

Calendar 2

June 2007

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Social welfare entitlements change frequently. Calendar 2 offers a guide through the maze, helping to map out the New Labour government's third term in office and beyond. The later changes are pledged, but may – of course – change. At the time of writing, some dates are uncertain. Always check for latest accurate details of rules and changes. The original Calendar was published by *Benefits* in October 2002. This edition covers a wider range of subjects and is twice as long. However, it remains a selected snapshot of actual or likely changes.

Early 2006

Jobcentre Plus rolls out a centralised and standardised system for administering **National Insurance Number (NINO)** applications.

March 2006

Claimants are able to register **online** to claim Jobcentre Plus benefits – but only in certain areas.

The website **Directgov**, at www.direct.gov.uk, carries information and claiming details for most Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefits – for example, for Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Retirement Pension. Plans include online claims.

April 2006

Social Fund changes include abolishing the budgeting loan ‘double debt rule’ (where if a claimant is already repaying a previous loan, the maximum amount they can borrow is reduced by double the amount of the outstanding debt), and reducing the standard repayment rate of 15% to 12%.

The percentage of childcare costs that are included in the **Working Tax Credit** calculation increases from 70% to 80%.

Hospital downrating and linking rules are abolished for most benefits. But other benefits, like Disability Living Allowance or Carer’s Allowance, still stop after a number of weeks and linking rules remain.

New **Housing Benefit** and **Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB)** rules and guidance deal with changes of address.

Tax credit arrears are ignored as capital for **HB/CTB** for up to 52 weeks.

The **tax credit** income disregard – for an annual increase in income – increases from £2,500 to £25,000.

For claimants aged under 60 on Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Income Support, or Income Based Jobseeker’s Allowance, the lower **capital limit** of £3,000 rises to £6,000.

Benefits for **children**, such as Child Benefit, can be paid for a child staying on at school or an unwaged government training scheme until their 20th birthday (rather than their 19th birthday). More **young people** in school or training are also able to claim benefit for themselves.

Activity Agreement and Activity Allowance pilots start for **16- and 17-year-olds** with no visible means of support.

Existing **Working Tax Credit** claimants now have their credits paid direct to them rather than via the wage packet. This change applied to new claimants from November 2005.

Permitted work rules allow people to claim incapacity-based benefits while doing some part-time work. 'Higher limit' permitted work now lasts for a full 52 weeks without having to request an extension after 26 weeks. There is also a new category of permitted work for people exempt from the Personal Capability Assessment. Measures introduced for moving from Incapacity Benefit to self-employment allow 'test trading' – allowing people to participate in a programme and to try out self-employment for a period of up to 26 weeks. The specific requirement to notify about starting permitted work is removed, as there is a general duty to report changes of circumstances affecting claims.

The **Train to Gain** scheme is rolled out to provide free, flexible training in the workplace for low-skilled employees.

A £10 a week **Learning Allowance** will be piloted for unemployed and 'inactive' benefit claimants to allow participation in full-time training.

Free local **bus travel** is introduced in England for people aged 60 plus and disabled people. A free national travel scheme starts for similar groups in Scotland. (Free national travel schemes started in April 2002 in Wales and, for people aged 65 or over, in October 2001 in Northern Ireland.)

Free eye and dental checks are introduced in Scotland for those aged under 60 – as well as for those over 60 – a year ahead of schedule.

Two **London City Strategy Pathfinder** areas, East and West London, are announced, to develop consortia to promote moves into work.

The **Financial Inclusion Fund** promotes face-to-face money advice and financial awareness in pilot areas.

May 2006

Carers on **Jobseeker's Allowance** are now given one week to be able to start work (increased from 48 hours) and they are given 48 hours to attend a job interview. Those involved in court or tribunal proceedings (not prisoners) are treated as available for and actively seeking work (signing on is not necessary) for up to eight weeks if they tell the employment officer. Those temporarily in police custody can be treated as available for and actively seeking employment for up to 96 hours.

