

Interest rate increases on the Court Funds Office special and basic accounts

News story

Increase of interest rates for Court Funds Office special and basic accounts from 29 April 2022.



In response to the Bank of England increases in the base rate since December 2021, the Lord Chancellor has reviewed the Court Funds Office (CFO) rates of interest payable to clients and has directed that from Friday 29 April 2022 these will change to the following:

-Special Account – increases from 0.1% to 0.645%
-Basic Account – increases from 0.05% to 0.323%

The Lord Chancellor has made this decision to ensure that the running costs of the CFO service can continue to be met and that an increased rate of interest payable to clients can be provided.

The Bank of England base rate rose again on 5 May 2022. However, no change to the new Court Funds Office rates of interest will be made until the Lord Chancellor has reviewed the level of interest paid to clients further.

If you wish to discuss further, please contact the CFO on 0300 0200 199 or email enquiries@cfo.gov.uk.

Published 24 May 2022

Spiking of university students to be tackled

University students will be safer as spiking is set to be stamped out at universities following the launch of a new working group from the Department for Education and Home Office dedicated to tackling the number of attacks against students. This forms part of the wider government mission to tackle violent and sexual crimes and strengthen victims' rights.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan has called for and convened the group, which will bring together vice-chancellors, police, campaigners and victims to produce plans for practical action to help keep students safe, reporting back before the start of the autumn term.

Professor Lisa Roberts, University of Exeter Vice Chancellor, has been appointed to lead the working group and coordinate the higher education sector's response.

Following personal experience with a victim of spiking, Minister Donelan will ask every university to introduce a policy on tackling spiking by the end of the year to ensure victims are recognised and supported.

Last month a Home Affairs Select Committee report found the true prevalence of spiking – which can range from drink spiking to attacks with needles – remains unknown, though a recent survey by student outlet The Tab suggested 11% of students believed they have had their drink spiked, and research by the Alcohol Education Trust found more than 1 in 10 young adults had been victims of spiking.

The Government has already taken action to reclassify GHB and closely related substances, which have been used for drink spiking, and will work with law enforcement and local authorities to look at further action to tackle these horrific crimes, including considering the case for a specific criminal offence for spiking.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said:

This is an issue that is very close to my heart, having had someone close to me spiked when I was younger, which had devastating consequences. So I know first-hand what a horrific crime this is and I am determined to stamp it out.

Recent incidents show that perpetrators are becoming more brazen in the way they are committing this appalling crime – which is why I am tasking a new working group to look at the issue more closely and come up with practical actions to stamp out spiking at our universities – I've been pleased to see innovative schemes already underway at the University of Exeter and Nottingham Trent University.

I am committed to tackling real issues that affect students across campuses – whether it is ending the use of non-disclosure agreements, standing up against antisemitism or now looking to end spiking – I will always fight to ensure students are protected at our universities.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan and Home Office Minister for Safeguarding Rachel Maclean today met victims, campaigners, senior police officers and university leaders to discuss the attacks seen in different parts of the country, and how closer working between universities and police could give a clearer picture of the scale and nature of the crimes against students.

Following a roundtable on spiking in March, with ministers from across government and hosted by Minister Maclean, it was agreed that a cross-government, multi-agency approach would be pursued to tackle the issue.

Minister for Safeguarding Rachel Maclean said:

Spiking is a heinous crime which puts lives at risk.

We have already reclassified drugs which have been used for drink spiking and provided funding through the Safety of Women at Night and Safer Streets funds to support initiatives which prevent people from becoming victims of spiking.

I know more must be done, which is why I will continue working with experts across the sector to discuss how we can go even further to tackle this crime and bring offenders to justice.

Insight and evidence will be used to inform the Government's report to Parliament on Spiking, to be published next Spring.

Professor Lisa Roberts, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Exeter said:

Everybody has the right to be safe and enjoy their night out with friends without the fear of spiking or violence. As chair of the new working group I will work with partners to look at the evidence, best practice and incidents across the U.K. so that we can make practical recommendations to improve the night-time economy for students.

We are fortunate in Exeter to have very strong working relationships with local agencies such as the Police, NHS Trusts, campaign groups, licensing and regulatory bodies which has been a key aspect of our approach to gender safety. This is obviously an issue for wider society that affects people from all walks of life and we want to play our part in tackling social problems in our towns and cities. We also work with our own students to take a

holistic approach to spiking and night-time safety from prevention to support.

