

CHAI (Community Help & Advice Initiative)

Riverside House
502 Gorgie Road
Edinburgh EH11 3AF
Phone: 0131 442 2100
chai@chaiedinburgh.org.uk
www.chaiedinburgh.org.uk

Scottish Charity No.
SC. 027594

ABOUT CHAI

CHAI is a registered Scottish charity providing free and independent advice to people affected by housing, debt and benefit issues in Edinburgh and Midlothian.

Our vision is:

CHAI works to ensure no one in our communities has to endure hardship.

Our missing statement:

CHAI helps and empowers people through high-quality, impartial advice on welfare benefits, housing, and debt.

ABOUT CHILDREN 1ST

Children 1st is a Scottish charity which aims to give every child in Scotland a safe and secure childhood. They help Scotland's families to put children first, with practical advice and with support in difficult times.

Tel: 0131 446 2300
cfs@children1st.org.uk

Maximise!

Income - Wellbeing - Attainment - Potential

Issue #8

June 2021

Welcome to our **Summer** edition! This newsletter includes information on benefits and housing news, and money tips to help maximise your income.

Our **Advice Team** can help you address any financial worries you may have. **We can assist you** with benefit checks, benefit, housing and debt issues, employability & more!

Contact your **School** or **Early Years Centre** to make an **appointment!**



"Best Start Grant" School Age Payment: Apply Now!

Eligible parents of children **aged 4 and 5** are being encouraged to apply for financial support of **£252.50** when applications open on **1 June 2021**.

The School Age Payment is open to families who receive **means-tested benefits** (Tax Credits, Universal Credit, Income Support, Income-Related ESA, Income-Based JSA) and have a

child who **was born between 1 March 2016 and 28 February 2017**.

The one-off payment can be used for anything from a new pair of shoes to books or arts and crafts materials.

Parents who have deferred their child's entry to school from August 2021 to August 2022 should still apply before **the closing date on**

28 February 2022 - if an application is made after this time it will be too late.

You can check Social Security Scotland's [promotional video](#) for more information.

Apply online at www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods or phone 0800 182 2222.



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EU Citizens! Don't Miss the End of June Deadline!

Following Brexit, EU citizens (as well as Swiss citizens and citizens of Norway, Lichtenstein and Iceland) need to register to the **EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS)** before 30 June 2021 to continue to live and work in the UK. You need to have been in the UK by 11pm on 31 December 2020 to apply to the scheme, unless you are joining a family member who has already applied.

Please remember that **every child within a family** will need to apply to stay in the UK AND that applications are required that even if you already have a permanent residence document or have lived in the UK for a long time. **Otherwise, you could lose your right to live and work in the UK.**

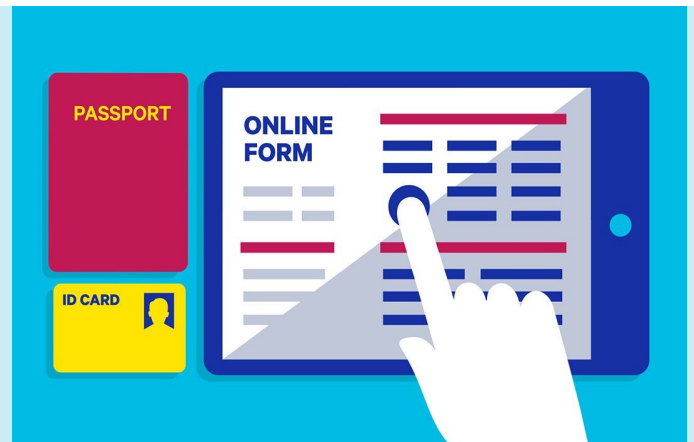
Applying to the EUSS will give you either settled status or pre-settled status, which also has important implications for **your rights to claim benefits and access homelessness assistance.**

Settled status is for those who have lived in the UK for a continuous period of 5 years, for at least 6 months of each year (there are some exceptions). If this applies to you, you will be able to stay in the UK indefinitely and claim benefits and homelessness assistance like any British person.

Pre-settled status is for those who were in the UK before the Brexit deadline of 31/12/20, but who have not yet lived in the UK for 5 consecutive years. You will be able to reapply to the scheme to upgrade to settled status once you have lived in the



UK for 5 full years. To claim benefits when you have pre-settled status, you will need to rely on a specific right to reside (like being a worker, a



former worker, etc.). This is a complex area of law, so get in touch for benefit advice.

However, please note that **CHAI does not give immigration advice.** As such, we cannot help EU citizens make applications to the EUSS. If you need assistance, contact the Citizens **Advice Bureau** on **0800 916 9847** (lines are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or visit your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

The Government also provides a **phone helpline**, the **Settlement Resolution Centre**, on 0300 123 7379) for advice and for help to access or recover online accounts, update personal details, share your status or for any technical difficulties.

