

Press release: Immediate access to hardship payments extended to help mental health and homelessness

Extra protections are being put in place for people receiving Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) who have a mental health condition or are homeless and had their benefits reduced because of a sanction, Minister for Employment Damian Hinds has announced.

Hardship payments act as a safety net to cover day-to-day living costs. The changes, detailed in new regulations being laid today, extend the number of people who can access this help immediately, rather than waiting for 2 weeks.

The regulations will come into effect from October, and are expected to help around 10,000 jobseekers over the next 4 years.

Minister for Employment, Damian Hinds, said:

We want people to do everything expected of them to look for work in return for their benefits. But when they don't, sanctions play a key part in the welfare system, and encourage jobseekers to stick to the rules.

However, we know how particularly hard it can be for some people to get back on their feet in difficult circumstances. That's why we're extending immediate access to hardship payments to cover jobseekers who are homeless or have a mental health condition so they can focus on accessing available support and getting back into employment.

In the last year on average less than 2% of JSA recipients were sanctioned each month.

Other vulnerable groups, including people who are pregnant, lone parents, and people with long term physical health conditions can already access hardship payments immediately.

A number of additional protections are already in place for eligible jobseekers who are homeless. For example, work coaches can temporarily put jobseeking requirements on hold while a homeless person finds accommodation. Also, targeted specialised support can be made available to someone who might be at risk of homelessness.

Immediate access to hardship payments is already available to people receiving Universal Credit who have received a sanction.

Sanctions are only used in a very small percentage of cases. In the last year

on average less than 2% of JSA recipients were sanctioned each month.

Immediate access to hardship payments is available for vulnerable groups following a successful application.

The new regulations will cover eligible claimants who are homeless, suffering from a mental impairment, including a mental health condition, and their partners.

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[News story: Benefits of 30 hours confirmed as free childcare places soar](#)

Extra money in the bank and more flexible working lives – these are just some of the benefits of access to 30 hours free childcare, an independent evaluation has found.

Making his first visit to a nursery delivering 30 hours yesterday, Monday 17 July, Children's Minister Robert Goodwill confirmed the findings of the government's Early Implementer programme, which has seen thousands of parents access a free childcare place.

He also announced that the number of parents now accessing a 30 hours place has tripled since April, with nearly 15,000 places being delivered – an increase of over 9,000 in just two months thanks to the successful roll out in four new council areas.

Minister for Children and Families Robert Goodwill said:

In just a few short weeks as Children's Minister I have already heard time and time again of how 30 hours is improving the lives of families in these areas, many of whom had previously found the cost or availability of childcare a real worry.

I'm delighted with the success of our Early Implementer programme, which is now not only anecdotal but confirmed in this independent evaluation. From cutting household costs to increasing the quality time working parents can spend with their children, access to 30 hours is giving families a real boost.

The hard work of all the professionals involved in early roll out

has been vital, and I'm determined to continue working with them to drive momentum ahead of the national launch in September.

The Early Implementer [evaluation](#), carried out by Frontier Economics, surveyed providers and parents in the eight councils who began delivering 30 hours last September.

The key findings include:

- Parents – nearly a quarter of mothers (23%) and one in 10 (9%) fathers – reported they had increased their working hours as a result of access to 30 hours, particularly those with lower incomes;
- More than three quarters (78%) of parents reported greater flexibility in their working life as a result of 30 hours;
- The vast majority of parents reported improved finances as a result of 30 hours: 84% reported they had slightly or much more money to spend; and
- Providers were willing and able to offer 30 hours and there was no evidence of funding being a substantial barrier to its delivery.

Researchers also carried out in-depth interviews with parents, who told them 30 hours had resulted in considerable financial savings while also reducing the burden they had previously felt while struggling to make ends meet. They reported having more money to spend on activities and trips with their children, to go on holiday, or even to contribute to a deposit on new homes.

Demand from parents for childcare places in the first eight Early Implementer areas – Hertfordshire, Newham, Northumberland, Portsmouth, Staffordshire, Swindon, Wigan and York – saw the programme exceed initial targets of 5,000 places.

Now the next four councils to launch the offer – Dorset, Leicestershire, North Yorkshire and Tower Hamlets – have seen more than 9,300 parents successfully apply for 30 hours since 1 April. This includes nearly 1,600 in Dorset, where parents have been applying via the government's online Childcare Service.

The Department for Education also confirmed, based on learnings from the four subsequent areas of early roll out which are testing specific elements of 30 hours delivery, that it has provided further information on charging to support childcare providers get ready for the national go-live in September.