Stamp out Spiking founder Dawn Dines said:

I have been campaigning now against drink spiking issues for nearly two decades. It is a disgusting cowardly crime that I have been actively raising awareness on to help protect and educate to safeguard on this issue.

We know that this crime has been hugely underreported for years and I have personally spoken to hundreds of victims and their family members, with this learning we can help to safeguard future victims to ensure that we gain more convictions and educate the general public on what drink spiking actually is, with a multi-agency approach, we can really get to the heart of the problem and make such a huge difference to stamp out this crime.

I am looking forward to being able to share my expertise to ensure the safety of students in higher education to ensure we make every effort possible to raise awareness to stamp out drink spiking in the future.

Universities have already set up their own initiatives to tackle the issue – with the University of Exeter offering drink safety test strips, and Nottingham Trent University funding and delivering bystander intervention training to staff in night-time city venues. The new working group will look at these and other solutions being tested on campuses across the country.

Last year students across the country took part in a mass boycott of nightclubs following a spate of reported attacks in Nottingham, Exeter, Birmingham, Southampton, and other university towns across the UK.

The launch of the new working group to tackle spiking on campuses follows a campaign to end the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) by universities to silence victims of sexual harassment, abuse and bullying. Over 50 universities have signed a pledge committing to end their use, which was unveiled by Minister Donelan and campaign group Can't Buy My Silence in January this year.

[Speech by Economic Secretary John](#)

Glen, at the Association of British Credit Unions Limited

Good afternoon everyone, and thank you for inviting me back once again.

This is now the fourth opportunity I've had to address you.

I had hoped to make a grander entrance to mark the occasion, but I'm told the pyrotechnics and AC/DC soundtrack are reserved for fifth visits.

In any event, I'm grateful for the chance to speak with you in a physical capacity this year. Not least because of the special contribution you make.

Especially because of the unique role played by the mutuals sector and credit unions in delivering those services that your members, communities, and the country need... providing an ethical home for savings, and affordable loans to those who may otherwise have to resort to high-cost lenders.

Whether that be through the Pennine Community Credit Union's efforts to provide savings accounts and affordable loans to communities across East Lancashire and Cumbria... or Just Credit Union's new education grant to help young people to continue in further education... the sector's good work runs through every artery of our society.

That is why, in my role as Economic Secretary, I have always and will always champion the mutuals sector, and credit unions in particular.

The pandemic

And after all, there is so much to champion.

Again and again, the sector has lived its core values... putting people before profit, and rising to meet the challenges of our times.

Your hundreds of thousands of members relied on you throughout the Covid-19 pandemic... including as a lifeline for people to borrow affordably when they needed it most.

The government is deeply grateful to you for these efforts.

And I am pleased that Her Majesty has also recognised leadership in the sector through the honours system – may I take this opportunity to congratulate those who have been recognised recently, including Christopher Bell from Capital Credit Union, Joanne Swaine from Leeds Credit Union, and Karen Bennett from Enterprise, and former ABCUL President, to name a few, for their services to the credit union sector.

Through the pandemic, as now, the government stood by you and your values... side-by-side... to bolster credit unions so that you, in turn, could support your members and communities.

We set up Fair4All Finance, which distributed a £5 million Covid-19 resilience fund to support credit unions and community development finance institutions in England.

In May 2020, the government also announced that additional funding through the dormant assets scheme would be released immediately to Fair4All Finance – including an expanded Affordable Credit Scale-up Programme.

This support, reinforced by measures from the devolved administrations, meant that social lenders could continue to administer loans to vulnerable customers to effectively serve their communities throughout the pandemic... and has ensured that the sector continues to grow, even in the most challenging of times.

Our prize-linked savings pilot, PrizeSaver, has also helped to increase sector membership and awareness – supporting members to increase their financial resilience by building their savings, while extolling the strengths of the mutual model and attracting new membership to credit unions across the country.

I have been encouraged by the success of this pilot – and would like to thank the sector for its positive engagement. It is a scheme that I saw from start to finish and the impact it has had is clear.

I am really pleased that 16 credit unions have continued running PrizeSaver independently since last year. This is welcome news, and a strong mark of success. And I hope and believe that PrizeSaver will continue to go from strength to strength.

Cost of living

The pandemic has proven that the trust placed in the sector by your members is well-deserved.

That trust will be vital as people across the country face unprecedented cost of living pressures – meaning that every pound must stretch further.

