

# Touchbase

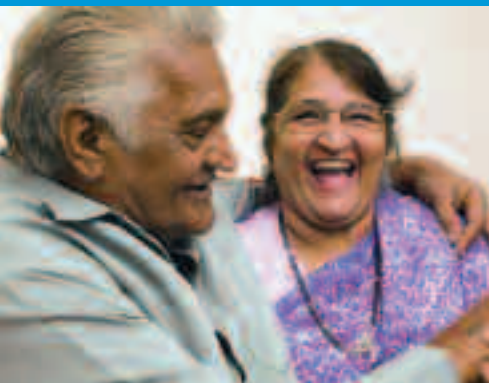
## In this edition

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## Budget delivers new support for unemployed

This year's Budget will provide an additional £2.8 billion to the Department over the next two years.

We will invest this new funding to ensure that Jobcentre Plus and Flexible New Deal providers are equipped to deal with larger customer volumes and to fund the new Jobs Fund and Young Person's Guarantee.

### Extra funding for Jobcentre Plus and Flexible New Deal

Additional funding from the Budget will enable Jobcentre Plus to recruit up to 10,000 staff for its customer-facing operations. This is on top of the 6,000 new staff already announced in the Chancellor's Pre-Budget Report. It will also allow the Department to move ahead with the Flexible New Deal from this October as planned.



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## Young Person's Guarantee

We will also implement a significant new package of support for jobseekers – particularly young adults and also long term unemployed people with labour market disadvantages.

**There will be the guarantee of an offer of a job, work-focused training, or meaningful activity to all young people aged 18 to 24 before they have reached the 12 month stage of their Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claim.**

The Guarantee will consist of:

- jobs funded from the newly created Future Jobs Fund, worth around £1 billion, to which local authorities and others can bid
- support to move into key employment sectors
- work-focused training
- a Community Task Force programme delivering real help within their local community.

## Future Jobs Fund

The Government has created a £1 billion Future Jobs Fund to which local authorities and other large organisations, such as social enterprises and voluntary sector bodies, can bid to create around 150,000 new jobs.

**This is a new approach to create jobs and provide hope for those most in need: young people, disadvantaged groups and others in deprived communities.**

The Government is committed to working with local authorities and other partners to deliver real help to individuals and their communities.

To find out more about the Future Jobs Fund and how the bidding process will operate please go to:

**[www.dwp.gov.uk/futurejobsfund](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/futurejobsfund)**



The Budget also announced a number of additional measures which will benefit DWP's customers:

- **Help for pensioners** whose savings may be affected by falling interest rates. The Budget announced that from November 2009 the capital threshold in Pension Credit (and in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit for people who have reached the qualifying age for Pension Credit) will be increased from £6,000 to £10,000, aligning it with the threshold for those living in care homes.
 

The effect of this change will be that for all Pension Credit recipients the first £10,000 of their capital will be fully disregarded.
- **Action to tackle fuel poverty.** The increase in the Winter Fuel Payment announced last year has been extended. From winter 2009/10 Winter Fuel Payments will be £250 for households with a person aged between 60 and 79 and £400 for households with a person aged 80 or over.
- **Additional help for people at time of pressure or crisis.** The Social Fund has received additional funding of £260 million over the next two years to provide greater support in the form of grants and interest free loans to millions of people at times of pressure or crisis.
- **Support for homeowners.** The Standard Interest Rate used for Support for Mortgage Interest calculations will be maintained at 6.08% for the next six months to provide continued support to homeowners.
- **Help for grandparents.** The Chancellor has announced that grandparents looking after children while their parents work will be credited with National Insurance contributions towards their State Pension.
- **Help for those with restricted access to credit.** An additional £18.75 million announced for the Growth Fund to enable lenders to make an additional 85,000 loans by 2011.
- **Help for those doing permitted work.** A new permitted work earnings disregard of up to £92.00 a week will be introduced from April 2010 at the earliest. It will apply to Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit customers who are claiming contributory Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance.