Updated [operational guidance](#) sets out the expectation that parents taking up the offer of a free childcare place should pay for meals, while making clear that there must be an opt-out for parents who cannot or do not want to pay.

Alongside this, a series of [case studies](#) has also been published, demonstrating good practice from councils and providers preparing for 30 hours delivery in September, as well as an updated FAQs document.

The 30 hours offer, which will be available for working parents of three and four-year-olds in England from September, could save families around £5,000

per year on the cost of childcare, helping them to balance their jobs and family lives.

Evaluation of the four additional early roll out areas is currently being carried out. Taken together with today's publication, these will give a robust analysis of the programme to date, although there are limitations for generalising all findings to national roll out.

Speech: Matt Hancock's speech to Parliament at the Urgency of Representation in the Media reception

I'd like to thank Act for Change, the Campaign for Broadcasting Equality & the TV collective for inviting me to speak here today. Each of you plays an important role in driving change, and I thank you for your work. It feels daunting to be the opening act for Sir Lenny Henry. So I'm not even going to try a joke.

But that's appropriate too because the need to see greater diversity on and off our screens is dead serious. Last August I was delighted to launch Project Diamond. It's a hugely ambitious attempt to collect very detailed data about who is employed in front of and behind the camera.

I look forward to seeing its first report later this year. Then we will see the real truth of how representative broadcasting is of the country.

I'm glad there's been some progress. Diversity is becoming integral among our major broadcasters. Diversity is now enshrined in the new BBC Charter. Channel 4 takes its diversity very seriously and both these have amazing apprenticeship schemes which drive diversity too.

I hope the new data from Project Diamond will force others to act. Because there is still much more to do. And there's particularly more to do in broadcasting. Only 1.5% of British TV programmes were made by a BAME Director, and only 14% of TV drama by a woman. Yet 14% of the population are from BAME backgrounds, and half the population are women.

And more than this, Broadcasting is special. You aren't only major and growing employers – important as that is. What we put on our screens represents the nation. It represents us overseas. It represents us to ourselves. It represents who we are, and who we hope to be.

So broadcasting must represent the whole nation. Broadcasting has a special responsibility to ensure every diverse voice from every part and every community of our great nation is represented, literally and figuratively.

Broadcasting can and should celebrate the bonds that tie us together.

These bonds are strong, but need nurturing.

For it is a strong foundation of the bonds that tie us together that can then allow us with confidence to celebrate our diversity as a nation how each individual is beautifully unique, and how we are at our finest when we take joy from our differences and are strong, and open, and looking out to the whole world.

That is the vision that we have: of a dynamic, diverse, creative society, finding the best in everyone one of us and looking out confident to the world.

So let us join together, and make that vision a reality.

Press release: Lord Gardiner visits the Carnaby Street pollinator paradise

A West End shopping haven transformed into an insect super-highway has been hailed as an example of actions businesses and communities are taking across the country to help pollinators at the start of [Bees' Needs Week](#).

London's Carnaby Street now has more than 700 hanging baskets, window box displays and planters to make the fashion hot spot as attractive to bees as it is to fashionistas.

Part of the Wild West End project, the move by property firm Shaftesbury to bedeck the iconic London landmark with thousands of nectar-rich flowers was championed by Pollinators Minister Lord Gardiner today to mark the start of Bees' Needs Week.

Bees' Needs Week – an annual event to promote the actions people can take to protect pollinating insects which this year takes place 17-23 June – will see a hive of activity across the country including a Pollination Day held by Kew Gardens and a series of bees and butterflies walks hosted by the Wildlife Trusts.

Minister for Pollinators and Biosecurity, Lord Gardiner, said:

Bees and other pollinators are not just a well-loved part of our cities, towns, villages and countryside – they are vital workers, driving our economy and boosting biodiversity.

Each of us can do our bit to help them flourish. Bees' Needs Week is all about celebrating those across the nation who work

throughout the year to help our pollinators, and encouraging more people of all ages to join in by taking simple actions such as planting bee-friendly flowers in a window box, letting your garden grow wild or not disturbing insect nests.

Our Bees' Needs champions from Shaftesbury have done an excellent job turning Carnaby Street in to a paradise for pollinators. The project is a fine example of businesses working together and shows how landowners across the country can do their bit to help our bees.

Penny Thomas, Shaftesbury's Company Secretary and lead on its biodiversity projects, said:

Pollinators, such as bees, are vital to the ecosystem and green features in the urban landscape – from sedum pods on roofs to window boxes with pollinator-friendly plants – encourage biodiversity and give residents, visitors and workers a chance to enjoy nature and improve health and well-being.

