

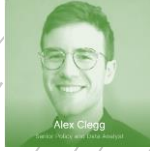
Revenues and Benefits Discussion Group

22 May 2023



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Meet the panel

(not everyone is available every week)

- Naomi Armstrong, Benefits Cambridge City Council
- Laura Bessell, Benefits Manager, Oxford City Council
- Alex Clegg & Tylor-Maria Johnson, Policy in Practice
- Nicki Duckworth, EntitledTo, Marshalling
- Malcolm Gardner, Visionary Network, Chair
- Paul Howarth, Independent Consultant
- Gareth Morgan, CEO Ferret Information Systems
- Megan Shepherd, Mid-Sussex District Council
- Kevin Stewart, Erewash Borough Council
- Bob Wagstaff, PSPS (Boston, South Holland, East Lindsey)
- Liz Whitehead-Davis, Hexagon Housing

Council Tax review



Expanding into DS



Covid Business Grants



More High-Rate Taxpayers



Housing Rights for Asylum Seekers

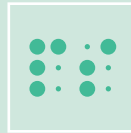
Discussion Points

A request



- Ferret, EntitledTo, Policy in Practice & InBest all must update the CTR element of their calculators. All four have asked if you would you be kind enough to upload copies of your 2023/24 schemes to bit.ly/CTR2324
- This will really help those vulnerable families who rely on their calculators for advice to increase their incomes.
- If you operate local welfare schemes, can you tell them about those too.

Clear and Concise Council Tax Reduction Schemes



Are you tired of trying to decipher quasi-legal language of your Council Tax Reduction Scheme? Look no further! Our clear and concise re-write of your legalistic rules is the perfect solution.



Our easy-to-understand format ensures that you and your stakeholders can quickly and easily understand the scheme without the headache of trying to interpret complex legal language. We do all that for you!

Default, Banded, Discount .. we have simplified them all

Clear and Concise Council Tax Reduction Schemes

Here are five good reasons for using our redrafted scheme:

- 1) **We do not change your scheme**, just demystify the language. But we offer advice if we feel that your scheme is not fully compliant with the regulations.
- 2) **Increased transparency** and better understanding of the scheme by the public: with a plain English scheme, the rules and conditions are more easily understood by both citizens and stakeholders alike. This helps to reduce confusion and misinformation, allowing people to make informed decisions about their council tax reduction entitlement.
- 3) **Easier administration**: a plain English scheme simplifies the application and assessment processes. This makes it easier for local authorities to administer and manage their scheme, leading to more efficient and cost-effective services.
- 4) **Increased access and compliance**: by using clear and concise language to explain the scheme, the public is able to access and understand the scheme more easily, potentially leading to increased take-up. This also increases compliance and reduces the number of potential appeals.
- 5) **Improved equity**: plain English schemes help to ensure that everyone is treated fairly, by clearly setting out the eligibility criteria and entitlement levels. This helps to reduce any potential inequalities that may arise from a lack of understanding of the scheme.

Default, Banded, Discount .. we have simplified them all

Finding the
right
information
has never been
easier with



The law and practice relating to Welfare Benefits is complex, detailed, open to interpretation and endlessly dynamic

LA Directories Ltd is here to help professionals across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland correctly and efficiently identify and understand the ever-changing law and guidance that governs the calculation of entitlement to Housing Benefit, Rates (Northern Ireland), Universal Credit, Council Tax Reduction and Discretionary Housing Payment.

LA Directories Ltd takes the law and guidance relating to Housing Benefit, Rates, Universal Credit, Council Tax Reduction and Discretionary Housing Payment then interprets and consolidates it into three product ranges...

- The Benefits Directory - a web-based knowledge management solution
- The Training Directory - provision of open and in-house training courses at all levels
- Consultancy services

Local authorities across England, Wales and Scotland are using our services as well as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

E-mail services.enquiries@ladirectories.com

Peter Davis, Marketing & Account Management

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Ferret Information Systems Ltd



Ferret Information Systems was established in 1987 and is the largest company in Europe in the field of law dealing with welfare benefits and similar areas of determinative, compliance, and regulatory law.



our training services:

Ferret is well placed to provide training services and its team of specialists have wide experience of benefits and housing grant legislation. We also provide consultancy to organisations, companies and government on the impact of legislative and policy changes.



our products:

Ferret produces a wide variety of systems, designed to provide support tools for advice workers, and also to provide information and advice directly to the public. Ferret specialises in a holistic assessment of financial circumstances relating to welfare benefits and tax credits entitlement, coupled with software development methodology which offers a high level of flexibility and rapid updating to reflect rule changes.



our platforms:

Systems supported include network, desktop, laptop, mobile devices, Internet and Intranet systems, and a public access system in multi-lingual, multi-media form for touch screen kiosks and public access PC's.




our customers:

Users of Ferret systems include government departments, local authorities, housing associations, CABx, HIA's and other advice agencies, universities, social welfare organisations, libraries, solicitors and financial advisers.

<https://www.ferret.co.uk/>

Over **Six Million** benefit checks
were completed on our calculator in 2022/23

By working with forward-thinking organisations,
as well as via our wone website, we are proud to be
helping people access the benefits they're **entitledto**



Barnet Council has become the first local authority to launch the InBest benefits calculator, designed to support residents with the rise in cost of living.

The InBest benefits calculator has been integrated into Barnet's online support application, to make it easier for people who are experiencing financial difficulties to find out what support is available to them.

It includes information on benefits such as Universal Credit, Pensions Credit, Attendance Allowance and Personal Independence Payment, as well as local financial support initiatives including council tax support and the residents support fund.

Barnet Council Leader, Cllr Barry Rawlings said: "The cost-of-living crisis is affecting us all, and we want to ensure Barnet residents know what financial support is available to them and how they can access these services.

"It is very positive to see Barnet is the first local authority to launch this free tool, and we hope to see many other local councils doing the same to help their residents."

To find out what financial support is available to help with the cost-of-living visit [Barnet Council Benefits Calculator](#)

inbest

End

Malcolm Gardner, Visionary Network Consultant

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Book a meeting with Malcolm <https://bit.ly/VNMGTime>



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Join the discussion

Each Monday lunchtime, a panel of professionals leads a discussion on revenue and benefits administration issues. The panel consists of council & housing officers, policy advisors, and analysts.

It is a free service that is well attended. Attendees make good contributions; everyone gets a chance to speak. Attendees includes senior managers, team leaders, suppliers, and support staff

You can join in the discussion during the week (and start some new ones) by joining our WhatsApp group: <https://bit.ly/3Qjrkqe>

Links to the recordings and the slide packs plus other relevant documents will be posted into both the WhatsApp group and in the Teams Channel and emailed to those who attended and subscribers to the group.

To sign up just email malcolm@visionarynetwork.co.uk with your name, organisation and email address. We are inclusive because sharing information and good practice is essential. You don't have to attend every session; recordings will be available.



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Expanding inbest's coverage to Discretionary Support Schemes

- **Discretionary Support Schemes:** Enhancing Access through Our Expanded Benefits Calculator
- **Problem:** Increasing numbers of Local Authority Discretionary Support Schemes are adding complexity to the welfare system. This results in lower awareness and uptake of these local benefits (60% vs. 70-90% for national benefits).
- **Our Solution:** Expansion of our benefits calculator to include all Discretionary Support Schemes offered by UK Local Authorities. This allows us to effectively support households not eligible for national benefits or facing financial hardship.
- **Coverage:** The updated calculator covers Discretionary Housing Payment, Household Support Fund, Council Tax Discretionary Relief Scheme, Local Welfare Assistance, Scottish Welfare Fund, and Discretionary Assistance Fund.
- **Value Proposition:** Our calculator increases awareness of local benefits and supports those facing financial hardship. This tool is particularly useful for our partners in the Debt Advice sector.
- **Opportunities for Local Authorities:** Enhance visibility of your Discretionary Support Schemes via our network of nearly 70 partners. Local Authorities can also use our free white-label benefits calculator to aid residents in identifying eligible benefits.
- **Successes:** Barnet Council and Barking & Dagenham have successfully onboarded.
- Connect with us to get involved!

The logo for 'inbest' is displayed in a bold, black, sans-serif font. It is positioned on a bright yellow, irregularly shaped background that resembles a paint splatter or a brushstroke. The background is set against a dark grey footer area.

<https://inbest.ai/contact/>

entitledto

independent | accurate | reliable

REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEMES IN 2023/24

- The report reviews the changes made by local authorities (LAs) in England to their Council Tax Reduction (CTR) schemes for the year 2023/24.
- A decade ago, in 2013, support for low-income households shifted from a national scheme to locally managed CTR programs.
- LAs have since adopted a wide range of different rules, having to balance their own council budget needs and the need to protect citizens.

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REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEMES IN 2023/24

- Around 13% of LAs in England (39 out of 296) changed their CTR schemes for 2023/24.
- The most common change was to increase maximum support for the poorest households (29 LAs).
- Only one LA reduced their maximum support. The second most common change was the introduction of an income-banded scheme (12 LAs).
- Currently, around 30% of CTR schemes are income-banded.

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REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEMES IN 2023/24

- The report also highlights a trend towards making CTR schemes more generous.
- For instance, several LAs increased the maximum support available, particularly for those with non-banded schemes. Several changes were also made to simplify the administration of CTR schemes.