### New measures to support unemployed people were introduced on 6 April 2009

#### ■ Enhanced support at six months.

Significant extra help is now available for people who have been claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) for six months or longer. These customers will be assigned a Jobcentre Plus Personal Adviser to help them plan their route back to work and make best use of an enhanced range of work and training options, including:

- **Recruitment subsidy** – access to jobs where an employer receives a £1,000 subsidy. In addition, eligible employers in England who receive the subsidy will also have access to in-work training support typically worth £1,500 for their new recruits via Train to Gain. Different training support is available in Scotland and Wales
- **Support to become self-employed** – working with Business Link in England and equivalent bodies in Wales and Scotland, light touch or intensive support will be available to help people set up their own business. For those customers who move from benefit into self-employment, a new self-employment credit of £50 a week will be available for up to 16 weeks

- **Work focused training** – new training opportunities to help customers significantly increase their skills in order to enter work. The training will allow people to progress onto a full qualification whether they are in or out of work
- **Work focused volunteering placements** – to help customers develop or maintain skills whilst looking for a job. Third sector partners will broker these work-focused volunteering opportunities.

The Government has pledged funding of £0.5 billion over two years from April 2009 to fund these changes.

#### ■ Enhanced support for newly unemployed, including:

- access to the Adviser Discretion Fund providing one-off cash help to improve an individual's immediate job prospects
- access to Local Employment Partnership vacancies
- access to help updating jobsearch skills, with a new one-hour group information session for those needing more support
- modern day job clubs delivered by external providers, including specialist support for those looking for professional or executive jobs delivered by organisations specialising in such jobs, and
- additional funding for Access to Work which supports disabled people overcome barriers to gain or remain in employment.

In addition, for those who are under notice of redundancy or are unemployed, there will be new individualised training on offer to help people increase their skills and re-enter the job market.

## Update on the Social Fund

The Welfare Reform Bill currently making its way through Parliament contains provisions that will contribute to a wider vision for the Social Fund in the future. It includes powers to:

- arrange with external providers to provide loans to benefit customers and others
- pay benefits in advance to reduce the need for a crisis loan
- arrange for the provision of goods or services, rather than cash, to people awarded Community Care Grants.

In addition, a number of smaller-scale changes are being made in advance of these major reforms, to help ensure that the cash-limited discretionary fund is managed effectively.

Two changes were implemented nationally from 6 April to:

- prohibit the award of a second crisis loan for living expenses for the same period unless there has been a further emergency or disaster that again places the customer's health or safety at risk
- reduce the range of cases where a review request requires the offer of a formal interview with the customer.

Two more are being tested in two Pathfinder regions beginning 27 April:

- limiting the number of crisis loans a customer can receive for living expenses, excluding alignment, to three in a rolling 12 month period
- requiring applicants on their third and subsequent application for living expenses, excluding alignment, to attend a face-to-face interview.

We will look further at Social Fund reform in future editions of **Touchbase**.

## The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council

### Public Meeting

**Mercure Holland House Hotel & Spa, Bristol**  
**Thursday, 25 June 2009 – 9:45am - 3.15pm**

The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) is holding a public meeting to give the public, and people with a professional interest, the opportunity to learn about the Council's work and take part in a day of presentations. The meeting will:

- describe the process of prescribing occupational diseases for the purposes of Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit



- seek public opinion about new issues of concern in occupational health, and on IIAC's future programme.

**Please note: individual cases or claims cannot be discussed at the meeting.**

To attend, please contact Zarina Hajee, IIAC Secretariat, on 020 7449 5619 or email: [iiac@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:iiac@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

### Further information

To find out more about the Council and its work visit [www.iiac.org.uk](http://www.iiac.org.uk)

# Help for potential second earners

In Jobcentre Plus, we get a number of enquiries asking what support we can give to the non-working partner of a person in work.

Providing the working person receives Working Tax Credits, we can offer their non-working partner a wide range of help through the New Deal for Partners (NDP).

Through NDP, a personal adviser can work with the non-working partner and offer them a package of advice and support, tailored to their individual needs. This includes:

- the development of a personalised return to work Action Plan
- access to training opportunities, which can also involve a training premium of £15 per week on top of payment of associated childcare and travel expenses



- a Better Off in Work calculation
- help applying for in-work benefits and tax credits
- advice on identifying registered childcare options.

While they are looking for work, we can help with their expenses to attend meetings and job interviews, including childcare<sup>1</sup> and travel costs. We may also cover some childcare costs when they start work or, through Childcare Assist, in the week before they start work.

As well as helping them to find and apply for jobs, we can continue to provide support and advice after they have started work, including covering childcare<sup>2</sup> if they are working less than 16 hours a week.

The non-working partner does not need to join NDP to receive our help, but most of the opportunities listed above are only available to those who have joined. If someone is uncertain about joining NDP, they can volunteer for an adviser interview at any time, during which they can find out more about the opportunities available.