A new customer service/**jobcentre** organisation model is rolling out until the end of September. It develops a standard operating model, first introduced in 2005, encouraging 'teleclaims' (claims by telephone). It aims to allow personal advisers to concentrate on 'hardest to help' customers. Some offices initially refused to accept paper claim forms, thereby breaching legal rights and natural justice.

June 2006

Tougher fortnightly job reviews start for **Jobseeker's Allowance** claimants. 'Only those claimants who are able to show they have undertaken their responsibilities to look for work are able to continue their claim'.¹

The maximum rate that **Credit Unions** can charge on loans rose from 1% to 2% a month.

July 2006

Deductions can be made (without consent) from an offender's benefit to pay compensation to someone they committed a crime against.

A claim for **Pension Credit** can already be made by phone but the need to validate the claim by signing a form is no longer needed – unless the Pension Service staff member decides otherwise.

Under the **Cities Strategy Pathfinders**, 13 more areas – including Heads of the Valleys and Rhyl in Wales – are given funds to form local consortia to help people to move from welfare into work.

August 2006

From now until April 2008, **Jobcentre Plus** benefit delivery centres (that administer and pay benefit) will reduce to 77. People will be told details – for example, new 0845 numbers – as their area goes live.

September 2006

People who satisfy **terminal illness** rules – where death is expected inside six months – can get Disability Living Allowance care and Attendance Allowance automatically. They are called ‘special rules’ claims. From now, any new special rules claims are limited to a fixed period of three years, rather than for life.

Student Loans of up to £3,000 replace grants for fees for new students in higher education. Special support grants and bursaries are introduced (and disregarded) for categories of students who may be entitled to income-based benefits.

Pilots begin allowing low-skilled **jobseekers** to take up a full-time education course as a route into work, when a lack of skills is considered to be a significant barrier.

October 2006

Improvements for people expecting a baby or expecting to adopt a baby on or after 1 April 2007 include that **Statutory Maternity Pay** and **Statutory Adoption Pay** can be paid for 39 weeks.

People are treated as **incapable of work** if they are prevented from working because they are a carrier of, or have come into contact with, an infectious disease.

People are given a month’s grace in which to get their **Income Support** or **Jobseeker’s Allowance** claim in if they tried to make a claim but could not because the telephone lines to that office were busy or inoperative.

The incapacity-based benefits **linking rule** extends from 52 weeks to 104 weeks. People no longer have to wait another six months on benefit in order to try out a job again. The requirement to ask for the linking rules is also lifted.

Volunteers' lunch expenses are now ignored as income by Income Support and other means-tested benefits.

New rules make it unlawful to discriminate unfairly against employees, jobseekers and trainees because of their **age**. The protection covers direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

The upper and lower **age limits** for Statutory Sick Pay and the lower age limit for Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay and Statutory Paternity Pay are removed. The rules also redefine the term 'employee', so that people aged under 16 can count as an employee – although there are strict limits on under-16s working.

Sunrise scheme (Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Services) pilots for asylum seekers and refugees, started in October 2005, are to continue for another year. Each new refugee, who chooses to participate, works with a caseworker to manage the transition from asylum seeker to refugee and produce a personal integration plan.

November 2006

Tax credit overpayments can be recovered from existing awards at set maximums – 10%, 25% or 100% depending on the circumstances. This can occur at the end of the year or 'in year'. Additional payments can also be made to reduce hardship. The intention is that the 'in year' limits will be applied manually from January 2007 and automatically from April 2007 – unless the claimant asks for more to be deducted. Before then, they have to be requested.

More changes in circumstances that have to be reported for **tax credits** are ceasing to work 16 or 30 hours a week, or ceasing to be responsible for a child.

The DWP announces measures to 'target working age claimants to reduce fraud and error in **Housing Benefit**'.²

Healthy Start scheme introduced nationally. Vouchers for fruit and vegetables as well as milk and vitamins replace the old Welfare Food Scheme, available for pregnant women and families with children under the age of four getting certain benefits. All pregnant women under 18 will get vouchers.