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REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEMES IN 2023/24

- The report further delves into the details of income-banded CTR schemes, the most common format for which now caters to six different household types. This targets support specifically toward lone parent households.
- The report underscores a problem with these banded schemes, where people migrating from legacy benefits to Universal Credit (UC) can lose their maximum support.
- In conclusion, while there's a general push towards offering up to 100% support for claimants in 2023/24, there remains a great deal of variation across England with some low-income households still required to pay up to 50% of their Council Tax bill.
- The report ends with an offer to assist LAs in setting up or modifying their CTR schemes.

EntitledTo [0161 980 6276](tel:01619806276)

Misallocated Covid-19 Grants Recovery

- Councils paid out £22.6bn in grants during the pandemic
- Estimated £1.1bn was paid wrongly, but only £11.4m recovered
- Lack of incentive and resource prioritisation hinder recovery efforts
- Concerns over incentivising councils to target small businesses

Challenges in Grant Recovery

- Grant schemes developed quickly, bypassing usual fraud and error checks
- Ambiguity in scheme design complicates recovery efforts
- Local Government received £210m additional funding for grant administration
- Revenue teams faced significant administrative burden for two years

One in five workers will be higher-rate taxpayers by 2027 – IFS

- According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), one in four teachers and one in eight nurses in the UK will become higher-rate taxpayers by 2027 due to the government's freeze on income tax allowances and thresholds.
- The IFS predicts that nearly 8 million people, or one in five taxpayers, will pay income tax at a rate of 40% or higher as a result of the Treasury's efforts to reduce the budget deficit.
- The freeze on allowances and thresholds, the largest tax-raising measure since 1979, means that an additional 2.5 million people will no longer be considered basic rate taxpayers by 2027-28.
- The IFS report highlights the financial pressures faced by workers whose wages are not keeping pace with inflation.
- While Chancellor Jeremy Hunt argues that action is necessary to repair the pandemic's impact on public finances, this report may lead to calls from some Conservative MPs to cut taxes.
- The Office for Budget Responsibility predicts that taxes as a share of national income will reach their highest level in 70 years.

One in five workers will be higher-rate taxpayers by 2027 – IFS

- The IFS points out that the proportion of individuals subject to higher-rate tax has significantly increased over the past 30 years, and the freeze on thresholds is amplifying this trend.
- The report notes that tax allowances and thresholds failing to keep up with inflation, also known as fiscal drag, has caused a "seismic shift" in the tax system and is a significant factor in the expected decline in living standards.
- Currently, 11% of UK adults pay the 40% higher rate of income tax, but this is projected to rise to 14% by 2027-28. Additionally, 3.1% of adults will face marginal tax rates of either 45% or 60%, a similar proportion to the 40% higher rate taxpayers in the 1990s.
- The freeze on thresholds is accelerating this process and will result in 2.5 million more people paying rates of 40% or higher by 2027-28.
- The report suggests that expanding the scope of higher rates is a political decision, but relying on a freeze leaves the income tax system vulnerable to the impact of inflation.

Private Rented Sector Reforms and Renters' Reform Bill

Proposed Reforms

- Ban on no-fault evictions
- Strengthening landlords' rights for antisocial behavior evictions

Tenant's Perspective

- Living conditions: damp, unsafe, cold homes
- Threat of sudden eviction

Landlord's Perspective

- Strengthening powers to evict antisocial tenants
- Broadening activities that can lead to eviction

Antisocial Behavior Evictions

- Two-week notice period
- "Nuisance or annoyance" triggering eviction

Private Rented Sector Reforms and Renters' Reform Bill

Rent Increase and Rent Caps

- No limitations on rent hikes or rent caps
- Outlawing extreme rent increases targeted at pushing tenants out

Enforcement and Oversight

- New ombudsman for private rented housing
- Role of the courts

Fierce Debate Expected

- Definitions of antisocial behavior
- Policing and timing of decency standards

Private Rented Sector Reforms and Renters' Reform Bill

Additional Tenant Rights

- New right to live with a pet
- Prohibition of refusing tenancies based on benefits or children

Tenant Concerns

- Potential for "back door" evictions through rent hikes
- Calls for closing loopholes and ensuring fairness

Reactions and Perspectives

- Shelter's cautious support for the bill
- Toby Lloyd's warning about back door route to no-fault evictions
- National Residential Landlords Association have concerns and demands

Removal of Basic Housing Protections for Asylum Seekers

- Ministers are implementing new rules to relocate asylum seekers from hotels to the private rented sector.
- These changes will remove basic housing protections for asylum seekers.
- Landlords will be exempted from regulations concerning electrical safety, minimum room sizes, and other important standards.
- Campaigners warn that the government's aim to alleviate the asylum seeker accommodation crisis may result in cramming people into small, inadequate spaces.
- MPs are scheduled to vote on the proposed changes, put forward by Suella Braverman (Home Secretary) and Michael Gove (Housing Secretary), as early as Wednesday.

Removal of Basic Housing Protections for Asylum Seekers

- Landlords of asylum seekers in England and Wales will no longer be required to register with local authorities.
- Landlords will be able to house asylum seekers for up to two years without obtaining a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) license, which is typically necessary for renting to multiple households in a single property.
- Mary Atkinson from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants highlights that HMO licenses ensure basic levels of safety and sanitation.
- Asylum accommodation already falls short of these standards, with cramped and inadequate living conditions.
- Removing HMO licenses may lead to unfit and unsafe living conditions for already traumatized individuals seeking sanctuary.

Removal of Basic Housing Protections for Asylum Seekers

- Michael Gove is advancing these rules in the Commons at the request of Suella Braverman to reduce the number of people temporarily housed in hotels.
- The government aims to bring these changes to a vote with little attention on the same day Gove's bill to ban landlords from evicting tenants without cause will be published.
- More than 50,000 asylum seekers are currently housed in hotels due to backlogs in the asylum processing system, costing £6m daily.
- Cramped and unsanitary conditions have resulted in outbreaks of highly contagious diseases.
- Temporary solutions have raised concerns among healthcare workers and migration campaigners and have strained local communities and services.

Removal of Basic Housing Protections for Asylum Seekers

- Suella Braverman plans to house asylum seekers on redundant cruise ships, barges, and ferries to address the crisis.
- Rishi Sunak is lobbying European counterparts to limit the European Court of Human Rights' ability to block asylum seeker deportations.
- The government hopes that removing housing regulations for private landlords will expedite the transfer of people from hotels.
- The government justifies the removal of licensing requirements by stating that it will enable the acquisition of more suitable long-term accommodation while fulfilling their legal duty of care.
- Landlords will no longer need to provide gas or electrical safety certificates or demonstrate the safety of electrical appliances and furniture.
- Minimum room size standards will no longer be enforced, putting thousands, including children and older individuals, at risk.
- Polly Neate, CEO of Shelter, emphasizes that licensing for HMOs was introduced to ensure people's safety.
- By removing these protections, the government is endangering the lives of thousands of people.
- Suella Braverman advocated for reduced migration in her speech at the National Conservatism conference, despite pressure to increase immigration for economic benefits.
- Michael Gove argues that migration contributes to the housing crisis, even though his policies are predicted to drastically reduce housebuilding.

Removal of Basic Housing Protections for Asylum Seekers

- Summary of Changes:
 - Removal of basic housing protections for asylum seekers
 - Exemption of landlords from regulations on electrical safety, minimum room sizes, etc.
 - Landlords no longer required to register with local authorities or obtain HMO licenses
 - The government will still have some oversight as civil servants will approve contracts with landlords.
 - However, the Home Office has already demonstrated a failure to provide safe and sanitary asylum accommodation.