Bees, butterflies and other insects play a crucial role in our environment and our economy, with 1,500 species of insects pollinating crops in the UK, contributing an estimated £600m to our economy.

But many struggle to find the habitats and food they need. By thinking about Bees' Needs and taking simple actions to meet them, people across the UK can help give bees and pollinators the food and shelter they need to survive.

Supporting the project for a third year, the Wildlife Trusts' Director for England Steve Trotter said:

The Wildlife Trusts believe that everyone should have the opportunity to experience the joy of wildlife in their daily lives and bees are a fantastic way to make a start!

By understanding more about what bees need to survive we can help our precious bees to thrive.

Tim Lovett, Director of Communications at the British Beekeepers Association, said:

People need to do three things to help honeybees and pollinators – Plant! Plant! Plant! They need simple flowers that will provide a good source of nectar and pollen throughout the summer.

Bees' Needs Week runs from 17-23 July in partnership with organisations including Friends of the Earth, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew.

Bees' Needs Week forms a key part of Defra's wider National Pollinator Strategy, launched in 2014 in partnership with charities, businesses and academic institutions. It encourages people to take five simple actions to help pollinators:

- grow more flowers, shrubs and trees
- let your garden grow wild
- cut grass less often
- don't disturb insect nests and hibernation spots
- think carefully about whether to use pesticides

Get involved

- for more information on Bees' Needs Week, events, and how you can get involved, click [here](#)
- follow #BeesNeeds on twitter to find out more about the campaign and tweet your pollinator questions to charities, businesses and bee experts
- build a bee hotel for your garden

[How to build a bee hotel](#)

Pollinators in numbers

- 1,500 species of insects pollinate plants in the UK, including bumble bees, honey bees, solitary bees, hoverflies, wasps, flies, beetles, butterflies and moths
- 25 species of bumble bee, 260 species of solitary bee, 1 honey bee species and hundreds of types of hoverflies, butterflies and moths live in the UK
- 70 of the 100 crop species that provide 90% of food worldwide are pollinated by bees.
- £600m is the estimated value of insect pollination to crops due to increases in yield and quality of seeds and fruit
- 46 hanging baskets, 49 planters, 660 window boxes, 6 green walls and 9 green roofs in Carnaby Street, as part of the Wild West End Project
- 5 simple actions the UK public can take to protect our vital pollinators: grow more flowers, shrubs and trees; leave patches of land to grow wild; cut grass less often; don't disturb insect nests and hibernation spots; and think carefully about using pesticides

[News story: Crown Commercial Service Annual Report and Accounts Published](#)

The [report](#) shows £12.4 billion of common goods and services are now being procured through CCS, whose aim is to become the 'go to' provider for the procurement of common goods and services across the entire public sector.

During the year, CCS – an executive agency of the Cabinet Office – has delivered £430 million in commercial benefits including savings for central government, and £295 million for the wider public sector – helping to deliver more efficient, effective public services that meet the needs of citizens.

Thousands more small and medium-sized businesses are successfully bidding to become government suppliers, and 32 of the government's largest suppliers have now signed the Prompt Payment Code – pledging to back small businesses by paying invoices on time.

Tony van Kralingen, Chair of CCS, said:

This is a very encouraging performance, led by Malcolm Harrison and his new team. We have exceeded our target for the delivery of commercial benefits to our customers in Central Government and the Wider Public Sector. We continue to build capability and deliver improvements to the quality of service that we offer.

Malcolm Harrison, Chief Executive Officer of CCS, said:

We have made encouraging progress in the past financial year, building on the solid foundations we laid during a thorough operational review which has seen us focus on where we can add greatest value for our customers.

By drawing on our deep commercial expertise and leveraging the purchasing power of our customers across the entire public sector, we have been able to deliver value for money for them, as well as for the nation, in meeting their business needs.

Looking forward, we intend to maintain our sharp focus on meeting our customers' expectations, not least through continuing to improve customer service levels and making it easier for a broad spectrum of public sector bodies to access our deals.

Performance highlights for 2016/17 include:

- £12.4bn of public sector procurement spend channeled through our commercial arrangements including frameworks – £6bn from central government, £6.4bn from the wider public sector. This is an increase of £1.1bn compared to £11.3bn in 2015/16 on a like-for-like basis
- £430m commercial benefits including savings achieved for central government
- £295m commercial benefits including savings achieved for the wider public sector
- All 32 of the Government's Strategic Suppliers have now signed the Prompt Payment Code
- Money spent directly with SMEs across the country via CCS frameworks has increased from £702m (2015/16) to £879m (2016/17)

To read the full report and accounts, visit [the annual report and accounts web pages](#)