

Legal Service Newsletter - March 2017

The Legal Service is provided by Stewarts Law's pro bono team as part of the Firm's commitment to help people with serious injury.

The service offers free advice to patients when they need it most.

To make a referral to the Legal Service, please contact your dedicated pro bono representative. Alternatively, you can contact Kara Smith in the pro bono team at ksmith@stewartslaw.com or by phone on 020 7822 8000.

Welfare Benefits and The Budget

By Ralph Johnston

On 8 March the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Phillip Hammond, delivered the Budget.

The Budget is an annual statement that sets out what the government plans to spend the country's money on. It is worked out by the Chancellor of the Exchequer with the help of his office, the Treasury.



Health and social care is a key area of government spending which includes the provision for welfare benefits. In the Budget, the Chancellor pledged additional cash of £2bn for health and social care over the next three years. Although this funding is a welcome and much needed addition to social care budgets, there are no plans to increase the provision of welfare benefits for current or future claimants.

Welfare benefits are a key issue on which the Stewarts Law pro bono team consistently advises clients. Financial resources are often a major concern for a patient who has suffered a life-changing injury, particularly the availability of immediate financial support for someone whose ability to work has been affected.

From April 2017, a number of changes are being made which will have an impact on new claims for welfare benefits. Two welfare benefits which we frequently assist clients with, Housing Benefit and Employment and Support Allowance, will be affected.

Housing Benefit

Housing Benefit can pay for all or part of your rent if you are on a low income or in receipt of other benefits. From April 2017, single people between the ages of 18 and 21 will no longer be entitled to claim Housing Benefit. As these plans had first been drawn up under David Cameron's leadership, it was thought that the new Conservative leader may scrap the policy. This does not seem to be the case, and although more vulnerable individuals will be exempt from the new age restriction there are significant fears that the change will lead to an increase in young people being homeless.

Employment and Support Allowance

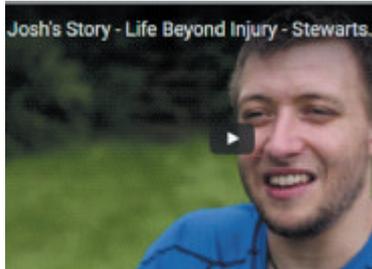
Employment and Support Allowance is a benefit that provides financial support for people who are unable to or have a limited ability to work because of illness or disability. From 6 April 2017, new claimants of Employment and Support Allowance who, after assessment, are put in the 'work related

activity group' will receive less money as the benefit will be reduced to the same rate as Job Seekers Allowance. This reduction will be mitigated by an increase in the provision of support to help claimants find work that they are able to do despite their disabilities. The success of the change will depend on the availability of suitable work and the ability of claimants to do the work to make up the shortfall.

Although the chancellor has provided a significant cash injection for health and social care in the Budget, the financial relief will not extend to new claimants of welfare benefits. They will only see the amount they may be entitled to claim diminish, while the cost of living continues to rise.

News

Please click on the images for more information about a particular news story



#LifeBeyondInjury - Josh's story

Josh was injured while carrying out his job at a climbing centre. He had always been passionate about climbing but following his accident, in which he sustained a spinal cord injury and subsequent right leg amputation, he wondered if he would climb again or even be able to lead a normal family life.



Personal Injury lessons from the Alton Towers Smiler disaster

Fun of the fair?

Emily Goddard and Paul Paxton outline some PI lessons from the Smiler Disaster



Stewarts Law debuts on Sunday Times Best 100 Companies to Work For list

Stewarts Law has featured for the first time on the 'Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work For' list.

Stewarts Law features on the list at number 58 overall, the 6th legal firm on the list.

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