It is important to meet the end of June deadline although the [guidance](#) issued by the Government in April has clarified that **some applications will be accepted late** if there are compelling practical or compassionate reasons:

"There remains scope, indefinitely, for a person eligible for status under the EU Settlement Scheme to make a late application to the scheme where, in light of all the circumstances and reasons, there are reasonable grounds for their failure to meet the deadline applicable to them."

Free Training Courses!

As we gradually come out of Covid restrictions, lots of job opportunities are becoming available, there's no better time to take advantage of **free courses** to **boost our skills, build up our confidence** and develop **new interests** – all at our fingertips! And all free! Below are some examples of what's on offer – just investigate them yourself or get help from CHAI.

Individual Training Accounts

Get up to £200 towards the cost of a training course with an SDS Individual Training Account (ITA). Use the money to build the skills you need for a job, or get training to take your career to the next level. Whatever you want to do, there's a wide range of ITA approved courses on offer, including first aid, food hygiene, CSCS, IT, healthcare and more. Because it's not a loan, you don't have to pay it back. Apply online: myworldofwork.co.uk

The eligibility criteria are as follows:

- Be aged 16 or over
- Not be in education or involved in any other programme funded by Skills Development Scotland
- Be unemployed and looking to get back into work, or Be employed and earning less than £22,000 per year
- Be resident in Scotland

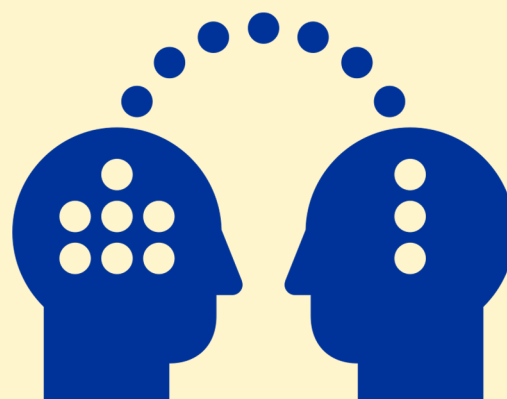
Future Learn

Free online training – learn at your own pace at times to suit you, taking typically 2 -3 hours per week over a few weeks.

These are taster courses which may lead to further learning and also give you a skills boost to enhance job applications. There are a wide range of subjects, including healthcare, IT, language, creative arts and many more. Look at the website: futurelearn.com

Learn My Way

Free online digital skills courses at different levels, which can be done under your own steam, or by getting help from someone else. The learning goes from basic: using a keyboard, using email, using the internet, social media like Whatsapp, online safety, Microsoft Office and many more things to learn. Find out more: learnmyway.com



Coursera

Free online training accredited by universities internationally, covering many and varied subjects, including language, social sciences, arts, IT and many more, at levels from beginner to advanced. Website for more details: coursera.org

The Welcoming

Free, flexible English language training at different levels, as well as Scotland for Beginners, Friendship, Health and Wellbeing. Just register with them and get started! Contact: thewelcoming.org

The above are just examples of the wealth of free training on offer, which **can lead to job opportunities and progression**, meeting new people and discovering new leisure activities.

Don't worry about not having a computer or laptop – the libraries are now open again, so you can easily book one of their computers. **Contact our employability team** on 0131 442 2100, for any help!

Getting Ready for School! A Guide for Parents!

Parents have a lot to think about before the schools go back in August. To make your life easier, here are some **reminders** of what you can apply for! Do **get in touch with us** if you want to check any eligibility criteria or need assistance to apply for benefits!

<p>Help with School Uniforms & Free School Meals</p>	<p>—> Apply on the City of Edinburgh Council's website: www.edinburgh.gov.uk/schoolgrants</p> <p>If you don't qualify for free school uniforms, you can apply for charity grants from the Edinburgh School Uniform Bank and Kids Love Clothes.</p>
<p>Your child has turned 16 & stays in non-advanced education (below HNC level)</p>	<p>—> Every August until your child turns 20, phone the Child Benefit Office 0300 200 3100 and the Tax Credits Office 0345 300 3900 to report what course your child is enrolled on for the new academic year. If you don't, your child elements will be stopped!</p> <p>—> If you claim the child element of Universal Credit (UC) instead of Child Tax Credits, report the change online www.gov.uk/sign-in-universal-credit 0800 328 5644. Note that the age threshold is 19 not 20 under UC!</p>



Young Scot Card & Travel Discounts

The Young Scot Card offers travel concessions for young people **aged 16 to 18** or for 19-25-years-olds who are also full-time volunteers.

For bus travel, the card gives you access to a third off of the adult fare, but only on adult **single fares**, as it **cannot** be used for **day tickets**, return tickets or weekly/monthly passes.

For rail travel, you can get either (a) one third off most single or return rail fares, or (b) 50% off all weekly or monthly tickets.

There are some **minimum spend restrictions if you travel by train** before 10am on a weekday during peak time, although this only applies to the one third discount. In that case, Anytime and Anytime

Day Single & Returns, Off-Peak, Off-Peak Day and Super Off-Peak Single and Return fares are all discounted with a £12.00 minimum fare.