In families where the non-working partner claims their National Insurance Credit, they can get the full range of support given to someone claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.

## Helen's story

This kind of support was recently provided by Jobcentre Plus adviser Sean Macdivitt, who helped Helen Whitmore, of Rowley Regis, to return to work.

Helen's partner works full-time and receives Working Tax Credit. Helen was looking for evening work so her husband could look after their two-year-old daughter when he finished work, to avoid the expense of formal childcare.

**With the help of an in-work benefit calculation, Sean showed Helen how Working Tax Credits could contribute up to 80% of their childcare costs. This would allow them both to work during the day and continue to enjoy family time together in the evenings.**

Sean gave Helen advice and tips on jobsearch and compiling a CV. Before long, she was in a part-time day job and her daughter was enjoying formal childcare.

<sup>1</sup> Up to a maximum of £175 per week for one child and £300 per week for two or more children

<sup>2</sup> Up to a maximum of £87.50 per week for one child and £150 per week for two or more children

# Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

## for people in work

*Working with you to build customers' understanding of how they can work and still claim.*

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit help over 4 million low income households to pay their rent and Council Tax. Of these, more than 2.5 million households contain people of working age – many of whom, research has shown, do not know they could still be entitled to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit even if they were working and earning.

**Our evidence also suggests that many of these customers may have made the decision to move into work had they known this.**

By letting customers receiving out-of-work benefits know they may still get Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit when working, we can help more people to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

### Working with advisers

DWP would like to work more closely with organisations that provide benefits and employment advice – such as local authorities, housing associations, advice organisations, private and voluntary organisations – to help raise awareness of who is eligible to receive these benefits. This, in turn, should help advisers give their customers the guidance they need to ease their transition into work.

**We are looking at ways to improve understanding, such as holding training events and producing customer or staff information leaflets, and welcome your views and suggestions.**

To let us know what you may find helpful to improve your colleagues and customers' understanding of these benefits, or to register for new information about Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit, please email us at [enquirieshrad@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquirieshrad@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

### Further information

For information about claiming Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit as in-work benefits visit [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) and search for Housing Benefit.

You can also find out about entitlement to benefits and tax credits at [www.direct.gov.uk/benefitsadviser](http://www.direct.gov.uk/benefitsadviser)

# Supporting second chance learning

**We have extended Income Support (IS) and Housing Benefit (HB) up to age 21 for those young people in full-time, non-advanced education who can currently claim up to age 20.**

These are generally young people who live away from home because they are estranged\* from their parents or carer, and who want to go back to, or carry on in, education. Prior to April 2009, the upper age limit was 20; this change will enable them to continue to study and receive benefits up to age 21.

These young people can now claim IS and HB between their 16th and 21st birthdays if they meet the normal eligibility rules (savings, residence in the UK etc). Their course must be full-time (ie 12 hours or more per week) and non-advanced (A level/NVQ Level 3 standard, and Scottish and Welsh equivalents, or below). Entry to employment courses count, too.

This means that a young person at their 19th birthday, who is in or enrolled on full-time, non-advanced education and able to claim IS (and HB, if appropriate) because of family problems, can continue to claim until the end of their course or their 21st birthday, whichever is earlier.



This measure will give vulnerable young people who are motivated to return to education the chance to do so.

\*Young people can receive IS if they live away from their parents or any person acting in their place, because:

- they don't get on with them and can no longer live with them, **or**
- they have no living parents or anyone acting as parents, **or**
- they are in physical or moral danger, **or**
- there is a serious risk to their physical or mental health.

## Further information

Nick Powell, Skills Division, Employment Group  
1st Floor, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NA  
E: [nick.powell@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nick.powell@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

# Reducing unsuccessful claims to DLA

Nugatory claims to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) are those claims that have no chance of success. They may be made by customers who have no mobility or care needs, or who do not satisfy the residence and presence conditions of the benefit.

We discovered a widespread lack of understanding of the purpose of DLA and its entitlement conditions. In order to manage expectations, we are helping working age customers to understand the benefit and who is eligible for it.

**We are also working with our partners to improve their understanding of DLA, to help ensure they do not, unintentionally, encourage people to make a claim that will not succeed.**

Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) has tested a checklist with prospective customers. They did this face-to-face with Jobcentre Plus, over the telephone with our Helpline, and by post with DLA adult claim forms issued in the Midlands area.

