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Introduction

There have been many changes to benefits for people in Scotland over the past few years, including the introduction of the Scottish Welfare Fund, Personal Independence Payment and Universal Credit. Further changes are planned by both the UK and Scottish Governments.

This factsheet provides information on the main changes which may affect older people living in Scotland. The information in this factsheet is correct at the time of printing. For information or advice about benefits call the Age Scotland helpline on **0800 12 44 222**

State Pension age

In April 2020 State Pension age is 65 and 8-9 months for men and women and it is increasing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Birth – from</th>
<th>State Pension age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 June 1954 to 5 July 1954</td>
<td>6 March 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 July 1954 to 5 August 1954</td>
<td>6 May 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 August 1954 to 5 September 1954</td>
<td>6 July 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 September 1954 to 5 October 1954</td>
<td>6 September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 October 1954 to 5 April 1960</td>
<td>66th birthday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

State Pension age will reach 66 by October 2020 and then 67 by 2028. The Government is planning further increases which will raise the State Pension age to 68 by 2039, affecting people born between 6 April 1970 and 5 April 1978.

State Pension age is also the age when you can claim Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance.

If you have internet access you can check your State Pension age at [www.gov.uk/state-pension-age](http://www.gov.uk/state-pension-age) or call the Age Scotland helpline on 0800 12 44 222 and an adviser can check it for you.
Single-tier State Pension from April 2016

People who reach their State Pension age after 6 April 2016 can claim single-tier State Pension.

To qualify you need to have paid or been credited with National Insurance contributions for at least ten years and you need to have 35 years of contributions to qualify for the full amount.

The standard rate of single-tier State Pension is £175.20 (2020/21) but not everyone will receive this amount. Some people will not have enough National Insurance contributions and others will have earned more under the old State Pension rules than they would qualify for under the new rules; this is called their starting amount. If your starting amount is more than the full new State Pension you will receive a protected payment which is paid on top of the single-tier State Pension.

You can get a forecast of your State Pension from www.gov.uk/check-state-pension or call the Future Pension centre on 0800 731 0175.

Single-tier State Pension is £175.20 (2020/21), which is above the level of means-tested Pension Credit for a single person of £173.75 (2020/21). This means that fewer people will need to claim Pension Credit to top up their State Pension, but fewer people will be passported to help with rent, Council Tax and health costs. You do not have to receive Pension Credit to qualify for help with rent, Council Tax and health costs.

You may be entitled to Pension Credit even if your income is higher than £173.75 (2020/21) if you receive a benefit such as Attendance Allowance because you have a disability, if you are a carer or if you have housing costs such as service charges to pay.

For advice about benefits call the Age Scotland helpline on 0800 12 44 222.
Universal Credit

Universal Credit is the new means-tested benefit for people of working age who have a low income. It was introduced in 2013 and is being rolled out to replace most means-tested benefits for people of working age.

If you are already claiming Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit for working age people, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance, Income Support or Working Tax Credit you will eventually be moved onto Universal Credit instead.

Like the benefits it replaces, Universal Credit includes some additional amounts for carers, people unable to work due to sickness or disability, rent payments and childcare costs.

You can claim Universal Credit online at www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit. It is calculated on your income the previous month and is paid monthly in arrears, but people in Scotland can receive Universal Credit payments twice a month instead and can ask for the rent part of their Universal Credit to be paid directly to their landlord.

For more information see Age UK’s factsheets Benefits for people under State Pension age and Universal Credit; the Age Scotland helpline can send you a copy. Call 0800 12 44 222.

Universal Credit and “mixed age” couples

Until 15th May 2019 a “mixed age” couple (where one is working age and the other is State Pension age) could claim Pension Credit when the oldest reached their State Pension age. Both Pension Credit and Universal Credit top up income to levels set by the Government.

From 15th May 2019 a couple cannot claim Pension Credit until they are both State Pension age. If the mixed age couple needs means-tested support they will need to claim Universal Credit instead until both are State Pension age.

If the couple claims Universal Credit, the younger of the couple will be subject to Universal Credit “conditionality”, needing to prove (for example) that they are a carer, that they are seeking work for 35 hours a week or that they are not well enough to work. The older of the couple will not need to
look for work but must check their Universal Credit account regularly and keep their claim details up to date.

The weekly rate of Universal Credit is much lower than the rate of Pension Credit. From April 2020:

**Pension Credit** basic rate for a couple is £265.20  
**Universal Credit** basic rate for a couple is £117.08  
**Pension Credit** basic rate for a single person is £173.75

Many mixed age couples will not receive either Universal Credit or Pension Credit because the older of the couple will have a pension income which is too high.

Couples claiming Pension Credit or pension-age Housing Benefit before 15th May will not be affected by this change if they continue to receive either of these benefits.

**Pension Credit and amounts for children**

As Universal Credit is rolled out and Child Tax Credit is abolished Pension Credit can now include elements for dependent children. The rules for this came into force on 1st February 2019. The amount will be broadly similar to the amounts for children included in Child Tax Credit.

**Pension Credit and mortgage interest help**

Until April 2018 Pension Credit could include payment towards your mortgage interest costs.