December 2006

Job Grant extends to Jobseeker's Allowance claimants aged 18 to 24 who have been receiving benefit for 26 weeks or more. This will provide £100 to help young people to meet the one-off costs of moving into work, or up to £250 for claimants with children.

Young asylum seekers rules on providing evidence to support claims eased. Asylum seekers under age 18, with discretionary leave to remain in the UK, are supported by their local authority. If they have applied 'in time' to extend their leave, once they reach age 18 they can claim benefit – but there are often months of delay, while they wait for evidence about the leave from the Home Office. To avoid such delays the evidence can be from someone such as a solicitor, and in the new year the Home Office is due to resume sending acknowledgement letters when they receive applications to extend or vary limited leave.

Shorter **Carer's Allowance** claim form, DS700 (SP), is introduced for older carers.

If they choose to, local authorities are now able to set up electronic or telephone claims for **Housing Benefit**.

Debts from certain not-for-profit lenders such as Credit Unions can be recovered from benefits. Called the **eligible loan scheme**.

Jobcentre Plus offices start to refer claimants outside to the nearest public telephone box to make **Social Fund Crisis Loan** applications on an 0800 number. The policy aims to prevent crisis loan applicants from receiving a refusal in an 'unscreened' office environment. The telephone-based application process is known as Crisis Loan Direct.

2007

HM Revenue & Customs plans to consult on the introduction of an **Integrated Customer Management** system that will allow it to pool all the information it holds on taxpayers in one place, creating a single taxpayer 'account'.

January 2007

Bulgaria and **Romania** join the EU, leading to new quota schemes for highly skilled work, or some low-skilled schemes, for example, in agriculture or food processing. A2 (Accession 2) workers must get a (free) worker accession card or a registration certificate.

People who have paid **voluntary National Insurance contributions** since 25 May 2006 can request that they be refunded. This is because they were probably not aware, at the time of paying them, of the government's plans, for April 2010, to reduce the National Insurance contributions needed for Retirement Pension to 30 years.

February 2007

The government announces a **New Deal for Carers**, with funds for emergency support, a national advice and information service and training for carers.

The **Connexions Card** for young people ends.

March 2007

Benefit law changes to reflect a new policy that **students** and prospective students will have to provide National Insurance numbers to get student loans.

The national rollout of the **Jobcentre Plus** network is nearly complete.

All new asylum seekers are processed under the **New Asylum Model**, which segments applicants into five channels, introducing very short timescales and aiming for faster processing by a single Case Owner.

An increase from £40 to £60 a week is announced for lone parents in London pilots of the **In-Work Credit** – paid for up to 12 months in work to lone parents who had previously been on Income Support for 12 months. In the remaining pilot areas outside London, payment stays at £40 a week.

The government announces a new **enforcement strategy** ‘to stop illegal immigrants from receiving benefits’ (*Home Office News*, 6 March 2007).³ Measures include creating local and regional immigration crime partnerships and National Health Service pilots to ensure overseas visitors pay for healthcare.

The UK government signs the **European Convention on Human Trafficking** and releases an action plan to improve support services for victims.

There is a pledge of free **childcare** places for up to 50,000 out-of-work parents who move into work.

Local Employment Partnerships are announced between Jobcentre Plus and several large retail employers, offering work trials, pre-employment training and other help for local benefit claimants.

Trials are announced of short, work-focused approaches to provide training in English as a second or other language (**ESOL**) in the London City Strategy Pathfinders for parents on benefits or tax credits.

April 2007

All **lone parents** on Income Support for over a year have to have six-monthly work focused interviews.

The time allowed to notify changes in circumstances that reduce entitlement to **tax credit** reduces from three months to one month.

A new **Working Tax Credit run-on** of four weeks starts for people who stop work, or reduce their work to less than 16 hours a week.

Adults aged 18–64 applying for **indefinite leave to remain** in the UK are subject to a new requirement to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the English language and life in the UK.

For Jobseeker's Allowance claimants who do not speak English, new guidance allows Jobcentre Plus staff the option to require attendance at ESOL courses as part of **Jobseeker's Agreements**. Failure to comply with a Jobseeker's Agreement means loss of benefit.