The checklist asks a series of questions to help customers decide if they may be entitled to DLA.

**Research showed that customers receive an improved customer service through better handling of their expectations at the very start of the claims process.**

PDCS has now made a decision to incorporate the checklist across all points of customer contact, including the Internet, beginning with the PDCS Helpline.

By providing clear and consistent information about DLA to our working age customers, they should be better able to decide if they are eligible to make a claim.

# Hearing older people

## the new UK Advisory Forum on Ageing

*Empowering engagement: a stronger voice for older people* was published on 3 February 2009, in response to John Elbourne's review of public engagement with older people. The report announced plans for a national advisory forum for older people supported by regional forums.

The national forum, which will be co-chaired by the Minister of State for Pensions and the Ageing Society and the Minister of State for Care Services, will need to build links with existing local and regional forums to ensure the views of older people are heard.

Government Offices will have a new role in mapping where older people currently influence policy and services. While these work well in many places, there are gaps, and certain minority groups are less well represented.

More detail on how the forum is constituted and run is included for consultation in the Government's forthcoming ageing society strategy.

To keep up with developments visit [www.dwp.gov.uk/ageing-society/engagement-older-people.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/ageing-society/engagement-older-people.asp)

# Older People's Day 1 October 2009

Following the success of last year's celebrations, 2009's Older People's Day will take place on 1 October. The day highlights older people's contribution to society and our economy, and aims to overturn negative attitudes and outdated stereotypes by bringing different generations together to promote a more positive view of later life.

Last year, around 50,000 people across the country took part in some 900 local events – ranging from gardening projects to tea dances, and exercise classes to achievement awards. The *Age, Snapped* photography competition and exhibition, with images that challenge our views of older people, will also return as the flagship event for this year's activities.

**Older People's Day celebrates the opportunities, achievements and aspirations of older people and the important role they play in our lives.**

If you or your organisation would like to get involved, email [dwp.fulloflife@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:dwp.fulloflife@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) or visit [www.dwp.gov.uk/fulloflife](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/fulloflife) for more information.



# State Pension reform

## Telling people about the changes

In the coming months, DWP will start a long-term communications programme about retirement planning. This will include providing customers with information about the significant changes to the State Pensions system, which will start from 2010 and make State Pensions fairer and more widely available, and the introduction of automatic enrolment into workplace pensions from 2012.

### Who will DWP communicate with?

Between now and April 2010, we will focus on customer groups most immediately affected by the changes to State Pensions. One of our main objectives is to help people identify whether they are affected and, if so, when.

There are five main categories of people who may be immediately affected:

1. Women born between 6 April 1950 and 5 April 1955.

Everyone in this category will be affected by the changes. They are the first group of people to be affected by the increases to women's State Pension age, bringing it

in line with men's. Their State Pension age will fall between 60 and 65, depending on their date of birth. As explained in an article in the March edition of **Touchbase**, we are writing to all these women over time. The first letters were sent in April this year.

2. People currently receiving benefits (for example, Jobseeker's Allowance) and/or are likely to claim benefits in retirement (for example, Pension Credit, Housing Benefit, Winter Fuel Payment).

People in this group will be affected by the changes because the entitlement ages for certain benefits will change in line with the increase in State Pension age.



3. People who can claim their State Pension before 6 April 2010 but have deferred, or may be considering deferring, their claim.

People considering deferring their State Pension until on or after 6 April 2010 need to be aware that, after that date, they will not be able to make a new claim for any adult dependency increase when they claim their State Pension.

4. People approaching, or already over, State Pension age who may not have sufficient National Insurance contributions to qualify for a full basic State Pension, in particular:
  - married people
  - people in civil partnerships
  - people reaching State Pension age between 6 April 2008 and 5 April 2015.

5. People of working age who will have significant caring responsibilities at any time from 6 April 2010.

We also aim to ensure that customers living abroad, who are affected by the changes, have access to relevant information.

### Further information

For information about State Pension reform contact Elizabeth Ruffley on 01253 688579 or visit [www.thepensionservice.gov.uk](http://www.thepensionservice.gov.uk)

To find out more about how we plan to communicate the changes to our customers, and obtain a briefing pack, visit [www.dwp.gov.uk/pensionsreform/factsheets.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/pensionsreform/factsheets.asp)

# Online access to DWP services

The next 12 months will see significant changes to DWP's online presence as we close our old websites and move the content to cross-government websites like [Directgov](http://Directgov) and [businesslink.gov.uk](http://businesslink.gov.uk)

In our last edition, we explained why we are making these changes and how they will make it easier for customers to access our services. Here's an update on what has already changed, and what is about to change over the next few months.

