

Fast-tracked benefit access extended to more nearing end of life

Press release

Fast-tracked access to benefits will be extended to a year from six months for people nearing the end of life, under changes due to take effect from 4 April.



- Changes will extend eligibility to end of life support from six to 12 months from 4 April 2022
- Those nearing end of life will be given fast-tracked access to Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance
- Delivering on 2021 commitment, the move ensures more people receive vital financial support quicker

Regulations are being laid today and come into force next month. They mean that from 4 April 2022, people who are thought to be in their final year of life will be able to receive vital support through the 'Special Rules', six months earlier than they are able to at present.

Those who are eligible will not be subject to a face-to-face assessment or waiting periods, and in the majority of cases they will receive the highest rate of benefits.

Minister for Disabled People Chloe Smith said:

We want to ensure people in the final year of their lives get quicker access to vital financial support.

We have listened to those with a terminal illness, as well as their families and friends, and we are delivering a change that will increase much-needed support in the most challenging of times.

Matthew Reed, Chief Executive of the end of life charity, Marie Curie, said:

After the announcement in the summer and following years of campaigning for this change to be put in place for dying people, we are pleased to see this next step come into place for Universal Credit and ESA claimants. This will ensure more dying people can concentrate on making the most of the limited time they have left, rather than worrying about their finances. Marie Curie believes that everyone has the right to the best end of life care and support.

Sally Light, CEO of the Motor Neurone Disease Association said:

I welcome the announcement that changes to the Special Rules criteria will come into force next month for Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit. This change will enable more people living with complex and unpredictable terminal illnesses like motor neurone disease to access the support they need swiftly and sensitively, without the need for a face-to-face assessment. This is an important first step and we hope that this positive change can be enacted for other applicable benefits as soon as possible.

The 12-month approach will be implemented first in Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance and will come into effect on 4 April. It will then be extended to Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

Clinicians will still have discretion under the updated rules and will be supported by a realistic and straightforward definition, which aligns with current NHS practice.

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