Most UK visa and immigration application **fees** increase sharply, with the money to be spent on increased enforcement, detention capacity and 'removals'.

Discretionary leave for **unaccompanied asylum-seeking children** is only granted to those aged 17-and-a-half years, with support continuing under the 1989 Children Act. Children should apply to extend their leave before they are 17-and-a-half, and the Borders and Immigration Agency wants to deal with any application to extend leave and any subsequent appeal prior to the child turning 18.

The statutory right to apply for flexible working extends to cover employees who are **carers** of disabled adults.

Extra £20 a week available on top of Income Support for lone parents who try out work activities in New Deal Plus for Lone Parents pilot areas. The **work-related activity premium** will be paid to lone parents who have been on benefits for at least six months and whose youngest child is aged 11 and over. The lone parent must undertake work-related activity agreed with a personal adviser.

Babies and young children in care will each receive an additional £100 a year in their **Child Trust Funds** for each year they spend in care.

Independent Case Examiner service starts to provide an independent complaints service across all the agencies of the DWP.

Employment Zone (EZ) pilots were due to end. However, new rules have extended pilots in particular areas, with claimants able to select from contractors who provide EZ programmes.

New **Disability Living Allowance** claim form introduced, based on one used in a pilot in the North West. It ties in with the Disability and Carer's Service's Customer Case Management system, but the computer-assisted decision making trialled in the pilot is deferred.

Joint Boards of Jobcentre Plus and local authority representatives were due to be set up to assist with Housing Benefit processing and other matters. A new **Fraud Partnership Agreement** is also established.

All new claims to the Pension Service are processed using the computer-based **Customer Account Management System**. Part of the Pension Service 'transformation' programme.

A national tenancy **deposit scheme** starts, with new measures on how tenancy deposits will be set up and held.

A new unified Legal Services Commission contract for **civil legal aid** work starts, although new fixed fee payments for such work are delayed until October 2007.

Financial eligibility for legal aid for **domestic violence victims** is improved, with the Legal Services Commission (LSC) able to waive both income and capital limits on a discretionary basis. LSC payments for domestic violence work will continue to be paid for by the hour, with the sole exception of the initial help, which is planned to be paid under new fixed fee arrangements.

There is a 50% increase in resources to enforce the **National Minimum Wage**, following increased penalties introduced in January 2007.

Consumers can take legal action against unscrupulous lenders because of an 'unfair credit relationship', rather than having to cope with proving 'grossly extortionate credit' terms.⁴

Prescription charges in Wales are now completely phased out.

The introduction of **water and sewerage charges** in Northern Ireland is put on hold, pending the recommencement of the devolved administration in May 2007. The charges were planned to be phased in over two years and included a reduced tariff for people on Housing Benefit or covered

by a new Low Income Rate Relief Scheme and certain young people. Pensioners were to be offered a water meter and there was to be a metered tariff. The Northern Ireland Assembly was expected to reconsider options.

May 2007

The deadline for promised improvements in **Jobcentre Plus** service, such as 'free' 0800 numbers, a single call service (rather than call back) and quicker processing and payment of claims.

Advance claims for Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit are no longer allowed for '**persons from abroad**', necessitating frequent repeat claims until the claimant can pass the habitual residence test. Advance claims for Pension Credit are no longer allowed for people treated as not in Great Britain or Northern Ireland.

Local authorities are volunteering to match Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claims with **Credit Reference Agency** data, to identify non-residence, undeclared non-dependants, landlord and tenant relationships and possible subletting.

Approximately 610,000 first-time **passport** applicants per year must attend at one of the 69 local offices in the UK for a face-to-face interview, under new 'authentication by interview' rules. Data will be held on a National Identity Register that could contain around 50 pieces of information about individuals, including biometric details.

The new **Ministry of Justice** starts, with responsibilities for the courts, sentencing, prisons and rehabilitation, as well as Department for Constitutional Affairs policies such as tribunals, human rights and freedom of information.