## The Pension Service website

At the end of September 2009, The Pension Service website will close, and the information and services for citizens will move to [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) in a new area covering pensions, retirement planning and making the most of later life.

Information about employing older people will move to the *Employing people* area of [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

Corporate and policy information about pensions will move to [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

Visitors to The Pension Service site will be redirected to the appropriate place. Over the coming months, we will change the web addresses in our leaflets, letters and other products so they refer to the correct website.



## Improvements to [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

The DWP corporate site is being redesigned with advisers and professionals in mind. The launch of the new site is planned for Summer 2009.

## Information for jobseekers

We have copied all information for jobseekers from the Jobcentre Plus website onto [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk). Citizens can now use either site to search for jobs, find employment advice, and get help to plan their careers. The Jobcentre Plus website is scheduled to close in March 2010.

## The Age Positive website

The Age Positive website, about valuing older people in the workplace, closed in March 2009. This information is now available alongside other content for employers on [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

These changes are part of our commitment to improve access to our services, and make government information more readily available for citizens.

# Making sure our time is well spent

DWP is committed to offering excellent customer service. To achieve this, we need to make sure that our services meet customers' needs and that the time we spend with them is time well spent.

We spend a lot of time dealing with customers who contact us to chase the progress of their claim; redirecting people who have called the wrong place; and reassuring those who are confused by what we have told them in a letter or phone call.

**We are testing some new ideas that will help to make our systems, processes and products more customer-focused, so customers don't need to contact us with queries so often.**

## **Text messaging – faster, more direct communication**

We know that some customers are interested in being contacted by text, so we have been trialling the use of texts to give important information such as appointment dates and payment reminders. We will evaluate this with customers and, if they find them effective, use texts in the future. For instance, we may text customers about the progress of their claim, so they don't need to contact us about it.

## **Transforming letters**

Unclear letters have been an issue for customers for some time – around 2 million customers contact us each year because they don't understand our letters. We will be consulting with customers and their representatives to make sure our letters are clearer and easier to understand. This, too, should remove the need for customers to call us for reassurance or explanations. From November, customers should notice an improvement in some of the letters they get from us.



# Asking our customers about equality

**When we developed our equality schemes in 2006, we wanted to improve the way we involve customers in our work – both locally and nationally.**

Since then, we have discussed our equality schemes with a wide range of organisations, including:

- the Strategy and Pensions Forum, which many of our national stakeholder groups attend
- our Inclusion Forum, also attended by a large cross-section of stakeholder organisations.

We set up the Equality Schemes Customer Reference Group and invited stakeholders to take part. The group, which now meets twice a year, helps us to monitor, and focus on, the delivery of our equality schemes, action plans, and diversity and equality policies. It has become one of the key stakeholder engagement groups, covering all seven equality strands.

We have asked group members' views on a range of customer issues, such as our use of accessible information and a review of leaflets and forms.

**We consulted the group on the proposals for the Departmental Customer Charter, and they raised a number of questions for us on our approach to equality and procurement.**

We continue to draw on other, more traditional forms of consultation, such as using the information we gather from customer surveys. And we share best practice with other government departments through meetings and individual contacts.

The group's next meeting is planned for September 2009.



# Tax

## – new compliance checks

The way HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) carries out compliance checks – also known as enquiries, visits and inspections – changed on 1 April 2009.

HMRC now has one set of powers, introduced by the Finance Act 2008, covering Income Tax (including PAYE and the Construction Industry Scheme), VAT, Capital Gains Tax and Corporation Tax. The changes, which affect both individuals and businesses, are designed to make the tax system simpler and more consistent.

The new legislation provides HMRC with:

- one set of powers to inspect business records, assets and premises
- a power to look at statutory business records without a right of appeal
- an ability to look at direct tax records 'in-year' before a tax return has been submitted
- a single approach to asking taxpayers and third parties for supplementary information, based on formal information notices with a right of appeal
- a new four-year time limit for assessments and claims – a reduction from six years for Income Tax, Capital Gains Tax and Corporation Tax and an increase from three years for VAT

- a reduction in time limits where the taxpayer is careless from 20 to 6 years
- a new statutory ban on HMRC inspecting purely private dwellings without consent
- a statutory requirement to give at least seven days' notice of a visit, unless either an unannounced visit is necessary, or a shorter period is agreed
- a new requirement that unannounced visits must be approved beforehand by a specially trained HMRC officer.

