

Changes in women's state pension age . . . and what this means for other benefits



You probably know that women's State Pension age will gradually increase from 60 to 65 from April 2010. So from 6 April 2020, the State Pension age for both men and women will be 65. The Department for Work and Pensions will be writing to all women to tell them when they will reach State Pension age.

But the changes won't just affect women!

As the age at which women receive State Pension rises, the qualifying age for a number

of other benefits will also change between 2010 and 2020.

The maximum age at which women can receive Jobseeker's Allowance, long term Incapacity Benefit, Employment & Support Allowance, Widowed Parent's Allowance and Bereavement Benefits will rise to 65 in line with the increase in State Pension age. Men can already receive these benefits until age 65.

The minimum age at which men and women will be able to qualify for Pension Credit and pensioner's rates of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit, will rise to 65 in line with the changes to women's State Pension age. At the same time, the maximum age men and women will be able to get Income Support will also increase to 65.

If MPs agree, the qualifying age for a Winter Fuel Payment, which is currently 60 for men and women, will also gradually increase.

Under the Government's pension reforms, State Pension age for both men and women is set to rise again from 2020 from 65 to 68. It is proposed that each change will be phased over two consecutive years in each decade.

For more information you can contact www.thepensionservice.gov.uk

If you, or somebody you know, would like the information contained in this document in large print, Braille, tape/CD; or in another language please contact Wealden District Council on 01323 443322 or info@wealden.gov.uk quoting code number D&P 127246/06.09

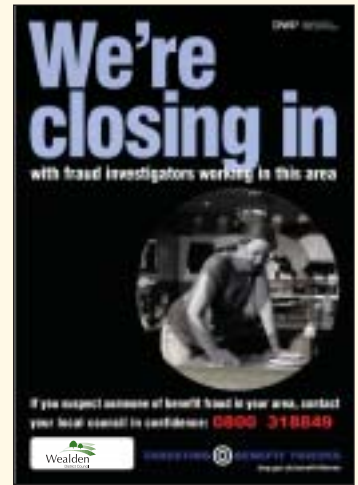
Benefit fraud – report it!

Wealden District Council takes benefit theft very seriously. Although most people who claim benefits are honest, some are abusing the benefit system and we are determined to catch them.

If you think someone is cheating the benefits system, let us know. You can:

- Phone the **FREEPHONE FRAUDLINE on 0800 318849** and give as many details as you can about the person you suspect.
- Go online to www.wealden.gov.uk click on **REPORT IT – Benefit Fraud** and fill in the form.
- Send an e-mail to benefitsfraud@wealden.gov.uk with as many details as possible.
- Phone Wealden District Council Benefits Service on 01323 443500 and ask to speak to a member of the benefits team or Investigation Unit.
- Write to the Benefits Investigation Unit at the Council or call in to one of our offices in Hailsham or Crowborough.

All information will be treated as confidential and you don't have to give your name if you don't want to.



Good news for mums and kids

HEALTH IN PREGNANCY GRANT

This new grant is payable from 6th April 2009 for expectant mothers who are 25 weeks pregnant. The grant is a one off payment of £190 to help towards extra costs in the later stages of pregnancy and is paid regardless of individual financial circumstances.



You can get a claim form from your midwife or doctor and further information is available on hmrc.gov.uk/hipg or 0845 366 7885.

CHILD BENEFIT INCREASES

Child Benefit was increased from January 2009 and from October 2009 it will be ignored in calculations for Housing and Council Tax Benefit, so if you are receiving these benefits, you will notice an increase. **You do not need to do anything as we will be reviewing any affected claims nearer the time.**

Say goodbye to small print

A new optical mouse has been installed on public-access computers in the reception areas at Hailsham and Crowborough. This magnifies small print documents so they can be easily read on a computer screen.

By running the mouse over any book, leaflet, plan or diagram the magnified image appears on the computer screen. The image can either be in full colour, white on black or black on white.