We know that these are global challenges but, as with the pandemic, we also know that the government and credit unions can take steps to help ease the burden.

It is because of this that the government is providing support worth over £22 billion in 2022-23 to help support people with these pressures.

As the Chancellor announced at this year's Spring Statement, this includes providing millions of households with up to £350 to support with rising energy bills and helping people to keep more of what they earn.

The government has also cut the Universal Credit taper rate, frozen alcohol duty, and further increased the National Living Wage to £9.50 an hour from April 2022.

We went further still – announcing an increase to the annual National

Insurance Primary Threshold and Lower Profits Limit to £12,570, a cut to fuel duty, and an additional £500 million to help with the cost of essentials through the Household Support Fund.

For your part, it's vital that credit unions continue to perform their important role by providing consumers with access to affordable credit – to help manage expenditure and increase financial resilience.

And in this, you will have the government's full support.

We will continue to strengthen affordable credit initiatives, which will both expand the provision of affordable credit and increase usage.

We are providing Fair4All Finance with £3.8 million of funding to pilot a No-interest Loans Scheme (NILS) – which has been designed for those consumers in vulnerable circumstances who would benefit most from affordable credit to meet unexpected costs.

The first stage of the pilot is now underway with Proof-of-Concept loans being administered through South Manchester Credit Union.

This is a fundamental, worthwhile, new initiative, to provide a gateway product for people who at the moment are beyond the lending capacity of some credit unions.

The challenge now will be to take that proof-of-concept pilot to a bigger pilot so that we can now validate it.

Just this morning, I met with recipients for whom these loans are providing real-life impact – covering the costs of new white goods to keep families running, funerals for loved ones, and debt consolidation. I expect the pilot to reach full-scale rollout in a number of pilot sites across the UK at the start of 2023.

Financial inclusion

We must also ensure that the door to affordable credit and financial resilience is open to all.

Ensuring an inclusive financial system has been a top priority of mine since I first started in this role. It is a task which we much approach with renewed vigour in the face of unprecedented cost of living pressures.

That is why, since 2019, the government has chaired the Financial Inclusion Policy Forum, bringing together the financial services industry, consumer groups, the regulator and third sector... and why we also publish an annual report on the government's work on financial inclusion, which details a broad range of initiatives over the last year, as well as ongoing work to support financial inclusion.

The government is committed to encouraging people of all income levels and at all stages of life to save. ISAs form a key part of this support, allowing individuals to save without paying tax on any interest. This includes – but

is not limited to – the Cash ISA which many credit unions offer. This support, coupled with other savings measures, mean around 95% of people with savings income pay no tax on that income.

Amendments to the Credit Unions Act

The government will continue to stand by credit unions in your mission to provide access to affordable credit and increase financial resilience... just as we did in the pandemic... to ensure the sector can deliver for its members now and into the future.

A big part of that, of course, is we in government listening and being responsive to the sector.

The 'Vision 2025' consultation clearly set out stakeholders' interest in offering services beyond those they can currently offer... allowing credit unions to diversify their incomes and support financial inclusion by providing further opportunities for the sector to grow and expand their reach.

We heard you loud and clear, and last year at this conference, I spoke about our commitment to amend the Credit Unions Act to allow credit unions in Great Britain to offer a wider range of products and services.

Today, we are delivering on this commitment. I am pleased to announce that we are preparing on the basis that these changes will be a part of the upcoming Financial Services and Markets Bill.

This legislation will include a new supplementary object, which will be optional to adopt... enabling credit unions to offer hire purchase, conditional sale agreements, and insurance distribution services to their members.

We know that you will have members, especially key workers or those who work a shift pattern, for whom having access to a reliable car can be essential. And these changes will mean that you can offer products such as car finance to your members, should they wish to choose them, for the first time.

As you'd expect, there will be processes to navigate, including ensuring compliance and seeking the necessary permissions from the regulators. But I believe that this change will genuinely help your members and see your credit union grow.

The Bill also makes minor amendments to support best corporate governance, including a legal requirement for credit unions to submit annual accounts to the FCA, and express permission for credit unions to temporarily lend to and borrow from other credit unions, even when there is no membership link. This shouldn't change the way you are currently operating, but rather provide legal certainty for these activities.

I am thrilled to be delivering on this 2020 Budget commitment... the government really values its engagement with the sector and I will keep listening to ensure we continue to support credit unions, so that you, in turn, can support your members.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude by thanking you again for all the good work you've done... and continue to do for your members, your communities, and the country.