Pilot work in a Housing Benefit department begins, using **voice risk analysis** technology for telephone calls, in an effort to reduce benefit fraud. Pilot work is also due to start in Jobcentre Plus services later in the year.

June 2007

Loans replace the backdating of Income Support, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit for **asylum seekers** who are granted refugee status. Loans are for people aged 18 or over and are also available for those who have been granted humanitarian protection. The Refugee Integration Loan is an interest-free loan from the DWP, repaid by deduction from benefit. It is to be spent on certain things that help refugees to integrate. Backdating will continue, however, for tax credits and Child Benefit.

Revised date for limits on the recovery of **tax credit** overpayments to be applied automatically.

Jobseekers aged 50 to 59 can be directed to join an Intensive Activity Period programme. New Deal 25+ now covers ages 25 to 59.

July 2007

The first local authority connections to **Government Connect** go live. Government Connect aims to provide a common infrastructure for secure electronic interaction between local government, central government and citizens.

Summer 2007

The government is due to respond to the recent ‘compelling’ report⁵ by former city investment banker David **Freud** – a report offering a ‘radical review’ of the welfare-to-work system.

August 2007

Revised date for people selling their house to provide a **home information pack** for buyers – including energy performance certificates – but only initially for homes with four or more bedrooms.

Universal entitlement for asylum seekers and refugees to free **ESOL** training ends. Fee remission is only granted to those under 19 years old, people on certain means-tested benefits and tax credits, and asylum seekers with ongoing asylum claims after six months, or in a few other

circumstances. Access to publicly funded further education provision is also restricted.

September 2007

Student support law changes so that **students** and prospective students will have to provide NINOs to get student loans. The Secretary of State can still make loans in exceptional circumstances, without a NINO – for example, if there are delays in processing NINOs.

Means-tested **Adult Learning Grants** of up to £30 a week during term time are due to start nationally for adults aged 19 or over studying full time for a first NVQ Level 2 or Level 3 qualification. They are not for people receiving other government grants, training allowances or out-of-work benefits.

October 2007

The **Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR)** starts. It brings together expertise and resources to promote equality and tackle discrimination in relation to gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age or race and to promote human rights.

The **Hospital Travel Costs Scheme** is due to extend to include transport to health facilities outside of hospital, as part of providing treatment closer to home. Changes should remove the need for a consultant to be involved in a particular treatment and promote greater public awareness and access to the help available.

New fixed fee payments start for Legal Services Commission **civil legal aid** work.

November 2007

In pilot areas, people evicted due to antisocial behaviour are due to lose some of their **Housing Benefit** if they refuse support. Reductions would be 10% for the first four weeks, 20% for the next four weeks, up to total removal of benefit, or a 30% reduction if there is hardship, for the rest of a five-year period.

End 2007

‘By the end of 2007’ a **Commission for Employment and Skills** will be created, aiming to provide a strong employer voice and leadership of the employment and skills system (Budget 2007, Chapter 3, para 3.112⁶).

By 2008

The DWP reviews the overall process of assessing eligibility for **disability-related benefits**, investigating whether different assessments are appropriate in all cases and whether there is scope for bringing them closer.

2008

Introduction of the new child support system. Initial plans include introducing the arm’s-length **Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission** to replace the Child Support Agency, encouraging more private settlements and strengthening enforcement powers.

Changes are planned to the Savings Credit part of **Pension Credit** ‘to ensure that it continues to focus resources on those with small savings’ (Pre-Budget Report 2006, Chapter 5, para 5.68⁷).

People applying for Pension Credit over the phone can make a claim for **Housing Benefit** or **Council Tax Benefit** at the same time, without the need for a separate signed claim form.

Roll-out commences of a points-based **immigration system** for migrants from beyond the European Union (EU), linked to the needs of the UK economy, with five tiers for workers with different levels of skills and students.

The Immigration and Nationality Directorate issues **biometric identification** to foreign nationals.

More work focused interviews and activities proposed for **lone parents**. Lone parents may be required to look for work once their youngest child reaches 12, rather than the current age of 16.

