

2020: Things to look out for

It's the start of a new year; there are some things you may want to look out for over the coming 12 months as they may have an impact on your day to day lives.

Universal Credit

There will be some big changes to Universal Credit this year. This is because the five year benefits freeze will come to an end on 8 April. Once the freeze comes to an end, the Department of Work and Pensions say payments will rise 1.7% in line with inflation. This should see more than 10 million benefit claimants in the UK seeing an increase in their payments, including the 2,500,000 people receiving Universal Credit.

Also from July, millions of existing benefit claimants will start to be moved across to Universal Credit.

Hospital parking

Hospital parking charges for some will be scrapped in England from 1 April. Blue badge holders, frequent outpatients and parents of sick children are among the groups that will benefit. NHS staff must still pay unless they are disabled or working overnight.

Council tax

From 1 April, councils will be able to double the current charge for empty homes that have been vacant for more than two years. Councils will also have the authority to raise council tax by 4%.

National wage increases

The national living wage is due to increase by 6.2% in April. The national minimum wage for under 25's will also increase by 6.5% From April 2020, the new rates are:

- National Living Wage - £8.72
- National Minimum Wage - £8.20

National insurance

From 6 April, you will pay no national insurance contributions on the first £9,500 of your earnings, up from £8,632.

Inheritance tax

From 6 April, families will be able to pass £1 million without paying inheritance tax when they die. This means if someone owns a home, they can leave £500,000 tax free. This doubles if a couple is married.

Holiday pay

From 6 April, how holiday pay is calculated for people who earn different amounts of pay week to week is changing. The change means employers will have to calculate the average weekly wage from an entire 52 weeks rather than just the 12 weeks before that holiday.

State pension

The state pension will rise by 3.9% from April – more than double the rate of inflation. However, some pensioners will not see the benefit of the increase now given that free TV licences for thousands of over 75's will be scrapped from June.

Also from 5 October, the state pension age will rise to 66.

Liberty Protection Safeguards

The new Liberty Protection Safeguards are due to come into force in October 2020 and will replace Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards as the system to lawfully deprive someone of their liberty.

Keira and Max's Law

From the spring of 2020, this new law will mean that consent to donate organs will be presumed unless you have opted out. You will have to carry a card to say that you don't want to be a donor.

There are certain groups who will be excluded from this new law including children and those who do not have the mental capacity to make an informed choice.

Parental bereavement leave

This new law is expected to come into force in early 2020. This new law gives workers the right to unpaid leave of up to two weeks from the first day of their employment should they suffer the loss of a child under the age of 18. This also applies to women who suffer a stillbirth or miscarriage from week 24 of pregnancy.

How can we help?

If you have any queries or questions about state benefits, tax or deprivation of liberty then please contact our specialist Court of Protection team by email on cop@boyesturner.com