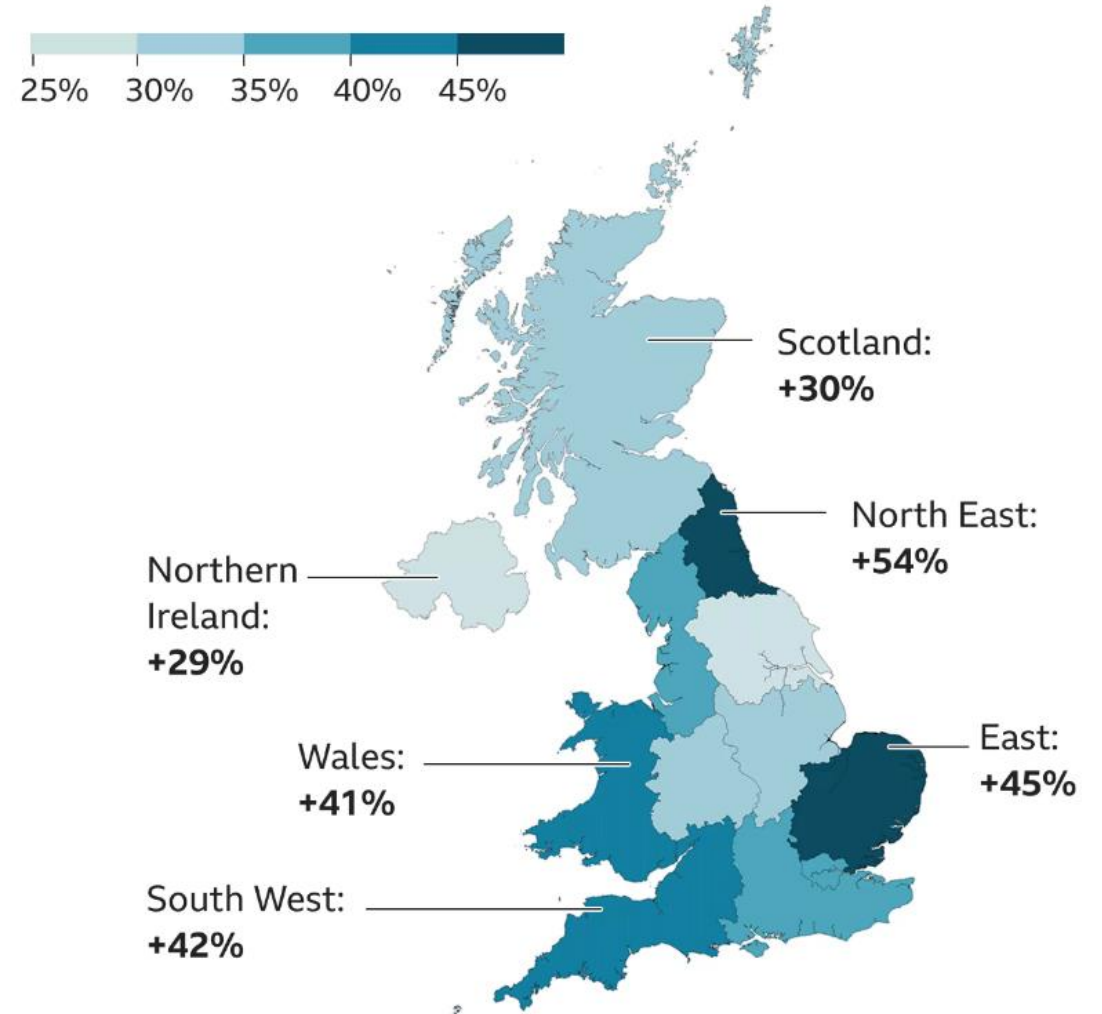
Foodbanks buying items

- Due to inadequate donations, food banks are having to purchase groceries to meet increased demand from families in need.
- According to the Trussell Trust, 13% of the food in emergency parcels had to be purchased, a change from pre-pandemic times when all food was donated. It is partly due to donations not always matching the most-needed items, leading to more purchases to cover shortages.
- Paul McMurray, a North Shields software engineer, has created a new software, Donation Genie, that might mitigate this issue.
- Food banks across the UK can use the website to find the items they need most, allowing individuals to donate precisely what is needed.
- This could lead to "less hunger, less waste, and less food poverty" according to McMurray, who developed the website during his charity days at Accenture.

Foodbanks buying items

All areas saw an increase in food bank use

Percentage change in total food parcels delivered by the Trussell Trust by nation and region, from 2021-22 to 2022-23



Source: The Trussell Trust

No additional energy grant assistance

- The UK government has decided not to provide additional assistance for homes with high energy bills despite persistently high costs.
- It is expected that Ofgem will announce a significant reduction in the price cap on Thursday.
- It is expected to fall to around £2,000, nearly double its value when first introduced.
- Under the government's Energy Price Guarantee Scheme, household energy bills have been capped at £2,500 since last October, and all households received a £400 state contribution.
- Bills will no longer be subsidized after June, when the Ofgem price cap drops.
- Low-income, elderly, and disabled individuals will still be able to receive financial assistance, but Martin Lewis expressed concern for people who are slightly above the threshold and may be unable to afford £2,000 energy bills.
- During July and September, Cornwall Insight expects household energy bills to drop to £2,054.
- This remains over £1,000 per year more than pre-pandemic price cap levels, and bills are unlikely to return to pre-2020 levels before the end of the decade.



1m Cancel Broadband

- Up to one million people in the UK disconnected their broadband in the past year because they couldn't afford it during a cost-of-living crisis.
- People on Universal Credit were six times more likely to cancel their access, despite being eligible for discounted rates.
- As Universal Credit recipients are four times more likely to have unpaid broadband bills, Citizens Advice expressed concern that the problem could worsen.
- CEO of Citizens Advice, Dame Clare Moriarty, expressed concern over people being priced out of internet access.
 - Current industry efforts to provide and promote social tariffs, which offer superfast broadband for just £10 a month, are inadequate.
- Only 5% of eligible households have used these social tariffs, leading to £824 million in unclaimed support.
- In addition, 42% of those who disconnected broadband found managing other bills difficult, and 27% found staying in touch with family and friends difficult.

Backlog in Audits

- The Financial Reporting Council's director of local audits Neil Harris has warned UK Parliament's levelling up committee that the number of outstanding local authority audits could exceed 1,000 by 2023 unless "urgent and decisive action" is taken.
- In total, there are 630 outstanding opinions, which indicate that no single solution can resolve the problem.
- As Harris prepares for the Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority to take over as 'system leader' for local audits, he expressed frustration at the lack of specific data.
- Tony Redmond, author of the 2020 Redmond Review into local audit effectiveness, said the financial sustainability of local authorities requires immediate attention.
- David Heald of the University of Glasgow noted that the backlog in local audits is specific to England and that the abolition of the Audit Commission and the focus on reducing audit costs have contributed to the problem.
- Outsourcing all audits to the private sector requires making audits profitable for these firms; otherwise, local audit will lose prestige and interest.

Scottish Council Reform

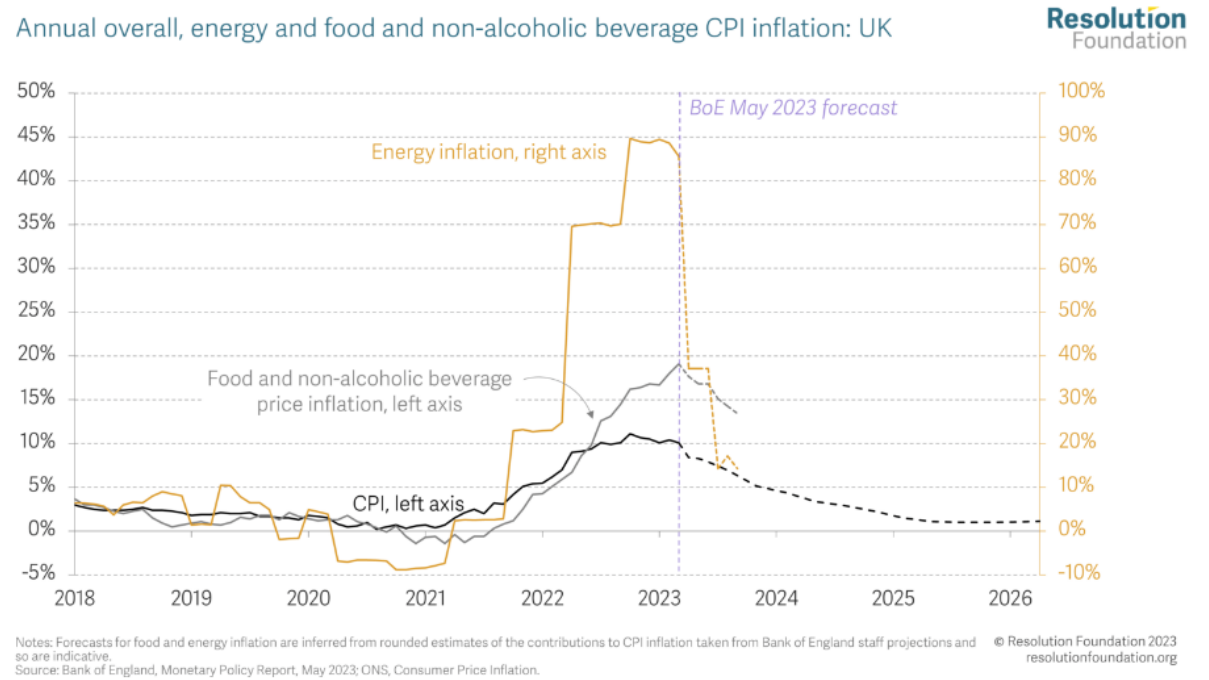
- Scottish councils are grappling with financial challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Despite increased funding, a report reveals that most of the money is restricted, hindering flexibility.
- High service demand and inflation add pressure on councils to save money and balance budgets.
- Urgent reform is needed through a new deal for local government, granting more control over grant spending and revenue raising.
- Funding cuts are projected from 2024-2028, coinciding with rising costs and increased demand.
- Councils have already made cuts, but sustainability concerns persist.
- The government acknowledges the need for reform and aims to empower councils for better service delivery.
- Immediate attention and collaboration are crucial for addressing the challenges and ensuring sustainable public service provision.

Food for Thought

- Cost of living crises are typically triggered by energy costs, but are increasingly fueled by food prices, according to the Resolution Foundation.
- In the past year and a half, food prices have surged by 25 percent, primarily affecting low- and middle-income households.
- The cost of food makes up a larger proportion of typical household expenditures, despite the faster rise in energy costs.
- Most households will experience a greater increase in food costs than energy bills by summer 2023. The shift from energy to food as the primary cost concern has been supported by falling energy prices and continued growth in food costs.
- Yet, this new reality is not fully recognized in political discourse and policy debates. Households with low incomes are disproportionately affected by rising food and energy prices because they cannot switch to cheaper alternatives.
- While energy prices are falling, policies addressing this crisis should not ignore the issue of high food prices, and should focus particularly on helping low- and middle-income households, as well as larger families.
- Governments should provide more support to those households, through programs such as food stamps and subsidies. Low-income households should also be provided with access to proper nutrition education and advice on how to make their money stretch further.
- Additionally, government policies should focus on increasing the availability of affordable, healthy food options.
- See <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/food-for-thought/> for Torsten Bell's blog.