Proposal that everyone with **mesothelioma** – an asbestos-related disease – will be entitled to compensation. Previously, a link had to be established to getting the disease through work.

March 2008

The **DWP** is due to have met a target of reducing its staff level by 30,000 by now.

April 2008

Housing Benefit Standard Local Housing Allowance rolls out nationally for the private rent sector. The allowance is usually paid to the claimant, unless it is in the overriding interest of the tenant for payment to go to the landlord. Housing associations and council tenancies are not included.

The date by which **Jobcentre Plus** benefit delivery centres should have reduced from hundreds to 77.

Pathways to Work should have been rolled out nationally by this date, with increased voluntary and private sector involvement.

The **New Deal for Disabled People** is due to end. In addition, the programme in Phase 1 Provider-Led Districts will end in November 2007.

The 10% starting rate for **income tax** is removed and the basic rate of tax is cut from 22% to 20%.

The higher personal allowances for those **aged 65 or over** to rise by £1,180 above indexation.

The upper earnings limit for **National Insurance** rises by £75 a week above indexation.

The child element of **Child Tax Credit** will increase by £150 a year (8.1%, £2.87 a week) above earnings indexation and the **Working Tax Credit** income threshold will increase by £1,200 to £6,420 a year. However, the rate at which tax credit awards are withdrawn, above the threshold, will increase by 2% to 39% on gross taxable income.⁸

The date of the first payment of new claims to benefit will no longer be affected by any form of payment within the **final pay packet**, under a proposal of the Benefits Simplification Unit.

Introduction of a £20 disregard of income from **sub-tenants** for working-age income-based benefits.

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate merges with the Audit Commission, forming a local services inspectorate and retaining the **Audit Commission** name.

A new, shorter self-assessment **income tax** return is introduced. Paper forms to be submitted by 31 October, or filing online is by 31 January in the following year.

An aim is that claimants will be able to use the online **Government Gateway** to access some of their own records on the DWP system.

For consumers, lenders are required to provide more information about **borrowing** and the Office of Fair Trading has greater powers over lenders.

Free national travel scheme starts in England for people aged 60 plus and disabled people.

June 2008

In-Work Credit pilots for lone parents are due to end.

October 2008⁹

For new claimants, Incapacity Benefit and Income Support are due to be replaced by an integrated **Employment Support Allowance** (ESA). Existing claimants are protected on their current rate, but there will be more proactive work done with them to prepare for work, such as periodic reassessments.

The **personal capability assessment** test of incapacity is due to change, intended to focus on capacity for work rather than incapacity and benefit entitlement.

The higher **permitted work** earnings limits rules (which were £86 a week from October 2006 to October 2007) are due to be extended to the means-tested element of the new Employment Support Allowance (to replace Income Support for people newly unable to work). For Income Support the disregard has been just £20 a week.

Other measures include having to stay on **Jobseeker's Allowance** for short-term sickness rather than going onto incapacity benefits.

End 2008

The £10 **maintenance** disregard (called a 'premium') extends to lone parents on the old Child Support scheme (from before 3 March 2003) by this time.

By 2009

Implementation complete of a points-based **immigration system** for migrants from beyond the EU, with the tier for students commencing.

2009

The Identity and Passport Service is due to issue **identification cards**¹⁰ for British citizens. The scheme will eventually cover everyone aged 16 or over who is legally resident in the UK for a period, likely to be three months or more.

April 2009

Child Benefit to be paid from 29th week of pregnancy.

Most working-age benefits to be aligned, so they are paid a minimum of two weeks in arrears, with a **common payday** for each customer based on the last two digits of their National Insurance number.

The upper earnings limit for **National Insurance** to rise by £800 a year above indexation, aligning it with the higher rate income tax threshold.

The **Rent Service** will transfer from the DWP to the Valuations Office Agency, an executive agency of Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs.

The **Workers Registration Scheme** for those coming to work in UK from 'A8' accession countries in the EU is due to end now.

