

## Welfare Reform changes that may affect you

**Benefit Cap (from November 2016)** There is a maximum total benefit entitlement of £384.62 per week for couples or single parents with children, or £257.69 per week for single people. You can obtain further information from the Department for Work and Pensions online at [www.direct.gov.uk/benefitcap](http://www.direct.gov.uk/benefitcap) or, if you believe you may be affected, you can ring 0845 605 7064.

**Introduction of Universal Credit to replace working-age benefits.** The Government is revising the current benefit structure and replacing a range of working-age benefits with a single streamlined payment known as Universal Credit. The Department for Work and Pensions started rolling out Universal Credit in Northampton from October 2015 and this is ongoing.

**Under Occupation for Social Housing Tenants** Housing benefit was changed for 'working-age' people living in council or housing association properties from April 2013. 'Working age' means anyone under 62 as at April 2013. The Government introduced a 'size criteria' which limits how many bedrooms your family will receive benefit for. If you have a spare bedroom, your benefit will be reduced by 14% or if you have more than one spare bedroom, your benefit will be reduced by 25%.

You may be eligible to apply for a **Discretionary Housing Payment** to assist you in dealing with any of these changes in the short term, or to help with moving costs to down-size your accommodation.

You can apply for this at [www.northampton.gov.uk/dhp](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/dhp)

**Mixed age couples.** From May 15<sup>th</sup> 2019, mixed age couples (where one party of the couple is over Pension Credit qualifying age and the other under that age) will no longer be able to choose whether they claim Universal Credit or Pension Credit and pension age Housing Benefit. Both parties of a couple will have to reach the Pension Credit qualifying age before they can be entitled to Pension Credit and/or pension age Housing Benefit.

From April 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 this will be the same for Council Tax Reduction, and will mean that both members of a couple will have to reach pension age before being entitled to Pension Age Council Tax Reduction. Until that point the couple will be subject to the maximum support of 65%.

**If you are affected by these changes, you may need further advice from one of the following:**

**Our website: [www.northampton.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/benefits)**

**Email: [benefitservices@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:benefitservices@northampton.gov.uk)**

**The Department for Work and Pensions: [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)**