

A QUICK GUIDE TO

rightsnet discussion

Have you heard about the support available via the online adviser discussion forum on our **rightsnet** website?

Thousands of frontline advisers use the forum to get help with their client casework questions, to share their experience, and to network with other advisers.

'rightsnet is by far the best place for information sharing. Engaging in 'debates' on the forums has improved my confidence and my ability to research material. I would not be nearly so good at what I do if it had not been for rightsnet.'



Join the rightsnet community @ www.rightsnet.org.uk

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An introduction to the **rightsnet** forum

The **rightsnet** forum is part of Lasa's **rightsnet** website and can be found @ www.rightsnet.org.uk/forums

The forum is free to use and anyone can view it. We know that lots of people find that even just viewing the discussions helps them to keep up to date.

However, to get the most out of the forum, it's good to get your own **rightsnet** account. Registering with the forum only takes a minute or two and, once you have your own login and password, you're good to go!

The forum is free to use and registering only takes a minute or two

Registering with the forum

Registering with the forum is easy.

You'll find a 'register' link at the top of every **rightsnet** page.



Clicking on the link will take you to our registration sign-up form @ www.rightsnet.org.uk/my/account

Our registration sign-up form

Our registration form is a simple 4-step process and will take just a minute or two to complete.

You just need to:

- 1 Provide your name and email address, and choose a 'screen name' (i.e. the name that will be displayed next to any posts you make in the forum).

Name and email

Your real name *

Please provide your full name. This will only be used for subscription and site administration purposes.

Screen name *

This will be displayed next to any postings you make in the forum, and used for on-site messaging.

Your work email address *

If you work for an organisation, we require you to use a work email address in registering with us.

- 2 Choose a username and a password.

Username and password

Please choose a username and password that you will use to access rightsnet. You must not let any other person access rightsnet using your username and password.

Username *

Case sensitive. Minimum of 3 characters. No spaces.

Password *

Case sensitive. Minimum of 5 characters. No spaces.

Confirm password *

- 3 Tell us that you'd like access to the forum, and provide your work details.

Discussion forum

Do you want access to the discussion forum?

Yes

We do not provide access to the forum for individuals seeking advice about their own benefit rights.

Please provide the following information if you want forum access. Registrations without full details will not be accepted.

Your team/dept and organisation *

Please enter (i) your team/dept and (ii) the name of your organisation (including its geographical location). This information will be displayed next to any postings you make in the forum.

- 4 Then, you just need to agree to our acceptable use policy (there's more information about this below), answer our security question, and then click the big blue 'register' button. And that's it!

I have read and agree with [rightsnet's acceptable use policy](#)

Security question

Which is the odd one out - red, blue, green, elephant? (8 characters required) *

Register

What happens next?

Once we receive your registration, we'll email you back to confirm that we've set your account up and you can then login and begin using the forum straightaway.