The changes came into effect from 1 April 2009, apart from the new time limits for assessments and claims. These will not take effect in full until 1 April 2010, to allow customers time to prepare. Taxpayers who do not complete self assessment returns will have a further two years before the new claim time limits come in from 1 April 2012.

Customers can access an e-learning package on the HMRC website that will help them understand how they are affected by the new compliance checks.

# FirstStop

## Advice for older people



***FirstStop* is a new, free one-stop service for older people, their families and carers giving comprehensive advice and information on housing, care, money and rights.**

One call to the advice line or one visit to [www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk](http://www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk) brings together the skills of four highly experienced organisations working in partnership for the benefit of older people: the newly merged Age Concern Help the Aged, Elderly Accommodation Counsel, Counsel and Care, and NHFA Care Advice.

*FirstStop* was set up as an integrated service to promote independence, dignity and choice for older people in meeting their care and housing needs.

It also aims to help people understand the Government's shared vision for the transformation of adult social care – *Putting people first* – and personalisation agendas which focus on choice and control.

The service covers:

- care and support – in a person's own home, specialist or retirement housing or care home
- housing – services to help people stay in their own home; their options, if they choose to move somewhere more suitable
- finance – including paying for care, benefits and allowances, council and NHS funding, financial planning and financial products
- rights – the law, standards to expect, how to get what you are entitled to, support services.

### ***FirstStop* advice line**

**0800 377 70 70 – the *FirstStop* advice line** is open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Calls are free from BT lines. Calls from other lines and mobile phones may vary according to the operator.

## Further information

To find out how your organisation could get involved with *FirstStop*, or to obtain flyers and posters to promote the service, contact John Galvin on 0207 820 7867 or email [info@firststopcareadvice.org.uk](mailto:info@firststopcareadvice.org.uk)

[www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk](http://www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk)

# The Tribunals Service

The Tribunals Service is an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Justice. It provides administrative support for the tribunals system and for those who hear cases and decide appeals. The service aims to ensure that the public can exercise their right to justice and seek effective solutions to disputes and problems.

The Tribunals Service is aiming to make better use of its estates, IT and staff resource in order to provide an equal level of customer service across all parts of the country, and across all tribunals.

Last September, it opened an Administrative Support Centre (ASC) in Birmingham, to test a new operating model in which case-processing administrative staff come together – as a ‘back office’ – to support a number of different tribunals.



*Administrative Support Centre, Birmingham*

Midlands Social Security & Child Support was the first workload to move into the ASC, followed by Asylum and Immigration ‘in-country’ appeals processing in December. Midlands Employment tribunal work will migrate in early 2010.

**As part of the new delivery model, multi-jurisdictional teams, including a customer interface team, provide support to teams of caseworkers who focus on case creation and progression.**

All staff are encouraged to suggest and implement work improvements on a daily basis and a performance management framework has been introduced to enable managers to allocate resources based on business levels that day. Even the layout of the ASC building has been designed to support a natural flow of casework – from the post room, to the teams and back out to the Hearing Centres.

The ASC pathfinder is being evaluated to determine which elements could be rolled out further across the Tribunal Service and the wider Ministry of Justice.

**Further information**  
[www.tribunals.gov.uk](http://www.tribunals.gov.uk)



# The Publicity Register

**Touchbase** is published on the DWP website: [www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers)

It is also mailed free of charge to anyone who joins the Publicity Register. The Publicity Register is a mailing list of advisers, intermediaries and other professionals who want to receive **Touchbase** and other relevant information about government services.

## When to contact the Publicity Register

Contact the Publicity Register to:

- change your address or contact details
- obtain your own copies of **Touchbase**
- cancel your copy of **Touchbase**.

Join the Publicity Register by making contact using any of the methods below:

**Online:** [www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/publicity\\_register.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/publicity_register.asp)

**Letter:** The Publicity Register  
Freepost Plus RRUU-HSKS-ZEYT  
LBM House  
Atlantic Street  
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## Comments about Touchbase

(not distribution queries)

The **Touchbase** editorial board is always pleased to receive comments about the style and content of **Touchbase**. We want to ensure it meets your needs. If you have any comments, questions or suggestions, please contact:

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