Food for Thought

Figure 1: Headline inflation is falling, but food prices will continue to rise rapidly

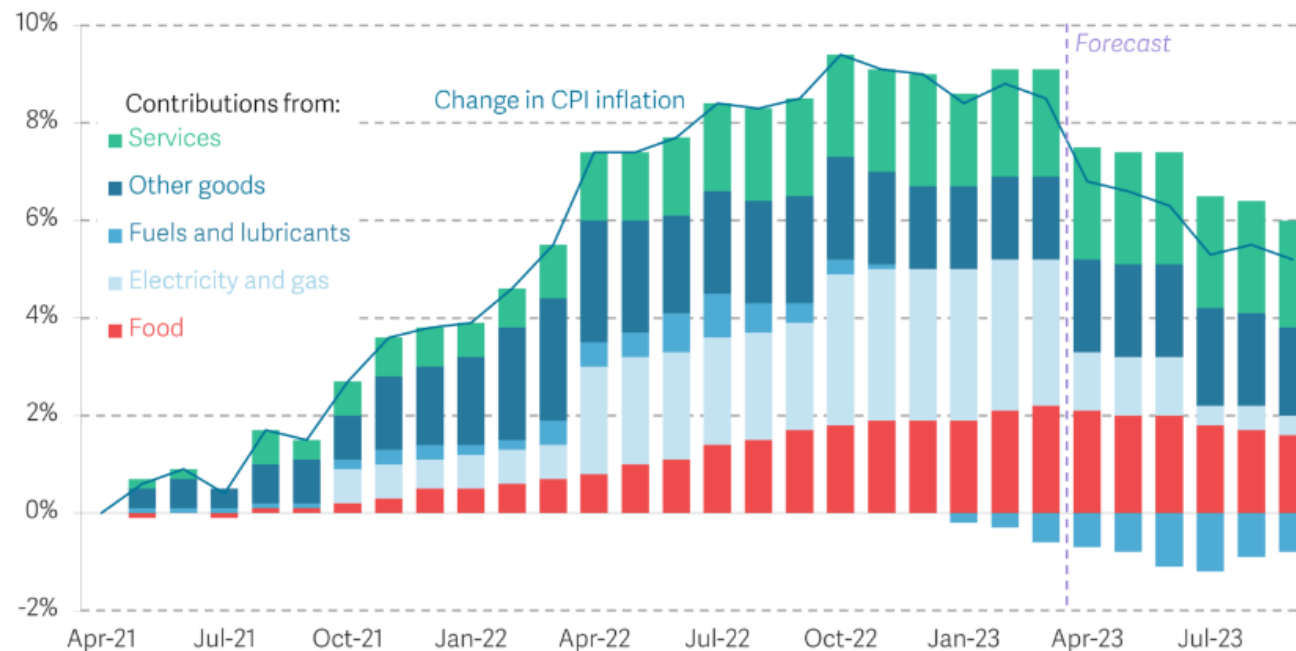


Food for Thought

Figure 2: From April, food will contribute more to CPI inflation than energy

Contributions to the rise in CPI inflation since April 2021: UK

Resolution Foundation



Notes: Bank of England data from April 2023 onwards is from Bank staff projections.
Source: Bank of England, Monetary Policy Report, May 2023; ONS, Consumer Price Inflation.

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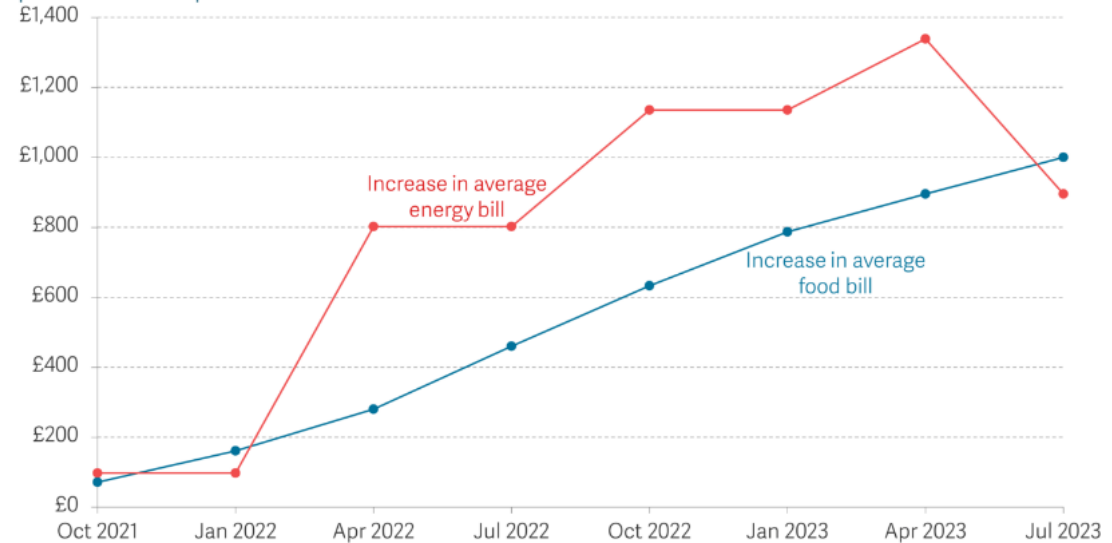
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Food for Thought

Figure 3: The average food bill increase since 2019-20 will be larger than the average energy bill increase by the summer

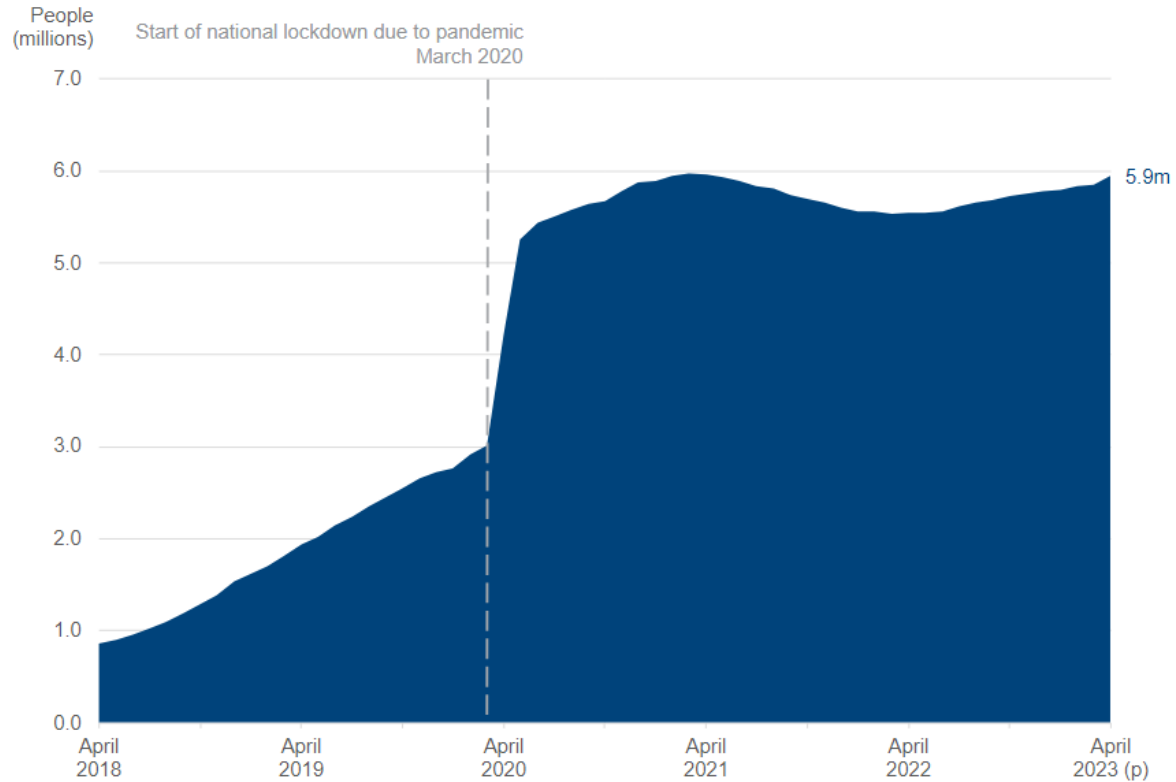
Average increase in annual household consumption on food and energy since 2019-20 at prices in each quarter: UK Resolution Foundation