Getting started

Logging in to **rightsnet**

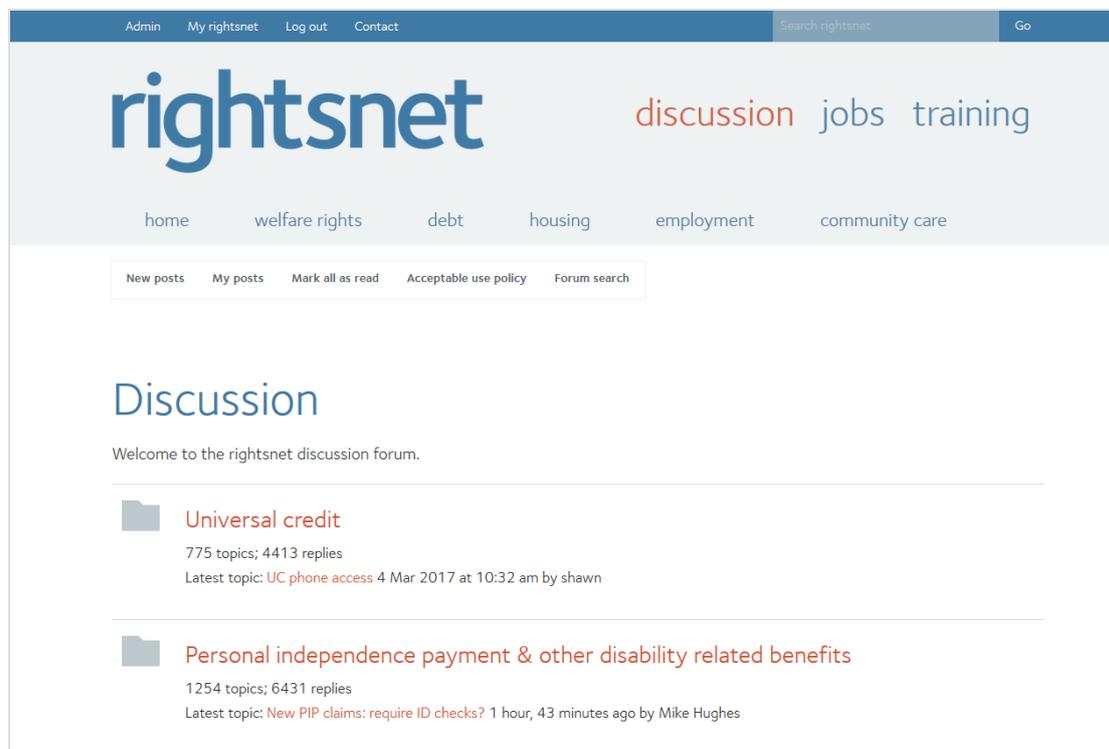
Once we've emailed you back to confirm that we've set your account up, you can then login and begin using the forum.

NB – you'll find a login link at the top of every **rightsnet** page.

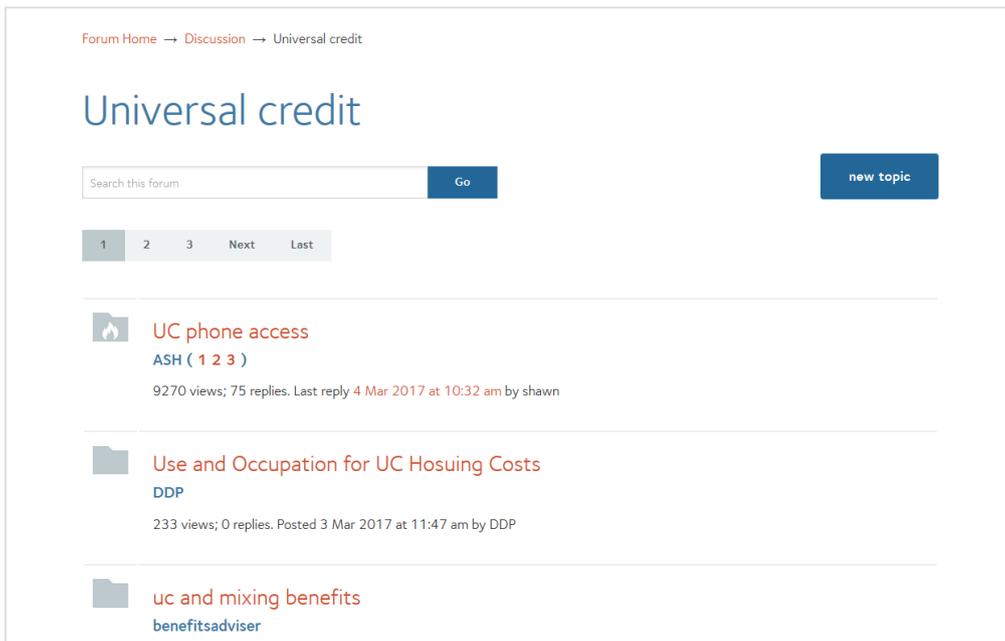


Finding your way around

When you visit the forum (www.rightsnet.org.uk/forums), you'll see that it's split into a number of different areas that relate either to specific benefits (for example 'universal credit' and 'personal independence payment') or to broader issues (for example 'decision making and appeals').

