

IMPORTANT CORRECTION

Carers in Hertfordshire regret that the article about Council Tax on page 14 of Carewaves, Winter Edition 2013 was incorrect. The information below is the correct information. We apologise to all Carewaves readers for this error.

Benefits News

Change in council tax discount for carers

Many people may be struggling to pay their council tax, particularly with the recent changes to local council tax support. However a recent change to council tax discount rules is good news for some carers.

Full council tax is based on at least two adults living in a home. Adults who count as living on their own can get 25% off their bill. They can also get a discount if they live with people who don't count as adults for council tax purposes.

Some carers can be disregarded. They must look after someone who isn't their partner, spouse or child under 18 for at least 35 hours a week. The cared for person must also be getting one of the following benefits: either rate of attendance allowance, the middle or highest rate of disability living allowance or either rate of the daily living component of the personal independence payment. Previously it had to be higher rate DLA care/high rate AA so you may now find that you can qualify under the new rules.

Contact your local council if you think you can benefit from this discount.

DLA Transfers to PIP

As new claims for PIP are taking longer to assess than anticipated, the DWP have announced that reassessment for PIP of people currently getting DLA will only happen in certain post-codes and not be introduced nationally from October 28th as originally planned.

Hertfordshire is not currently in a designated reassessment area.

This means that, **for the time being**, any Hertfordshire resident coming to an end of their DLA award or children reaching the age of 16 will still be invited to renew their DLA not PIP. It also means that people who are currently getting DLA and report a change in their condition can still move to a different rate of DLA and won't be reassessed for PIP.

Transfer of people with lifetime or indefinite awards of DLA will still take place from October 2015 onwards, so the delay in transferring the 'natural transfers' will squeeze the PIP timetable into a shorter period.

This change doesn't affect people aged 16 - 64 who aren't getting DLA and who are making a claim for PIP for the first time. They should still claim PIP.

Details of the reassessment timetable are available on www.gov.uk - please check this and seek advice first if you are thinking of seeking a change to your current DLA award.

Carer's Allowance and minimum wage

The minimum wage for adults increased on October 1 to £6.31. An unintended consequence of this is that any carers working 16 hours a week will no longer be able to get Carer's Allowance as they will have gone over the £100 weekly earnings limit.

However, some carers may be able to mitigate the effects of this by looking at whether any expenses can be deducted when calculating their earnings - eg if they have to pay for someone to look after the cared for person or children so they can work, or contributing to a pension.

The Money Advice Unit's Extra Money for Carers pack has been updated and revised to include information about the effect of major Welfare Reform changes on carers – copies are available from 0300 123 4040 or on line at www.hertsdirect.org/benefits