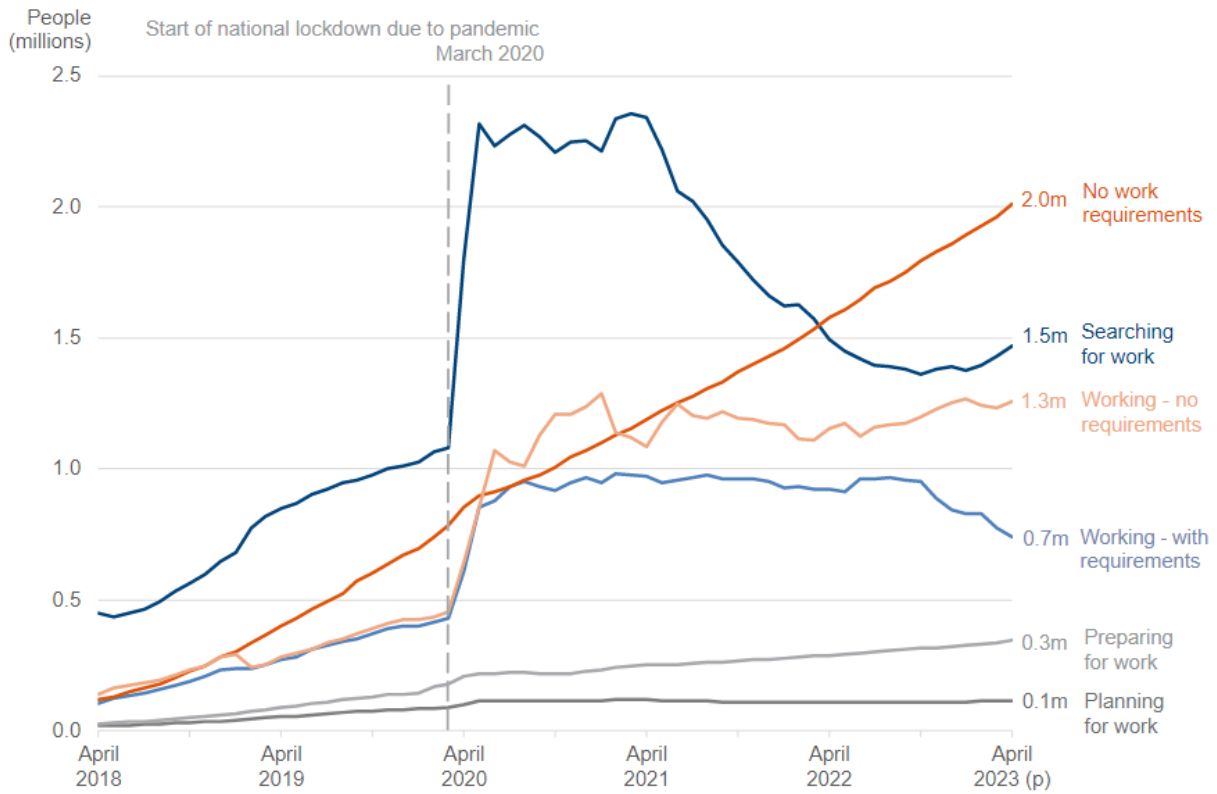
Notes: Q4 2022 and Q1 2023 data include £400 energy bill discount. The Bank of England forecast for food and non-alcoholic beverage inflation used in this analysis is inferred rounded estimates of the contributions to CPI inflation taken from Bank of England staff projections. Data is for annual household consumption, using the prices in each quarter. Consumption baskets are held fixed from 2019-20.
Source: RF analysis of DNS, Living Costs and Food Survey; OBR, Economic and Fiscal Outlook, March 2023; Bank of England, Monetary Policy Report, May 2023; ONS, Consumer Price Inflation; Cornwall Insight, Energy Price Cap forecast.

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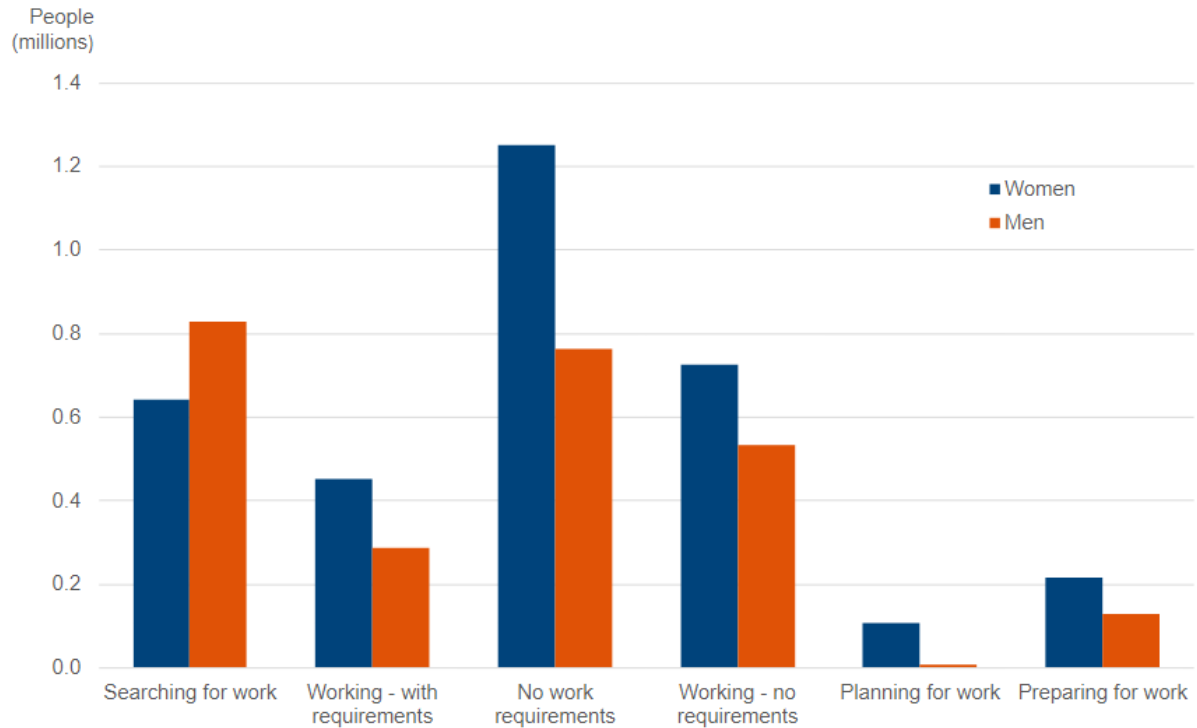
People on Universal Credit, Great Britain, April 2018 to April 2023



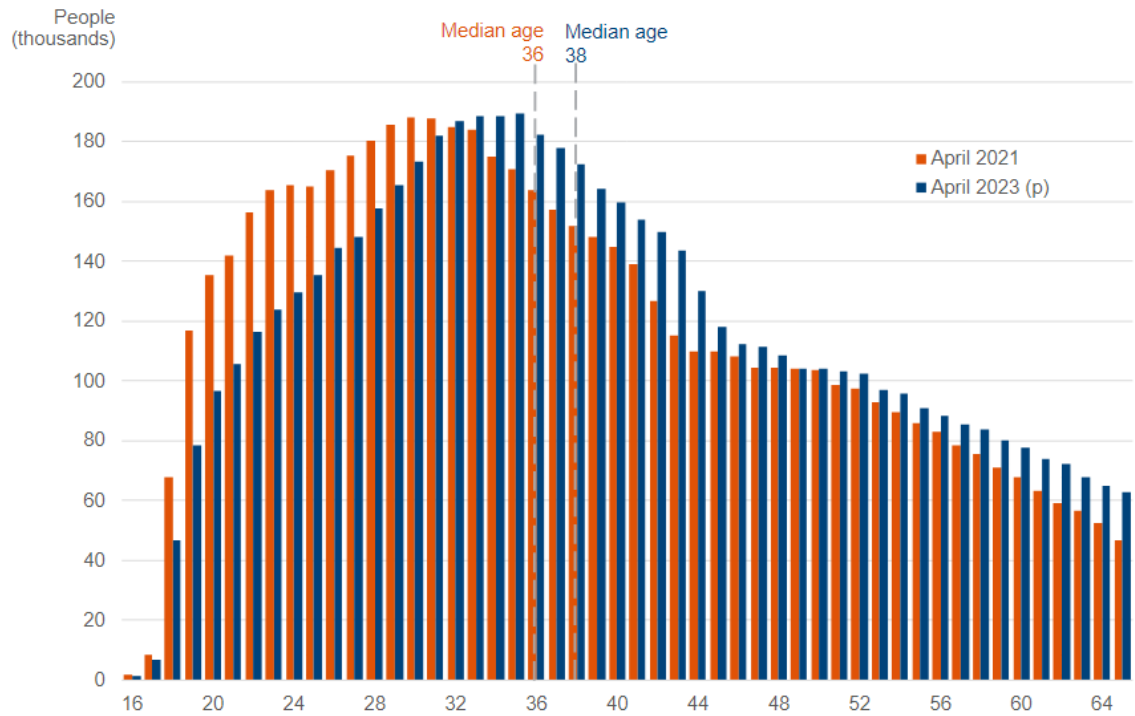
There were 5.9 million people on Universal Credit in April 2023



