Fraud, Error and Debt Bill in this parliamentary session to crack down on fraud in the social security system.’

For the Prime Minister's full speech, visit: <https://labour.org.uk/updates/press-releases/keir-starmer-speech-at-labour-party-conference-2024/>

For details about the new bill, visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-laws-to-be-introduced-to-crack-down-on-fraud>

Household Support Fund extended

The Household Support Fund has been extended for a further six months. An additional £491 million will be given to local authorities, with separate funding also given to Scotland.

'This funding will work to help those in need. Pensioners and others struggling with the cost of living over the colder months should contact their local council to see what support may be available to them.'

Contact your local authority for further details.

For more information, visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-support-extended-to-help-struggling-households-with-bills-and-essential-costs-over-winter>

Winter Fuel Payment – guidance issued

As we are sure you are aware, Rachel Reeves, the new Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, has announced changes to the eligibility criteria for Winter Fuel Payment in England and Wales. From Winter 2024/25, as well as being over State Pension age, you must be in receipt of Pension Credit, Universal Credit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance.

She also announced that the government intend to accelerate the plans to bring together Pension Credit and State Pension age Housing Benefit, which was originally intended to begin in 2028.

The DWP have published new guidance about the Winter Fuel Payment changes, which can be found here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66f41596a31f45a9c765ebe1/adm-chapter-l5-winter-fuel-payments.pdf>

For the full statement, visit: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-29/debates/45E1221B-F210-4132-8A8E-711B96F4D503/PublicSpendingInheritance>

Support for Mortgage Interest – interest rate change

From 9 September, the interest rate used to calculate SMI mortgage payments has increased to 3.66%. As a reminder, this is different to the rate that is used to calculate the repayment amounts – currently at 3.9%.

For more information, visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-mortgage-interest-statistics-background-and-methodology/support-for-mortgage-interest-statistics-background-and-methodology#background-information-timeline>

Care leaver bill

A Private Members' Bill which seeks to raise the Universal Credit standard allowance to the 25 and over rate for all care leavers has received its first reading in the House of Lords. We will keep you updated with any developments.

You can follow the progress of the bill here: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3763>

