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The **Potteries Gold** Post

NEW RULES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

‘YOUTH OBLIGATION’ STARTING SOON, PLUS CUTS TO UNIVERSAL CREDIT HOUSING COSTS.

The **Youth Obligation Programme** for unemployed **18-21 year olds** started last month, although it is not yet operating in all Jobcentres.

Starting with a **three week intensive support** period of workshops and training, this will be followed by support from a Work Coach to apply for work, training and apprenticeships, with a face-to-face intervention at five months stage to review progress to date and job goals.

After **six months**, you must either be in a **job or apprenticeship**, in approved **training or study** or doing a **community work placement** in order to receive your benefit.

While many young jobseekers might find such a scheme helpful, motivating and supportive, there is a risk that poor quality schemes, or over-tough operation of them, could encourage some young people to cancel their benefit claims, leaving them to get by on a combination of family support, casual employment or even illegal activity. Already, **over 50%** of people entitled to Income-based JSA do not claim it, many of them young people, and young people are also the group most often affected by **benefit sanctions**.

We are keen to hear from you if **you**, or a **young person you know**, are affected by this new regime, so please **share** your good and bad experiences with **Potteries Gold**. You can talk to your local **community champion** or message us via **Facebook**.



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CUTS TO UC HOUSING COSTS FOR 18 TO 21S

There have been some news stories recently implying **young people** can't get **Housing Benefit** (HB). That is not the case – **no changes** have been made to HB regulations. If you are a young person with rent to pay, you can **still claim HB** unless you are in a Universal Credit (UC) **digital service area** or began your claim in one. Stoke-on-Trent is not due to be a digital service area until **March 2018**.

What is different in a UC Digital Service Area?

Single 18-21 year olds who live in digital service areas (or began their UC claim in one) are can't get a **housing costs element** included in their UC unless special circumstances apply to them. These include:

- You are part of a **couple**;
- You are **responsible for a child** or a qualifying young person;
- You are receiving the **care component of DLA** at the middle or highest rate or the **daily living** component of **PIP**;
- You have **no parents** or neither parent has a home in Great Britain;
- You cannot live with your parents due to a **serious risk** to your physical or mental health;
- You have been subject to, or threatened with, **domestic violence**;
- You have **earned income** equal to or exceeding the amount earned whilst working **16 hours** per week at the **National Minimum Wage**.

Even when the full digital service is introduced, many young people will still get help with rent, including those **already claiming**.

Many people who could get Housing Benefit don't claim it. It is for people both in and out of work, so if you're on a zero-hours contract or low wage, why not check Turn2Us to see if you qualify? You can find their benefit calculator at: <http://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk/AboutYou>

Potteries Gold is a **Citizens Advice Staffordshire North & Stoke-on-Trent** project to help people in Stoke-on-Trent cope with changes to the benefit system

★ **Benefit Talks for your community group** ★ **Pop-Up Benefit Advice** ★

★ **PIP/ESA Workshops** ★ **Benefit Leaflets** ★ **The Potteries Gold Post** ★ **Volunteering** ★

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