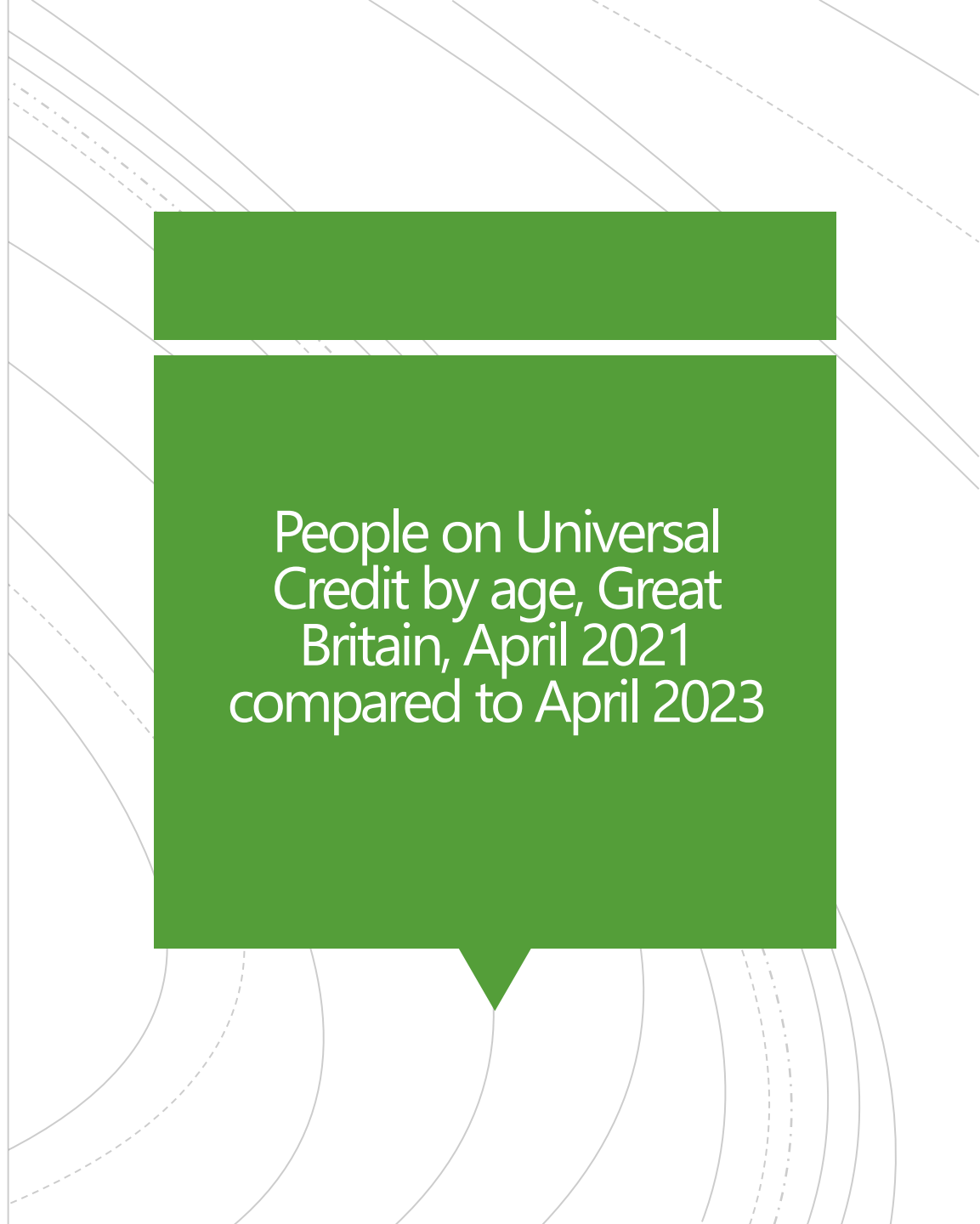
People on Universal Credit by conditionality regime, Great Britain, April 2018 to April 2023

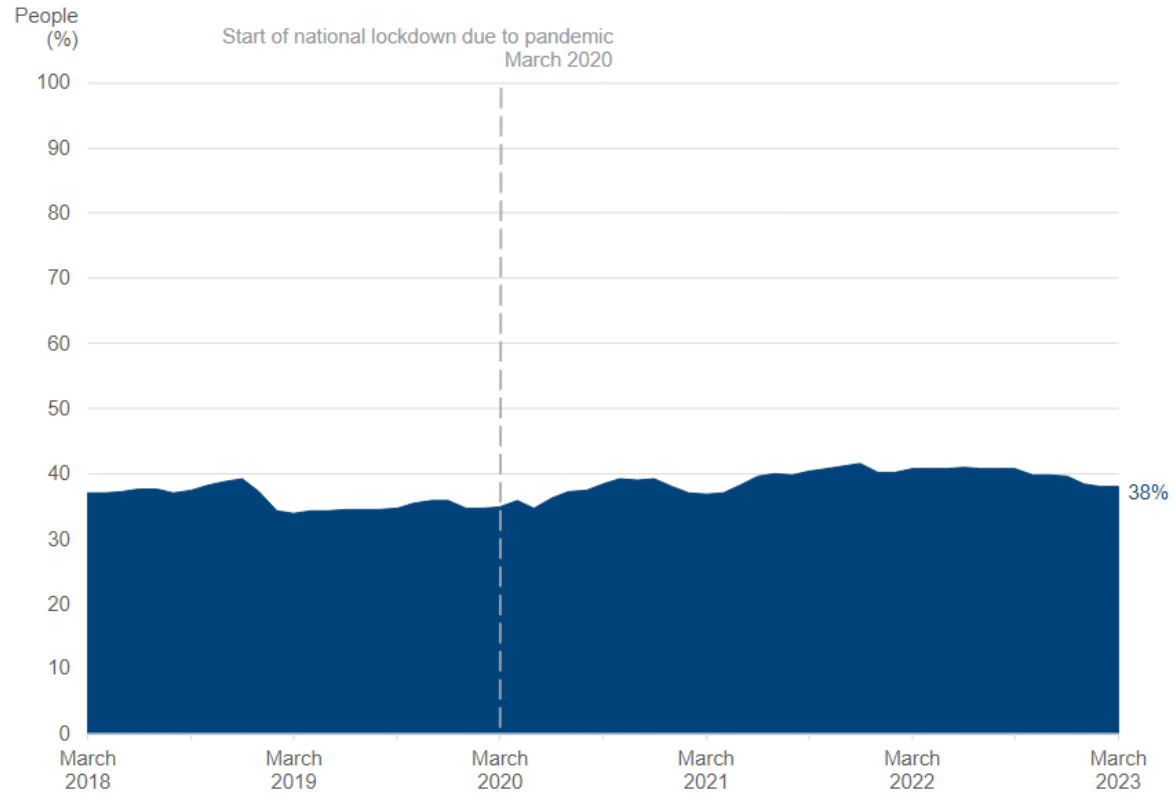


People on Universal
Credit by gender and
conditionality regime,
Great Britain, April 2023

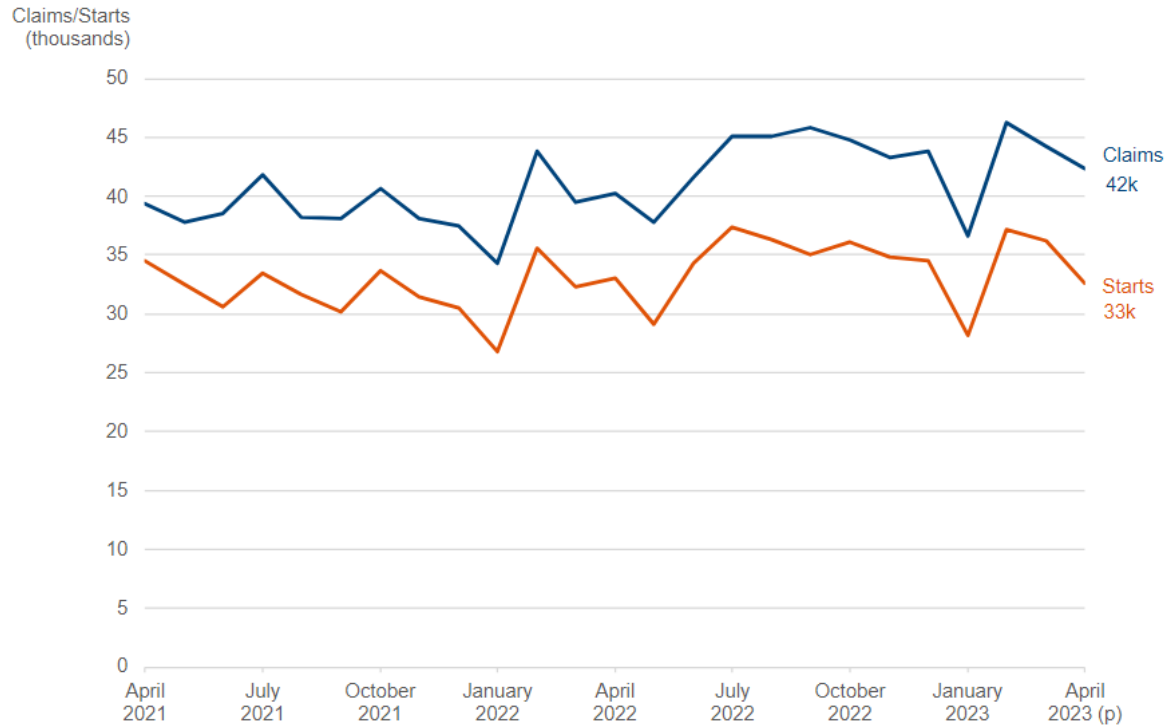


People on Universal Credit by age, Great Britain, April 2021 compared to April 2023