Any customer who wants to use this facility should talk to one of our reception staff. They will be happy to help and it just takes few seconds to put it into operation.

Help available to home owners to repair their homes

Poor housing conditions can cause ill health, especially for older people, disabled people and people with young children, but owners cannot always afford to keep their homes in good repair.

As a result of new government legislation and an assessment of housing in the district, Wealden District Council is providing new financial assistance to help owner occupiers to repair, improve or adapt their homes in the following circumstances:

- Help to adapt a home to meet the needs of a disabled resident
- Help with small scale works to resolve health and safety issues for low income households.
- Help to bring substandard homes up to the Decent Home Standard for low income, elderly and disabled householders.

A financial assessment is required and conditions apply in respect of occupancy of the home and possible repayment of loans.

For more information contact the Property Services Section on 01323 443321

Pension credit paid for longer

Pension Credit customers are usually set an 'assessed income period' during which they do not have to tell the Pension Service about changes to pensions, savings or investments unless this could mean they get more Pension Credit.

At the end of that period the claim would normally be reviewed, but from April 2009, this 'assessed income period' can be extended indefinitely for some customers aged 80 or over.

Those people affected will be notified by letter from the Pension Service and there will be no change to their Housing or Council tax Benefit entitlement. **If you have any queries, you can contact the Pension Service on 0845 6060265.**

Electric Blanket Testing 2009

Electric Blanket Testing and Safety roadshow will be taking place again this year from the 12th-16th October. **If you need any more information on the event please do not hesitate to contact Sophie Hepworth or Zoe Clarke on 01323 443302.**



Date	10.00am - 12.00 midday	2.00pm - 4.00pm
Monday 12th October	Hailsham Community Hall	Pevensey Bay - Ethel Wood Hall
Tuesday 13th October	Uckfield Fire Station	Polegate - St Johns Church Hall
Wednesday 14th October	Crowborough Fire Station	Heathfield Fire Station
Thursday 15th October	East Dean Village Hall	Alfriston Village Hall
Friday 16th October	Hartfield Village Hall	Rotherfield Village Hall

East Sussex Hearing Resource Centre

The East Sussex Hearing Resource Centre is a local registered charity for deaf, deafened, hard of hearing and deafblind people. We are based in Eastbourne but cover the whole of East Sussex. Our aim is to improve the quality of life for all deaf people across the county and we try to achieve this in the following ways:

Drop-in Centre on Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 10am and 4pm. Demonstration of devices to help a hearing impaired person retain their independence. (amplified telephones, TV listening devices, extra loud doorbells etc)

Deaf Outreach Service – a mobile service which visits a different rural area each week to give information and advice on deafness. This is run in partnership with Social Services.

Hard of Hearing Groups – in Crowborough, Battle, Hastings, Uckfield, Heathfield, Lewes, Bexhill and Polegate.

A Volunteer Scheme – training and support of volunteers to provide a hearing aid service at venues throughout East Sussex. This involves the dispensing of hearing aid batteries and basic hearing aid maintenance.

Home visits to people who are unable to attend our centre or visit the Deaf Outreach Service.

Lipreading Classes at Uckfield, Polegate, Eastbourne, Bexhill and Hastings.

Sign Language Classes at Eastbourne and Hastings.

Mobile (using our bus) Lipreading and Sign Language Classes at various venues throughout the year.

Deaf Awareness Training

Communication Support – BSL, Speedtext electronic note taking, loop, infra red

Installation of loops

For further information please contact:

East Sussex Hearing Resource Centre,

8 St Leonard's Road, Eastbourne, BN21 3UH Tel: 01323 722505 (voice, text, fax),

E-mail: mail@eshrc.org.uk www.eshrc.org.uk Registered Charity No: 1101140



**Wealden District Council, Benefits Service, Council Offices, Vicarage Lane
Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 2AX. Tel: 01323 443500.**

E-mail: benefits@wealden.gov.uk Website: www.wealden.gov.uk



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