



# COVID-19 UPDATE FROM CITIZENS ADVICE BRENT – 01 SEPTEMBER 2021

## Benefits update

### Universal Credit (UC)

#### Reallocated earnings

In [the 27 August edition of Touchbase](#), the DWP confirmed that they have rolled out an automated way of reallocating earnings. This follows the Court of Appeal decision in the Johnson case on the issue of claimants being paid early due to non-banking days.

Up to now clients have been asked to let their work coach know when this will occur so the payment can be moved into the next assessment period (AP) manually. Touchbase says that the UC system now automatically identifies claimants who receive a second monthly salary payment in one AP, so that DWP staff can spot and reallocate it where necessary. If a client is concerned that their case will not be caught, they can still give notice to their work coach, just in case.

A [summary of the Johnson case](#) is available on CPAG's website.

#### Retrospective identity checks

There are a number of new issues regarding proving identity and claiming UC. Seemingly as part of the retrospective ['Trust and Protect'](#) checks the government announced, claimants are being asked to provide very specific proofs. For example, one client was asked to post a selfie outside their front door with the front door open.

If a claimant does not comply then their claim may be closed, and an overpayment created from the start of the claim. It is not clear what legal basis the DWP are using, particularly to close the claim from the date of claim rather than date of decision.

Martin Williams of CPAG issued a [freedom of information request](#) on this matter.

Unfortunately the DWP response provided little clarity, referring to '[specific COVID 19 regulations](#)' which have nothing to do with verification.

That response declines to give further detail of 'Trust and Protect' due to a freedom of information exemption, an answer that has been given to [other requests on the same issue](#).

The exemption being that releasing the information requested 'would likely prejudice the prevention and detection of fraud and crime'.

### **What can clients do?**

In the first instance clients should try to comply with the requirements.

If they are unable to comply, they should ask the DWP if there is an alternative solution, such as attending a face-to-face appointment at the jobcentre to prove their identity.

If this is not possible then they should challenge any negative decisions with a mandatory reconsideration, asking what legal basis the DWP are using.

## **Consumer update**

### **Travel restrictions**

[The lists of green, amber and red countries](#) have been updated. People will need to check these latest lists to confirm what they need to do when entering the UK. Thailand and Montenegro are now on the red list, and The Azores, Liechtenstein and Lithuania are on the green list.

### **Contactless payment**

After an announcement about contactless payments in March, the increase in payment limit from £45 to £100 will happen on 15 October.

### **CBD oil scams**

The rise in popularity of CBD products has led to scams involving large sums of money

being taken out of people's accounts, and no products being delivered. [Which? have reported a scam](#) which used a fake celebrity endorsement, and an elaborate customer service experience to encourage more people to sign up.

### **NHS Covid-19 Pass scam**

[Fake text messages](#) inviting people to apply for an NHS COVID pass are circulating. The message has a link which people are encouraged to click on. This takes the victim to a phishing site which gets personal and financial information from them.

## **Employment update**

### **Remote right to work checks have been extended to 5 April 2022**

Checks continue to be necessary and employers must continue to check the prescribed documents set out in [Right to work checks: an employer's guide](#) or use the [Home Office right to work online service](#).

This means that video checks and acceptance of scanned documents or photos rather than originals can continue. The [Employer Checking service](#) also remains in place. It remains an offence to knowingly employ anyone who does not have the right to work in the UK.

## **Housing update**

### **Right to rent checks**

The [Home Office guidance](#) has been updated to extend the pandemic concession on Right to Rent checks to 5 April 2022:

- checks can currently be carried out over video calls
- tenants can send scanned documents or a photo of documents for checks using email or a mobile app, rather than sending originals

Landlords should use the [Home Office Landlord Checking Service](#) if a prospective or existing tenant cannot provide any of the accepted documents.