In addition to travel discounts, the card can be used as **proof of age** and opens up a range of other **discounts** across Scotland.

Check out the Young Scot website for **more information** on the range of shopping discounts and offers available: <https://young.scot/the-young-scot-card> or phone 0808 801 0338.

To apply, request an application form online www.edinburgh.gov.uk/schools-learning/young-scot/1 or apply in person through your school in P7, or at any [Edinburgh Library](#).

The Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

Young people **aged 16 to 19** may be entitled to a **£30-a-week allowance**, called EMA (Educational Maintenance Allowance) if they want to continue learning in school or college on a course of **non-advanced further education**. It is designed to encourage young people to further their education after compulsory schooling ends.

Age Eligibility

The young person must be 16 to 19.

Income Eligibility

The household income must be below £24,421 per year, before tax, or below £26,884 if there is more than one child in education in the family. The household income is the income of parent(s) or carer(s) living with the young person.

A young person's income from work is **not** taken into account, however.

Residency Conditions

The young person must be ordinarily resident in Scotland.

Course Requirements

Young people can only qualify if they are either:

- attending school full time, or are home-educated,
- or on a full or part-time non-advanced course in a college or education centre (up to and including Scottish national qualifications at higher or advanced higher level).

All learners must take part in a **learning agreement/action plan** (previously known as an activity agreement) with the local council. This sets out what is expected of the young person around attendance and coursework, and takes their per-

sonal circumstances into account.

Attendance Requirements

Being paid is **dependent on performance** and attendance at school or college, as detailed in the learning agreement.

Payments

Payments are made directly to the young person into a bank account. It is paid every two weeks in arrears during term time, but not during breaks.

Interaction with Other Benefits

The young person's EMA will **not** reduce any benefits their parents receive, such as Child Benefit, Housing Benefit, Universal Credit or Working Tax Credits.

Young people on Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA) or claiming Universal Credit as a jobseeker, or on government supported training schemes are **not** eligible for EMAs.

How to Apply

Applications are made on a form which you can obtain from the school or college. If the young person is studying at school, they can apply with their local council. See: www.mygov.scot/ema

In addition to the application form, a young person will need to provide a **learning agreement**, which they can obtain from their education provider. It must be signed by the young person, their parent or carer and the education provider.

Renewals

Young people **must renew** their EMA at the start of **each academic year**, and provide a new learning agreement.

Covid-19 News In Brief

The Tenant Hardship Fund

The Tenant Hardship Loan Fund offers **interest-free loans to private and social tenants** who have accrued arrears since 01 January 2020 (during the pandemic) or who need help with 3 months' future rent.

This scheme will continue to receive applications **beyond the original deadline** of 31 March 2021.

Check **eligibility** and **apply** online at: <https://tenanthardshiploan.est.org.uk>

Eviction Action Resumed

Since **Monday 17th May**, it is now possible for Sheriff Officers to **enforce a court/tribunal eviction orders** by serving a Charge for Removing and to enforce such a notice by physically removing a tenant, other occupiers and their possessions from a residential property.

Although the moratorium on eviction enforcement is in place until the end of September, it only applies to homes in areas under Level 4 or 3 of the coronavirus restrictions. **Under Levels 2, 1 and 0** (which applies to Edinburgh), **there is no such ban**. Eviction action has therefore resumed.



The DWP may carry out new evidence checks

The Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) is now retrospectively verifying benefit awards that were subject to **'Trust and Protect'** easements in early stages of the pandemic.

Due to lockdown restrictions, many claimants did not have to provide **evidence of their income, savings, housing or childcare costs** at the start of their claims. The DWP will now be contacting people to request such evidence.

We recommend that you **make sure your Universal Credit online journal is up-to-date** and that you promptly **respond to any calls or emails from the DWP** to avoid your benefit payments being stopped. Contact us if you need any support!

Sickness & Disability Benefits

The new Child Disability Payment

This new Scottish benefit will replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for children aged 3 months to 18 years old. It will be administered by Social Security Scotland. The new Child Disability Payment will be open for applications from 26 July 2021 but only in the **pilot areas** of Dundee, Perth & Kinross and the Western Isles.

In Edinburgh, the full roll-out is expected for the **autumn** (tbc). Eligible DLA claimants will be automatically transferred to this new benefit without having to make a new claim.

Medical Assessments

Telephone and video assessments have been added as channels for undertaking medical assessments for sickness and disability benefits, which will therefore continue to be used beyond lockdown. The DWP also announced on 23rd April that face-to-face assessments will resume, alongside existing paper-based assessments, and telephone assessments which will continue to take place where suitable.

Long Covid—new DLA Guidance

The DWP have added new medical guidance on post-Covid Syndrome for DLA. This is the first guidance document on this matter. Contact us if you are affected by Long Covid for advice on disability benefits.

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For an appointment, contact your child's School or Early Years Centre or phone CHAI on 0131 442 2100.



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