The last few years are testament to the critical role performed by credit unions... one which I and the government will continue champion at every opportunity.

Thank you very much.

[Violent robber receives immediate prison term under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme](#)

News story

Claire Brown has been sentenced to an immediate prison term for carrying out a violent robbery which left the victim needing hospital treatment.



A West Midlands woman who stole a mobile phone and bank cards in a violent robbery has been sentenced to an immediate prison term after her case was referred to the Court of Appeal by the Solicitor General Alex Chalk, QC MP.

On 27 November 2021, Claire Brown, 39, knocked on the door of the victim's house and asked to borrow her phone. Brown claimed she was concerned for the welfare of her uncle and wanted to call him. She then forced her way into the house and struck the victim three to four times on the head with a brass ornament, leaving her needing hospital treatment to close a cut above her eye.

After striking the victim, Brown left the house with the victim's mobile

phone and two bank cards. Brown then spent over £140 using the stolen cards.

On 11 March 2022, Brown was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment suspended for 2 years at Birmingham Crown Court for robbery and fraud by false representation.

The Solicitor General referred the original sentence to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme because he believed it was too low.

On 24 May the Court of Appeal found Brown's sentence to be unduly lenient and sentenced her to an immediate prison term of 3 years and 9 months.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General Alex Chalk QC MP said:

This was a distressing incident for the victim, who was left needing hospital treatment for her injuries. I believed that the original sentence handed down to Claire Brown did not reflect the gravity of her offending, and I am glad that the Court of Appeal agreed today.

Published 24 May 2022

[Type 45 Ballistic Missile Defence upgrade to support more than 100 UK jobs](#)

- Type 45 Destroyers to receive significant upgrade as the UK to become the first European nation to operate a Maritime Ballistic Missile Defence detect and destroy capability.
- UK have joined tri-national ASTER Block 1 missile programme with France and Italy.
- Full upgrade programme worth more than £300 million, supporting more than 100 jobs, including highly skilled roles in Stevenage, Cowes, Bristol and Bolton.

The UK is set to become the first European nation to operate a Maritime Ballistic Missile Defence capability that can detect and destroy Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles as it commits to a significant upgrade of Britain's fleet of Type 45 destroyers.

The upgraded defence system, using the ASTER 30 Block 1 missile previously used only in French and Italian land systems, will help UK forces combat the increasing threats posed by anti-ship ballistic missiles at sea by developing

the missile into a maritime variant.

The Ministry of Defence has placed an initial contract for this work with MBDA which, when delivered, will be worth more than £300 million and support more than 100 jobs across the UK – including highly skilled technology roles in areas such as system design and software engineering in Stevenage, Cowes, Bristol and Bolton.

Defence Procurement Minister, Jeremy Quin said:

As we face global uncertainty, alliances and greater defensive capability are more important than ever. Joining our French and Italian counterparts will see us collectively improve the cutting-edge technology our armed forces possess.

It is another example of us delivering on the commitments from the Defence Command Paper, helping protect our service personnel when faced with the most severe threats.

Upgrading the defensive capability of the Type 45 fleet was committed to in the [Defence Command Paper](#), as part of the [Integrated Review](#) last year. Being able to defend against anti-ship ballistic missiles will add to the current capability of the Destroyers to defeat threats from the air.

The signing of the tri-national agreement is the first formal step in the upgrade of the six vessels, which will include converting existing missiles to the ASTER 30 Block 1 standard, as well as updates to the SAMPSON multi-function radar (MFR) and Sea Viper command and control missile system, under the full Sea Viper Evolution programme.

Sea Viper's upgrade will boost the lethality of the Type 45 vessels, helping to ensure the Royal Navy remains poised to defend the surface fleet and the Maritime Strike Group against complex air threats both now and into the future.

DE&S CEO Sir Simon Bollom, said:

This demonstrates the UK commitment to delivering a cutting-edge maritime Air Defence Capability. Sea Viper Evolution will deliver a significant uplift in capability and brings to a close many years of detailed planning and activity by the Maritime Air and Weapons team in DE&S.

The Sea Viper Evolution programme follows the recent contract awards to introduce the Common Anti Air Modular Missile (CAMM) into the Type 45, which will see the missile outload of the platform increased from 48 to 72 missiles.

The Royal Navy's Type 45 destroyers are among the most advanced in the fleet

and carry out a range of activity, including defence from air attack, counter-piracy operations and providing humanitarian aid.