A package of **debt management and relief** measures is due to improve and extend the current range of solutions available to assist debtors with relatively low levels of income and capital.

September 2009

The first top-up payments to start for **Child Trust Funds**, as eligible children reach seven years of age.

By 2010

Plan for all 5- to 11-year-olds to have access to affordable school-based childcare all year round – called 'wrap-around' **childcare**. All secondary schools are to be open from 8 am to 6 pm and there should be 3,500 Sure Start children's centres, as well as additional parenting support for fathers and those parents who need it most.

The government and the devolved administrations seek an end to the blight of **fuel poverty** for vulnerable households by 2010.

All public funding for **adult vocational skills** in England, apart from community learning, to be routed through Train to Gain learner accounts.

In a **Housing Benefit** reform to contribute to improved work incentives and also to the government's target of reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation, the government hopes to separate out reasonable costs for the rent and management of temporary accommodation.

2010

Plan to remove **adult dependant increases** in the State Retirement Pension and Carer's Allowance for new claims.

Target date to set up a **change of circumstances service** on bereavement, births and changes of address, aiming for citizens to report only once changes that affect a range of services and entitlements. Part of the Transformational Government agenda to introduce streamlined, shared services.

Plan to rationalise **business support** schemes from 3,000 to no more than 100.

2010 (or end of Parliament)

Maternity leave pay period extends to 52 weeks by the end of Parliament, at latest.

March 2010

Present **Post Office card accounts** contract ends, but card accounts will continue following an open tendering process.

April 2010

State retirement pension age equalisation begins to be phased in until April 2020, when it will be 65 for men and women. The qualifying age for the Guarantee Credit part of Pension Credit also rises. Prescription charges and exemptions are under review. The age for entitlement to concessionary travel in England will increase for both sexes between 2010 and 2020. The devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are responsible for concessionary travel schemes.

Many more people, particularly women and carers, will be entitled to the full rate of **Retirement Pension**, due to a change in the National Insurance contribution rules, with a reduction to 30 in the number of qualifying years needed. New arrangements due to begin for crediting National Insurance for parents and carers.

A DWP-commissioned review recommends that **Independent Living Funds** should be subsumed within **Individual Budgets** from this date.

2010–2011

From 2010–11 the government aims to significantly increase the amount of **maintenance** that parents with care on benefit can keep before it affects the level of benefit they receive.

Government target to halve **child poverty**, compared with 1998/99.

By April 2011

No pensioner **aged 75 or over** would pay income tax until their taxable income reaches £10,000 a year.

2012

Introduction planned of **Personal Accounts**, a new low-cost savings product with automatic enrolment.

Plan to relink annual **State Retirement Pension** increases to rises in average earnings, subject to affordability and the fiscal position or otherwise, by the end of the (next) Parliament.

Plan to abolish **contracting out** for defined contribution pension schemes, aiming to remove complexity.

A key target for the Scottish Executive is to ensure that by this year every unintentionally **homeless** person in Scotland will be entitled to permanent accommodation.

September 2013

Proposal that **young people** should remain in education or training until age 17. This means the first pupils to be affected would be those entering secondary school in September 2008. Young people would be required to work towards accredited qualifications at school, in a college, or in ‘on the job’ training or day release. If they drop out, young people would be

supported to re-engage through integrated youth support services. Any enforcement process would be used only as a last resort if a young person refused to re-engage. Breaching an 'attendance order' may be made a criminal offence, punishable by a £50 fixed penalty or prosecution.

End 2013

Target date for all **maintenance** cases to have been transferred to the new Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission.

September 2015

Proposal that **young people** should remain in education or training until age 18.

November 2016

Target that, as far as reasonably possible, no person in England, Scotland or Northern Ireland should have to live in **fuel poverty**.

2018

Target that, as far as reasonably possible, no person in Wales should have to live in **fuel poverty**.

April 2020

State pension ages equalised at 65 for men and women.

Plan to remove **adult dependant increases** in the State Retirement Pension and Carer's Allowance for claimants with transitional protection from before April 2010.

Government target to end **child poverty**.

