

# Housing Benefit Direct issue 146 March 2014



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## Editorial

This month's edition is short and sweet so I am following suit with a short covering note.

Universal Credit continues to roll out with Bath and Harrogate offering a service to new jobseekers from 24 February. The next stages of roll-out will include new claims from couples in existing live running sites and roll out across more of the North West of England.

You will be aware of the Prime Minister's announcement in November of restrictions on access to benefits for EEA migrants. This month's edition outlines the key three changes which have been made or will be made by 1 April.

Finally, we have information on the Money Advice Service and new videos which help claimants with different aspects of Universal Credit including concerns about paying for rent. These are available on the Money Advice Service website.

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## Changes to migrant claimants' access to DWP Benefits

Following the Prime Minister's announcement in November 2013, a number of measures are being introduced to restrict migrants' access to benefits.

Firstly a stronger and more robust Habitual Residence Test was introduced in December 2013.

In January 2014, a 3 month residency test was introduced for European Economic Area (EEA) jobseekers, or British nationals returning from living abroad. These claimants will be unable to claim income-based Jobseeker's Allowance until they have lived in the UK or the Common Travel Area for three months. Also from January 2014, EEA jobseekers will only be able to get income-based Jobseeker's Allowance for six months. After six months only those who have a job offer or can prove they have a genuine chance of finding work will be able to continue claiming.

From 1 March 2014, a Minimum Earnings Threshold will help determine whether an EEA national's work can be treated as genuine and effective for the purpose of claiming income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit. Further details can be found in circular [HB A3/2014](#)

From 1 April 2014, EEA jobseekers will no longer be able to get Housing Benefit even if they get income-based Jobseeker's Allowance. This will only apply to new claims to Housing Benefit from this date. Full details of the clerical solution and the legislation for this measure will be set out in a Housing Benefit circular, which will be issued in advance of the legislation coming into force.

Any enquiries relating to this item should be sent to [iu.crosscutting@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:iu.crosscutting@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

## Universal Credit goes live in Bath and Harrogate

From 24 February Bath and Harrogate became the next two jobcentres to take claims for Universal Credit from new jobseekers, meeting our commitment to rollout Universal Credit in a carefully, controlled way.

We have already demonstrated this with the successful launch of the Pathfinder in April and July 2013 and with the expansion of Universal Credit to Hammersmith in October and Rugby and Inverness in November 2013.

We will continue to expand our current live service so that from summer 2014 we will start to take new claims for Universal Credit from couples and, in the autumn, from families. Once it's safely tested we will also expand the service to cover more of the North West of England

Take a look at the [press notice](#) for more information or [GOV.UK](#)

## Universal Credit gets animated with the Money Advice Service

The [Money Advice Service](#) is an independent service set up by the government to help people manage their money better. It provides a wealth of other Universal Credit information online, where partners and claimants can access extra support material on how to budget.

Five animated videos to help claimants understand different aspects of Universal Credit are now available on the Money Advice Service website:

- [How to choose a bank account](#)
- [How to open a bank account](#)
- [How to make payments using your bank account](#)
- [How to use your bank account to make budgeting easier](#)
- [Worried about paying your rent?](#)

The Money Advice Service developed the videos in close collaboration with DWP and with the help of stakeholders from the banking and housing sectors.

Four of the videos cover the steps involved in choosing, opening, setting up and managing a bank account. It will be particularly useful for those people who currently do not have or use a bank account.

The fifth video, called 'Worried about paying your rent', provides easy to follow information and guidance for those who need advice about managing and paying their rent.

DWP's Universal Credit team are also working with the Money Advice Service on a new dedicated landlord's section for their website, which will be available later this spring and will provide information on changes to Housing Benefit.

It will also contain information on Universal Credit and how it affects landlords and tenants, the support available to them as well as practical help on opening a bank account and managing rent payments.

For more information about Universal Credit please visit [GOV.UK](#)