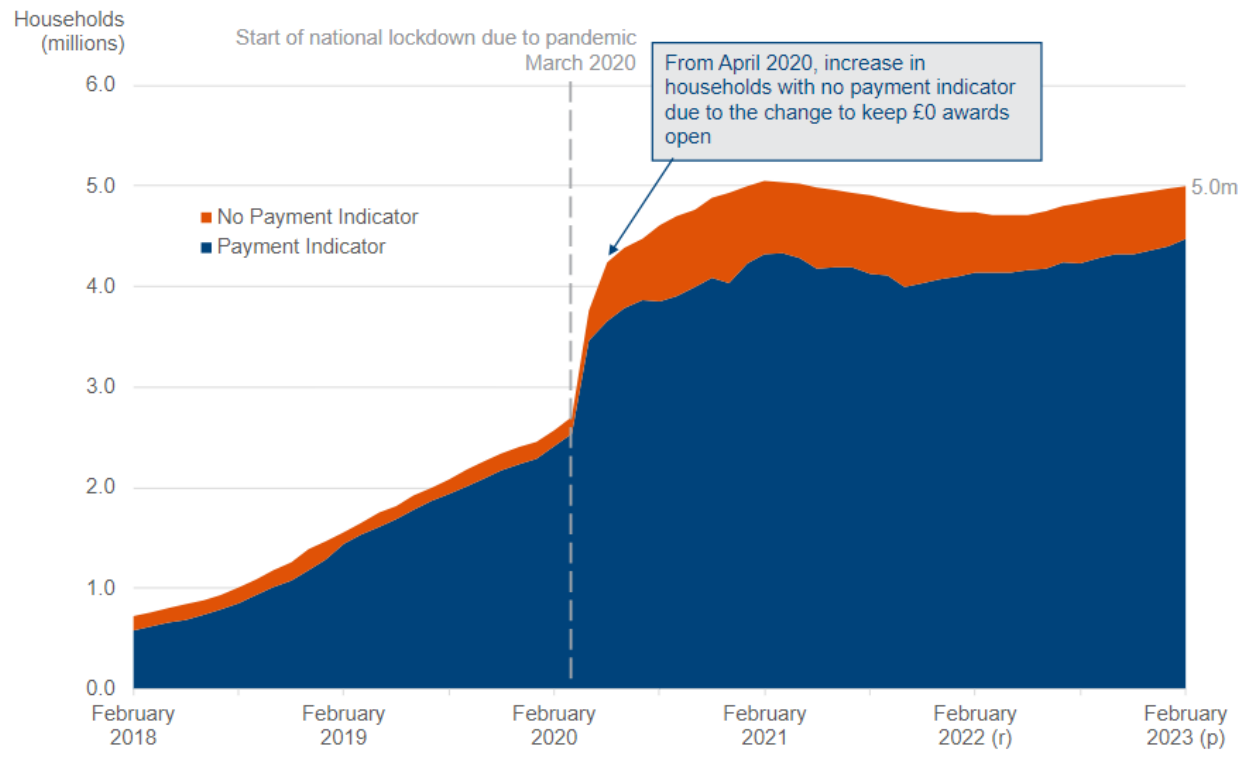




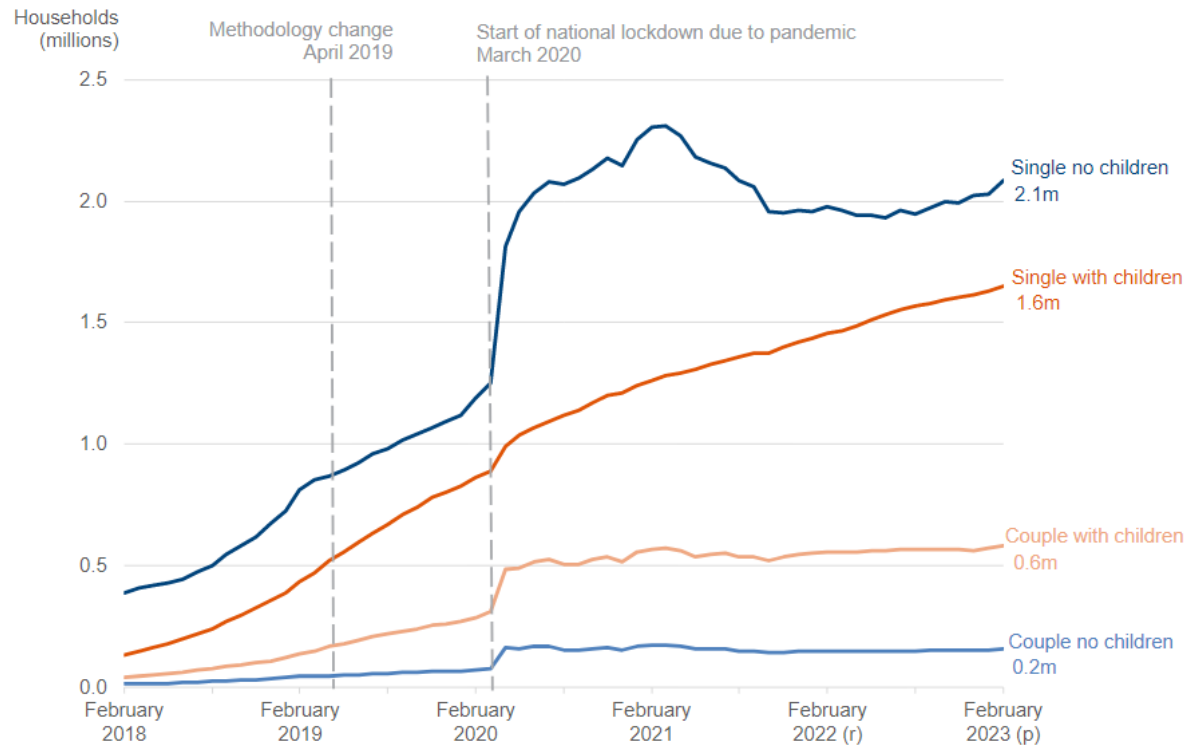
People on Universal
Credit in employment,
Great Britain, March
2018 to March 2023



Claims and Starts to
Universal Credit, average
weekly rates, Great
Britain, April 2021 to
April 2023



Households on Universal Credit by payment indicator, Great Britain, February 2018 to February 2023



Households on Universal Credit with a payment by family type, Great Britain, February 2018 to February 2023

Benefit Sanctions

- in February 2023, 6.18% of UC full-service claimants subject to sanction as part of their conditionality regime, at the point where a sanction was applied, had a deduction taken from their UC full-service award as a result of a sanction. This:
 - is down by 0.33 percentage points from November 2022
 - is up by 2.30 percentage points in the latest 12 months
- the UC sanction rate reached a peak of 6.84% in October 2022 when compared to the 11 months preceding the COVID-19 pandemic
- prior to legislation changes made on 30 March 2020, the UC sanction rate was 2.51%
- over the course of the roll-out of UC (live and full service), the balance of individuals in conditionality regimes where sanctions can be applied as a proportion of the caseload has changed

Benefit Sanctions

- in February 2023, 31.5% of UC claimants were in the conditionality regimes where sanctions can be applied (this includes claimants in the “searching for work”, “planning for work”, “preparing for work” or “unknown” conditionality regimes). This proportion:
 - was 44.7% in March 2020. In October 2022, this proportion was 31.2%, rising to 31.5% in February 2023. October 2022 has the lowest percentage of claimants in conditionality regimes where sanctions can be applied when compared to the timeseries from the 11 months preceding the COVID-19 pandemic
- adverse sanction decisions on UC full service have decreased from 59,000 in March 2022, which is the highest across the whole timeseries. In January 2023, the number of adverse decisions was 45,000



Tampon Tax

- The UK Treasury is investigating whether removing the 5% VAT, or the "tampon tax," has reduced consumer prices.
- In response to Brexit, the tax was removed from tampons and sanitary products, but there are concerns that retailers are not passing the savings on to women.
- Price increases for these products have exceeded inflation rates over the past year, according to a recent study.
- The price of a pack of 20 supermarket own-label tampons has risen by 27% from 91p to £1.16.
- Some critics argue that the tax reduction has made supermarkets wealthier without increasing access to menstrual products.
- According to them, retailers have pocketed £10m a year.
- According to Tax Policy Associates, tampon prices were cut by about 1% at most, with retailers retaining the majority of the benefits.
- Instead of cutting VAT, the founder Dan Neidle suggested distributing essential products for free to those in need to make them more affordable.
- Government encourages retailers to pass savings on to consumers.
- One of the benefits of Brexit, according to former chancellor Rishi Sunak, was cheaper period products.
- The rising cost of nearly all goods, including tampons, contradicts these claims, say critics.

Quote of the Week

“Smart people instinctively understand the dangers of entrusting our future to self-serving leaders who use our institutions.. whether in the corporate or social sectors.. to advance their own interests.” – Jim Collins

James C. "Jim" Collins (born 1958) is an American researcher, author, speaker and consultant focused on business management and company sustainability and growth.



Kevin Stewart

- Quick Update:
 - Council Tax
 - Business Rates
 - General



Case Law of Note

New or Updated Guidance

- Guidance on how local authorities should exercise their homelessness functions in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 from 3 April 2018.
 - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>
- Decision makers' guide: Vols 4, 5, 6 and 7: Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support: staff guide
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/decision-makers-guide-vols-4-5-6-and-7-jobseekers-allowance-and-income-support-staff-guide>
- Decision makers' guide: Vols 8 and 9: Employment and Support Allowance: staff guide
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/decision-makers-guide-vols-8-and-9-employment-and-support-allowance-staff-guide>



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Other Information



Building Teams That Redefine Excellence

Empowering both clients and candidates to achieve their goals



Welcome to #TeamBSS

Your Public Sector Recruitment Partner

Expertise

Since we started back in 2018, we've been focused on public sector recruitment, and it's become our specialty! We're excited to bring our experience and know-how to the table when it comes to supporting public sector organisations by connecting them with amazing candidates.

Understanding the challenges

We truly "get" the unique needs and challenges faced by both clients and candidates in the public sector. This understanding allows us to provide solid support and guidance throughout the entire recruitment journey. Our expertise in handling the ins and outs of public sector hiring means that clients and candidates alike can trust us to make the right connections and contribute to the success of their organisations.

Matchmakers

Our agency is passionate about finding the perfect match between local government positions and top-notch professionals. We know that getting the right person for the job is crucial, and our expert recruiters go the extra mile to source and evaluate candidates who have the right mix of skills, experience, and personality to thrive in public sector roles.

Tailored solutions

We're all about offering customised solutions for both our clients and candidates. We understand that everyone has different needs, so we take the time to really listen and get to know what's important to each party. This way, we can create recruitment strategies that make everyone happy and lead to successful outcomes.