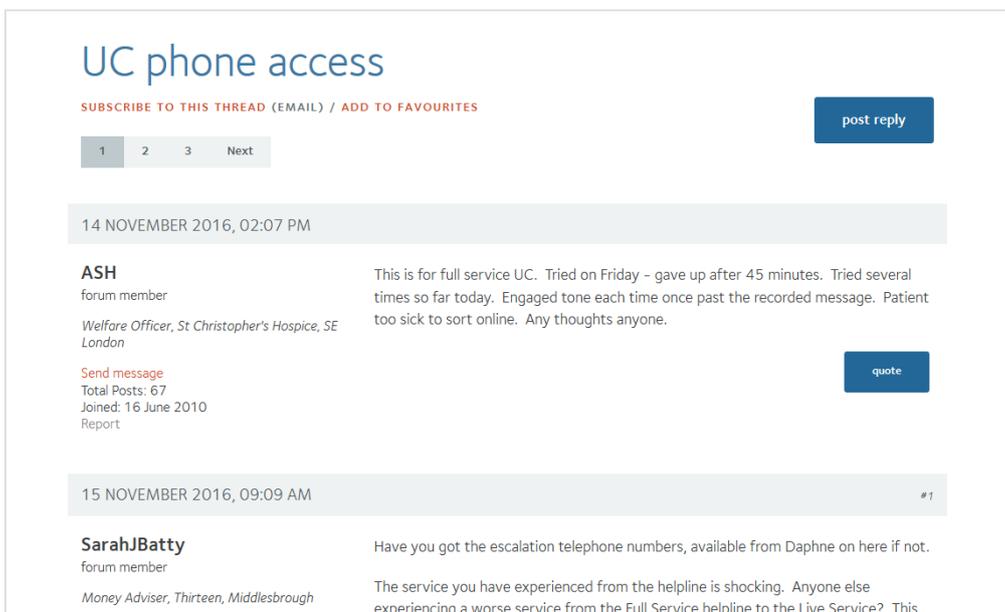


When you click into an individual forum, you'll see a list of the topics (or 'threads') that have been posted or added to most recently.



NB – when somebody responds to someone else's post, the discussion thread jumps back to the top, so you can always be sure that you're reading the latest contributions (or 'posts').

If you then click into a particular thread, you can see all of the contributions that have been made by advisers.



You may find that reading other people's posts is helpful, or you might want to make a contribution yourself.

Reading other people's forum posts

You may find that reading other people's posts is helpful in keeping up to date and also, especially if you're new to the forum, in getting an idea of how other people use the forum.

If you click into an area of the forum that interests you, you'll find the latest discussion threads are listed with those with the most recent contributions at the top of the page.

If you then click into a specific forum thread, you can read the original post and see who submitted it, and also read any replies that have been posted.

You'll see that when someone posts a question, they will often start to get responses very quickly, often from advisers in other parts of the UK. The forums are a great way to get quick thoughts on a problem you're stuck with or a question you want to get an opinion on.

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Posting a message in the forum

You may find that you want to ask a question in the forum, or share some information that you've come across with other advisers, or perhaps reply to a question or issue that someone else has raised.

Whilst posting a contribution to the forum can be scary at first, you'll quickly find that the other advisers who use the forum are very friendly and eager to help.

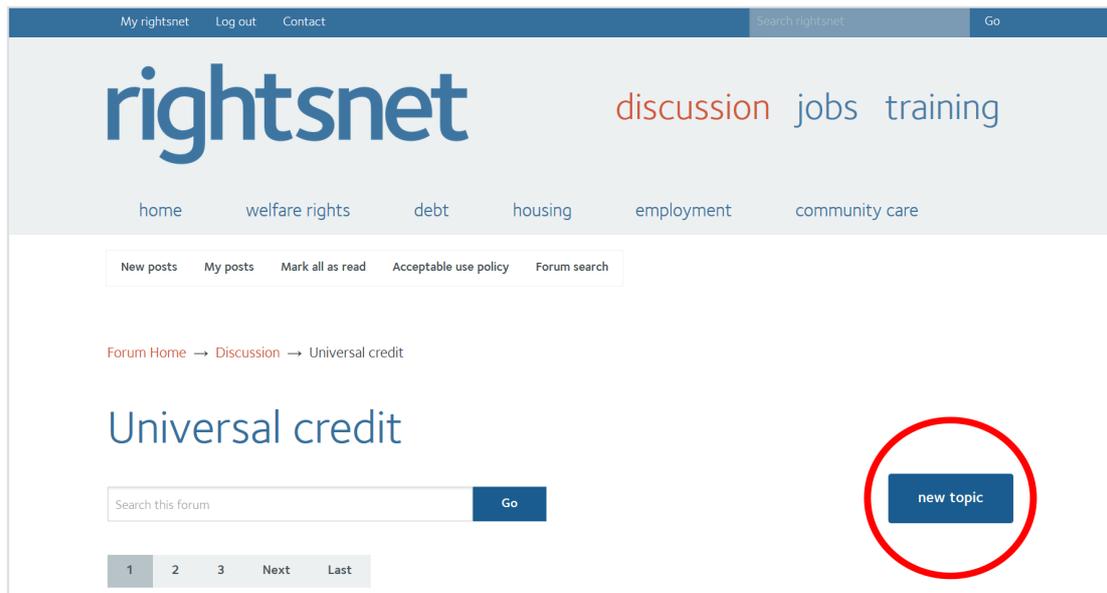
When you registered with the forum you'll have seen the acceptable use policy that everyone signs up to (www.rightsnet.org.uk/forum-policy) and, whilst the policy has lots of small print-type rules, its main purpose is to provide a friendly, supportive and considerate environment where advisers can share their experience and expertise. We hope that once you get started, you'll quickly see how using the forum can really help you in your work.