Since April 2018 the help with your mortgage interest has been replaced by a system of interest-bearing loans secured on your home which will be repaid when your home is sold.

If you claim Pension Credit and need help to pay your mortgage, contact an independent advice agency straight away for advice about your individual situation.
Help with rent

Housing Benefit (sometimes called Local Housing Allowance) is a means-tested benefit paid to tenants to help with the cost of rent. If you are receiving Universal Credit you will normally receive help with rent through Universal Credit not Housing Benefit. There are some exceptions if you live in certain kinds of accommodation, such as accommodation where you receive care, support or supervision.

The room restriction that was introduced in April 2013, sometimes called the bedroom tax, can reduce help with rent for a working age council or housing association tenant if their home is considered to be too large for their needs. Mixed age couples affected by the changes in May 2019 will be affected by the bedroom tax too. If you are affected by this contact your local council to find out what further help they can provide.

Personal Independence Payment

Since June 2013 no-one over 16 has been able to make a new claim for Disability Living Allowance (DLA); they have to claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP) instead.

If you are already getting Disability Living Allowance and had reached the age of 65 by 8th April 2013 the government does not currently have any plans to reassess you for Personal Independence Payment.

Other people receiving Disability Living Allowance will be invited to claim Personal Independence Payment instead of Disability Living Allowance. You will not have the option of continuing to claim Disability Living Allowance instead. Get advice if you are in this situation.

Personal Independence Payment is one of the benefits which is being devolved to Scotland.
Devolution of welfare powers to Scotland

Under the Smith Commission agreement substantial elements of the welfare system, involving eleven benefits and 15% of the current welfare budget, are being devolved to Scotland. The Scottish Government has consulted widely about how best to use its new powers and passed the Social Security (Scotland) Act in April 2018.

Universal Credit, State Pension and Pension Credit will remain reserved benefits delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions, but in Scotland Universal Credit claimants can receive payments twice monthly instead of monthly and can ask for the rent part of Universal Credit to be paid directly to their landlord.

Scottish welfare powers include responsibility for benefits for carers, disabled people and those who are ill:

- Attendance Allowance,
- Carer’s Allowance,
- Disability Living Allowance,
- Personal Independence Payment,
- Industrial Injuries Disablement benefit,
- Severe Disablement Allowance

The powers also include responsibility for:

- Cold Weather Payments,
- Funeral Payments,
- Sure Start Maternity grants,
- Winter Fuel Payments,
- Discretionary Housing Payments (help with payment of rent)

The Scottish Government has set up a new agency Social Security Scotland and aims for devolved benefits to be delivered with fairness, dignity and respect. The principles Social Security Scotland will work to are:

- Social security is an investment in the people of Scotland
- Social security is itself a human right and essential to the realisation of other human rights
- the delivery of social security is a public service
• respect for the dignity of individuals is to be at the heart of the Scottish social security system

• the Scottish social security system is to contribute to reducing poverty in Scotland

• the Scottish social security system is to be designed with the people of Scotland on the basis of evidence

• opportunities are to be sought to continuously improve the Scottish social security system in ways which—

  (i) put the needs of those who require assistance first, and
  (ii) advance equality and non-discrimination

• the Scottish social security system is to be efficient and deliver value for money.

The Social Security Scotland Charter explains how these principles will be delivered in practice. You can see the Charter at www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about-us/our-charter or call Social Security Scotland on 0800 182 2222 and ask for a copy.

The Scottish Government has set up Social Security Experience Panels of more than 2,300 people with recent experience of claiming benefits to advise about how Scottish benefits should work. You can find information about their work on the gov.scot website www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-experience-panels-index-of-publications/

The Scottish Government is already using some of its new powers and has set dates for other powers to be introduced; this is not a complete list but focuses on the benefits most likely to be claimed by older people:

From **summer 2018** people in Scotland who receive **Carer’s Allowance** which is £67.25 (2020/21) are receiving an automatic 6-monthly payment of **Carer’s Allowance Supplement** (£230.10 in June and December 2020) from Social Security Scotland.

From **16th September 2019** help with funeral costs for people who receive low income benefits is available as a **Funeral Support Payment** from Social Security Scotland. Information about Funeral Support payments is available here www.mygov.scot/funeral-support-payment/.
New claims for **Disability Assistance for Older People** (to replace Attendance Allowance) can be made from **2021**.

**Winter Heating Assistance** (to replace the non means tested Winter Fuel Payment) from Winter 2021.

**Cold Spell Heating Assistance** (to replace the means tested Cold Weather Payment) from Winter 2021.

Claims for **Carer’s Assistance** (to replace Carer’s Allowance) can be made from 2022
Useful organisations

Age Scotland helpline 0800 12 44 222

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

If you need an interpreter call 0800 12 44 222 and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

You can call us on 0800 12 44 222 for a copy of our publications list or download copies from our website at www.agescotland.org.uk.

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can offer you information and advice. You can find your local CAB by calling Citizens Advice Scotland on 0131 550 1000 (this number can provide contact details not give advice) or visiting the Citizens Advice Scotland website www.cas.org.uk/bureaux

Social Security Scotland

You can find information about Social Security Scotland on their website https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/ or call their helpline 0800 182 2222.

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