April 2024–April 2026

Plan to increase **state pension age** over two years from 65 to 66.

Last possible date for reduced rate National Insurance contributions for women still paying the **married woman's stamp**. This 'small stamp' of limited value was abolished for women first making contributions after April 1977.

2030

By around 2030, the reformed **state second pension** is to become a simple, flat-rate weekly top-up to the basic State Retirement Pension.

April 2034–April 2036

Plan to increase the **state pension age** over two years from 66 to 67.

April 2044–April 2046

Plan to increase the **state pension age** over two years from 67 to 68.

Notes

¹ Budget 2006, Chapter 4 (www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/4/B/bud06_ch4_162.pdf).

² HB/CTB Circular A17/2006 (Revised) notes: 'Although it is pleasing to see that fraud has come down, this has been more than offset by a sharp increase in claimant error, mainly on standard working age cases. Our analysis indicates that the impact of the New Tax Credits (NTCs) is a big factor. However, it is also the case that some Local Authorities (LAs) are not targeting review activity on high-risk cases'.

³ 'Illegal immigrants' are not entitled to social security benefits.

⁴ In over three decades, little more than a handful of people have won cases on 'grossly extortionate lending', due to extremely narrow legal interpretations.

⁵ *Reducing dependency, increasing opportunity: Options for the future of welfare reform* by David Freud was published by the DWP in March 2007. Described by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions as a 'compelling framework for the next stage of welfare reform' ('Radical review of welfare could help thousands more into work', DWP press release, 5 March 2007), the review recommended: a reduced role for Jobcentre Plus; greater use of private and voluntary sector providers; stronger

conditionality in benefits – particularly for lone parents; simplification to a single working-age benefit; much closer tax and benefit integration; and for Jobcentre Plus to be at the heart of a connected set of welfare services, aiming to provide a one-stop front end for all benefits.

⁶ www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/5/D/bud07_chapter3_302.pdf

⁷ www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/571/C1/pbr06_chapter5.pdf

⁸ In the 2007 Budget, the government considered marginal deduction rates (MDRs), which show how much of a rise in gross earnings is lost through higher taxes or reduced entitlements. It estimated that ‘about half a million fewer low income households face MDRs in excess of 70% now than in April 1997’ (Budget 2007, Chapter 4, para 4.70; see website below). Its estimates also showed that almost one million more low-income households now have MDRs in the range of over 60% up to 70%. It noted that ‘most of these families face an MDR of around 70%’ (Budget 2007, Chapter 4, Box 4.4; see website below). It acknowledged that ‘the changes to income tax and tax credits announced in this budget do not materially affect these conclusions’ (Budget 2007, Chapter 4, Box 4.4; see website below). It estimated that about 50,000 households have MDRs over 90%. The MDRs over 70% reflect the additional tapers, of 65% and 20% respectively, for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit and the worst effect remains an MDR of 95.5%. In practice, reductions in tax credits may be delayed for up to one year. But, in addition, people may incur work-related expenses. (www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/A/2/bud07_chapter4_267.pdf)

⁹ The original April 2008 target was put back to October 2008. Jobcentre Plus and the DWP also stated that a 22-month run-in, commencing in January 2007, was needed – suggesting a start date for ESA of November 2008 (DWP [2006] *Welfare reform: Report of the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions under Section 82 of the Welfare Reform and Pensions Act of 1999*, London: The Stationery Office). The IT system is based on the Pension Service’s Customer Account Management System, linked to a modified Jobseeker’s Allowance Payment System.

¹⁰ Biographical information will be stored on the DWP Customer Information Service, which holds National Insurance records. Initially, biometric information will be stored on systems currently used for asylum seekers. Information on the issue and use of ID cards will be stored on the existing Identity and Passport Service computer system.

Calendar 2 was written in a personal capacity by Terry Patterson, Welfare Rights Specialist. Thanks to Jean Betteridge, Clive Davis, Stephen McKay and Gary Vaux for suggesting topics. Responsibility for any errors remains the author’s alone.

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