

## FINANCIAL INCLUSION NEWS BULLETIN

26 March – 2 April 2020

### DEBT

- StepChange warns Covid-19 crisis has revealed widespread financial vulnerability and calls for long-term changes to support. See <https://www.stepchange.org/media-centre/press-releases/debt-statistics-2019.aspx> [01/04/2020 StepChange] and 2019 Statistics Yearbook <https://www.stepchange.org/policy-and-research/2019-personal-debt-statistics.aspx>
- Loan and credit card payments set to be frozen. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-52132329> [02/04/2020 BBC]

### FOOD

- Coronavirus: Free school meals children to get food vouchers. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52098076> [31/03/2020 BBC]

- **Emergency Food Provision through the Local Welfare Support Scheme**

There is now additional food support available for families and individuals who are experiencing difficulties in accessing food due to financial difficulties or self-isolation. Personal circumstances will determine the type of help that can be received.

Referrals can be made through local key workers, council services or by calling on 0113 376 0330.

#### **Leeds Food Aid Network and We Care Leeds**

The Leeds Food Aid Network are working in partnership with We Care Leeds, to deliver food boxes across Leeds.

If people need assistance, we encourage them to try the Local Welfare Support Scheme first, but if that can't be arranged, please email a referral.

For details of how to refer to this scheme and for up to date information on emergency food provision in Leeds please visit [Leeds Food Aid Network](#).

### FUNDING

- Sources of funding for charities in response to COVID-19. See <https://doinggoodleeds.org.uk/news/2020/03/31/sources-of-funding-for-charities-in-response-to-covid-19/> [31/03/2020 Doing Good Leeds]

### GAMBLING

- Children more likely to become gamblers due to high volume of betting ads. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/27/children-more-likely-to-become-gamblers-due-to-high-volume-of-betting-ads> [27/03/2020 Guardian]

- Gamstop urges online gambling self-exclusion during lockdown. See <https://www.casinobeats.com/2020/04/01/gamstop-urges-online-gambling-self-exclusion-during-lockdown/> [01/04/2020]

## HIGH COST LENDING

- UK payday lenders start suspending new loans in Covid-19 crisis. See <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2020/mar/30/uk-payday-lenders-start-suspending-new-loans-in-coronavirus-crisis> [30/03/2020 Guardian]
- Bighthouse enters administration. See <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/business/coronavirus-was-final-nail-coffin-jobs-leeds-bighthouse-stores-risk-company-collapses-2522879> [31/03/2020 YP]

## INCOME

- National Living Wage increase raises income of low-paid workers. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-living-wage-increase-raises-income-of-low-paid-workers> [01/04/2020 Gov]

## POVERTY

- Charity calls for 'emergency measures' to tackle child poverty. See <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Charity-calls-for-emergency-measures-to-tackle-child-poverty/50259> [27/03/2020 LocalGov]
- This is where to get help in Leeds if you are worried about money or debts. See <https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/people/where-get-help-leeds-if-you-are-worried-about-money-or-debts-2518293> [26/03/2020 YEP]
- New hardship funding can be used flexibly by councils on local pressures and priorities, including on helping those who are most vulnerable. See <https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-responds-ippr-report-support-children-during-coronavirus> [31/03/2020 Local Gov]

## WELFARE

- Migration Yorkshire have just launched the new Migrant Information Hub - [www.migrantinfohub.co.uk](http://www.migrantinfohub.co.uk). The Migrant Information Hub aims to offer useful information and resources to help migrants, and those supporting them, to stay safe, connected and informed, and to reduce the harmful impacts of coronavirus (Covid-19) on our region and on people's lives. It includes new multi-lingual resources, national guidance, local services and support, plus news and updates on specific migrant issues.
- Universal credit: 'almost impossible' to complete claim as more than 500,000 apply. See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/26/universal-credit-claims-almost-impossible-as-more-than-500000-apply> [26/03/2020 Guardian]
- Coronavirus: Claiming welfare benefits (update). See <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/insights/coronavirus-claiming-welfare-benefits/> [31/03/2020 Parl]

- Nearly a million universal credit claims in past two weeks. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-52129128> [02/04/2020 BBC]

## FREE SCHOOL MEALS- NOTICE FROM WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE

- Letter received from West Yorkshire Police

It appears that a number of scam emails are circulating stating: **if your child's school is closed and your child is entitled to free school meals; then to send your bank details to the school and they will help you with funding while schools are closed.**

The links are fake and vulnerable families may be giving their bank details on line.

Please could we share this information via Twitter for communities attention and advise people not to share personal details/bank details.

Kind regards

Rachael Hides  
PC1055 - Strategic Engagement Officer – Faith  
Leeds Division, Stainbeck Police Station  
Stainbeck Lane  
Leeds LS7 3QU      Tel: 07793 219117

## HELP TO CLAIM

Delivery of Help to Claim by Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland will continue for a further twelve months from 1 April 2020 until March 2021.

This ensures that there is no break in the support available to people in making their claim to UC and getting their first full payment on time. This is particularly important at a time when so many people are interacting with the department's services for the first time.

The Secretary of State intends to inform all MPs today (30.03.2020) that Help to Claim will be continuing in a letter setting out the department's response to Covid-19. In the current circumstances, neither the department nor Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland are planning any national press announcements, but please share this message within your service delivery teams and partners.

Jobcentre and Service Centre staff should continue to signpost and refer UC claimants who need support to Help to Claim for help in setting up their claim and getting their payments set up.

## NOTE FROM CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP

The government released the annual poverty statistics: 4.2 million children in relative poverty after their housing costs had been accounted for in 2018/19. That's up from 4.1 million. I know this will be of great concern to you - it's simply not right that child poverty continues to rise.

I know you'll join us in welcoming the government's emergency measures in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. And that you'll also share our concern that not enough is being done to help families with children.

A modest increase in child benefit of £10 per child per week could reduce child poverty by 5 percentage points, and help families at a time of crisis when schools are closed, costs are higher and income might be greatly reduced.

Please see [our briefing](#), outlining more measures that could support families at this time. If you're an adviser, there is some useful information here: [cpag.org.uk/coronavirus](http://cpag.org.uk/coronavirus).

Yesterday was the 10-year anniversary of the Child Poverty Act being brought in - this was a significant step, but sadly the Act no longer exists. We've seen child poverty rise, and it is vital that the government gets this right for families both right now in this time of crisis, and in the long term.

Indeed, the government's response to the Coronavirus pandemic shows that radical action to tackle urgent problems is possible. This time next year, we really hope we can tell you there is a national child poverty strategy in place to turn the tide.

## OTHER

- **Council helpline**  
Helpline for anyone needing assistance while they are self-isolating. Tel: 0113 3781877 and be matched with a local volunteer who can help.
- **Council support page** - [Coronavirus support page](#).
- Leeds Money Information Centre website - [www.leedsmic.org.uk](http://www.leedsmic.org.uk) – this brings together all services across Leeds and gives contacts details