Civica Open Revenues Systems Manager

12 Months+ | £450 per day Umbrella | Remote

The Assignment

We are seeking a qualified and dedicated Revenues & Benefits Systems Manager for a 12-month remote contract, offering up to £450.00 per day (umbrella). The successful candidate will be responsible for managing the Revenues & Benefits ICT systems and the Business Support team, ensuring the smooth operation and proactive management of the department.

This role requires close collaboration with Revenues Teams and the Revenues and Benefits Service management team to drive the effective delivery and continuous improvement of Revenues Services. The Systems Manager will also be expected to provide cover for the Benefits Project and Development Manager when needed, showcasing adaptability and versatility in their skill set.

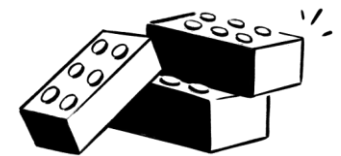
What we're looking for

We're looking for candidates who have 3 main skills/knowledge:

1. Essential experience with Civica Open Revenues as a back-end user
2. Expertise in managing Revenues Service ICT systems and providing support to colleagues
3. Proven ability in leading a Business Support team and working proactively with software suppliers for service optimization and value for money

To find out more or to apply

[>> Click here to visit the full advert](#)



Benefits Assessor (Academy)

7 Months | £25 ph Umbrella | Remote

The Assignment

We're on the lookout for a skilled Benefits Officer to join us for a 7-month contract role, operating on a full-time basis. This position is entirely home-based, offering flexibility and convenience for the right candidate. We're particularly interested in professionals who bring at least 5 years of recent experience in Benefit Assessment, complemented by the hands-on usage of Capita One (Academy).

As a Benefits Officer, your core responsibilities will be deeply rooted in upholding the Housing Benefit Regulations, Council Tax Support Scheme, Taxation Regulations, and associated policies and procedures. This involves maintaining up-to-date and accurate records, not just for new and review claims for benefit/support, but also for information affecting entitlement to and payment of these benefits/support.

What we're looking for

We're looking for candidates who have 3 main skills/knowledge:

1. Up-to-date working knowledge of Benefits Legislation, Council Tax Support scheme and best practice
2. Experience of the Capita One (Academy) system
3. 5 years of recent experience in Benefit Assessment

To find out more or to apply

[>> Click here to visit the full advert](#)



Benefits Officer (Civica OpenRevenues)

6 Months | £28 ph Umbrella | Basildon

The Assignment

We're seeking an experienced Benefits Officer to administer Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support, ensuring a high standard of quality and accuracy of work. In addition to administer basic Council Tax billing, up to and including the issue of the bill. Staff will ensure that all work undertaken is in accordance with legislation guidelines and handled as promptly and efficiently as possible.

The post holder will ensure that decisions on Housing Benefit entitlement are made in accordance with law and policy guidelines, and that Council Tax demands and notices are issued in a timely manner for liability, exemptions, discounts and reliefs.

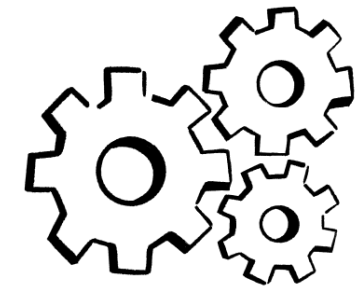
What we're looking for

We're looking for candidates who have 4 main skills/knowledge:

1. At least 3 years experience working as a Benefits Officer
2. A good working knowledge of HB/CTR law and procedures
3. A skilled Civica Open Revenues user

To find out more or to apply

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Government Changes

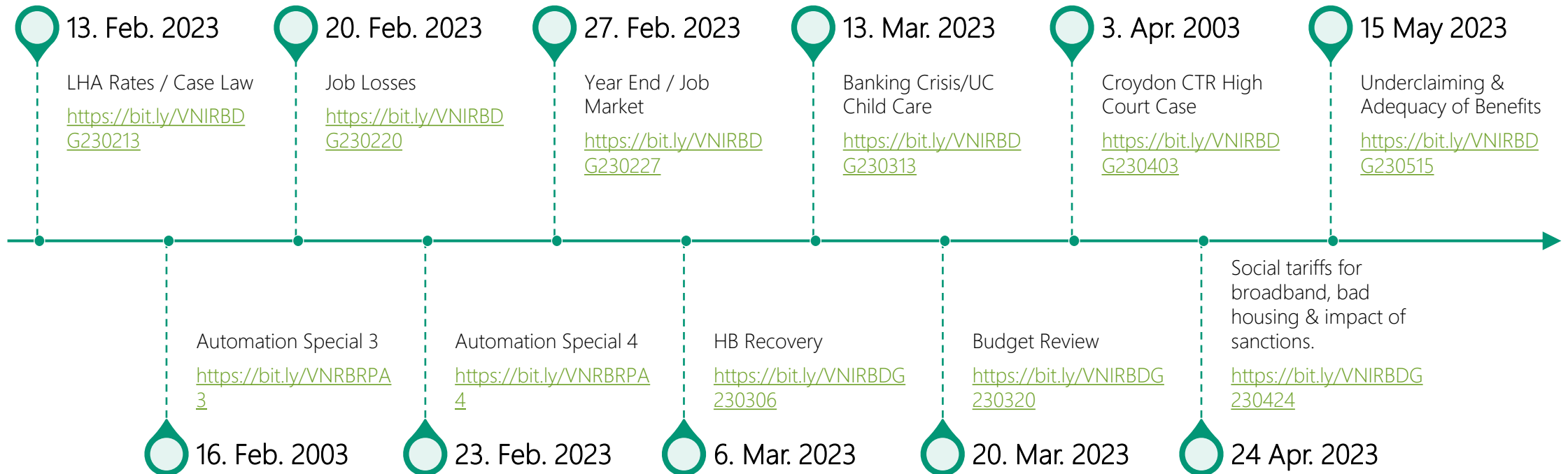
- The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has been replaced by the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).



In Partnership
with

LA Directories
Limited

Previous Recordings





Dates where
there will be
no sessions

- 29 May 2023
- 28 August 2023
- 18 December 2023
- 25 December 2023
- 1 January 2024

Impact assessment calculator



- Help for policy officials to calculate figures for impact assessments.
 - From: Department for Business and Trade and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
- https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fuploads%2Fsystem%2Fuploads%2Fattachment_data%2Ffile%2F1150244%2Fimpact-assessment-calculator-april-2023.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK



Other Workshops

Autumn Season 2023: Monthly series of focused Workshops

Thursday 21 Sept – ChatGPT & AI

Join us for an exciting workshop on ChatGPT and AI! In this workshop, you will get a chance to learn about the latest advancements in AI technology and how it is disrupting the world in which we live. We will look at ChatGPT, a cutting-edge language model trained by OpenAI, we will look at working with AI tools and techniques. And the issues that arises from such tools. Make no mistake these tools are going to have an impact whether that is for good or ill, and they are going to make an impact soon.

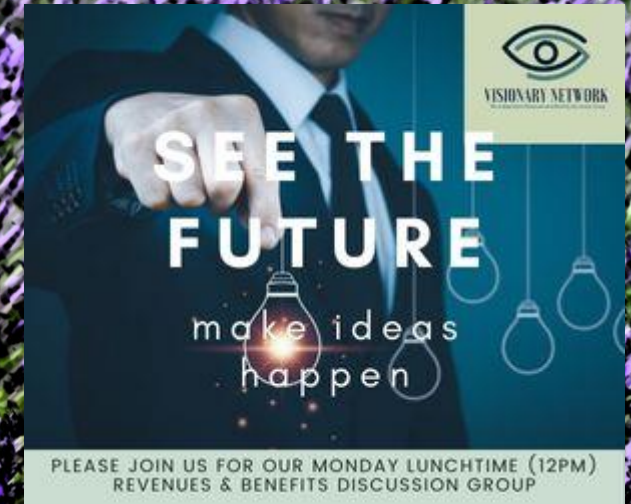
Thursday 19 Oct – Social Prescribing

Social prescribing is a healthcare approach that involves linking patients with non-medical resources and services to improve their overall well-being. This session will look at SP in depth and understand how and why Revenues and Benefits could have synergies with local prescribers and SP stakeholders.

Thursday 23 Nov – 15 Minute Cities

The concept of 15-minute cities has gained popularity in recent years as a way to promote sustainable and liveable urban environments. Cities such as Paris and Melbourne have already begun implementing 15-minute city initiatives, and the concept is gaining traction globally as urban planners seek to create more equitable and accessible cities for all residents. In the UK Oxford City has the most developed plan, Birmingham, canterbury, Sheffield and Ipswich at not far behind. This has quite a wide impact on communities, especially vulnerable households. Not only does it speak to health, transport but also to the wider demands of Government departments, such the DWP policy of expecting people to apply for jobs within a 90 min travel time. Not mention LAs own staff.

[Click here to register](#)



Visionary Network



- Visionary Network is a not for profit organisation, whose objective is to encourage thought leadership and good practice in the field of public service.
- We are independent and will draw on views, ideas and practices from any practitioner and/or organisation committed to public service.
- We encourage debate, and the fair exchange of ideas, viewpoints and philosophies.
- Any products we do produce will be for the betterment of society, public sector led and if costed will reflect our not for profit values.
- Our focus is on improving the knowledge, health, environment and lives of our citizens through better administration and access to services.

A nonprofit organization is a type of organization that is formed for a specific social or charitable purpose rather than for profit. Its primary goal is to serve the needs of a particular community, cause, or interest, and any profits or revenue generated are reinvested back into the organization to further its mission, rather than being distributed as profits to owners or shareholders.