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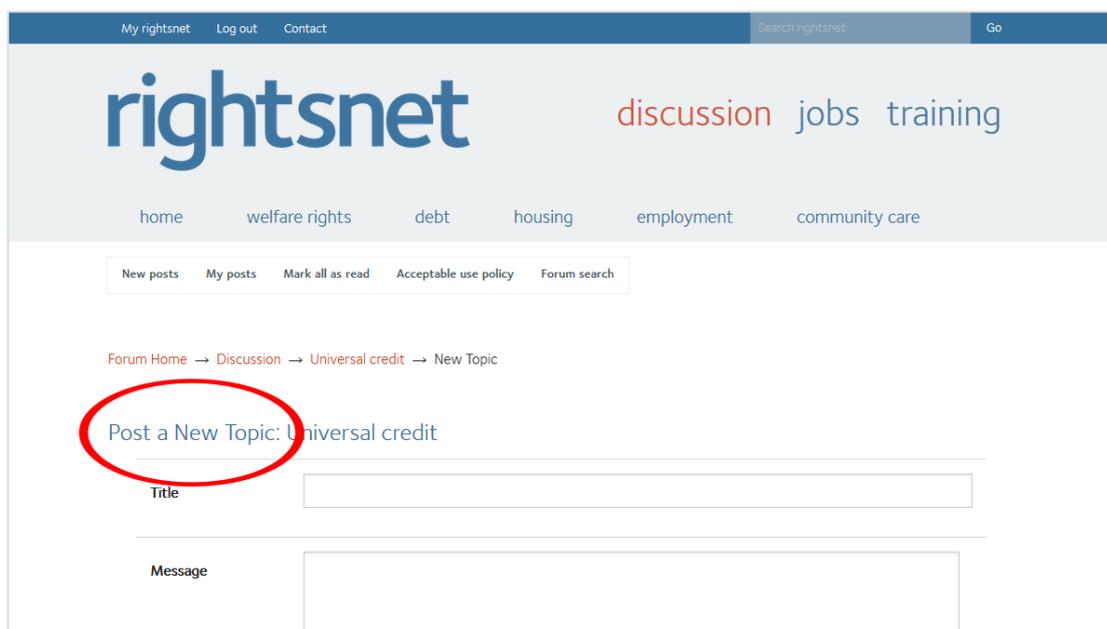
Starting a new topic

If you want to start a brand new topic, you just first need to decide which of the individual forums you'd like your post to appear in. There are 12 individual forums, some that relate to specific benefits (for example 'universal credit' and 'personal independence payment') and others to broader issues (for example 'decision making and appeals').

Once you've decided and clicked into the forum that you'd like your post to appear in, you'll see a blue 'new topic' button toward the top of the page.



Clicking on the 'new topic' button will then bring up a form for you to create and post your message.



Once you've added a title for your post and entered your message, you can use the 'preview post' button to see how it will look (and edit it if you need to), before finally clicking on the 'submit post' button.



Your new topic will then be live on **rightsnet**!

NB – In addition to using the 'preview post' option to review and edit your message before submitting it, you can also edit your post after it's been submitted and is live on the site. Just click on the 'edit' button.

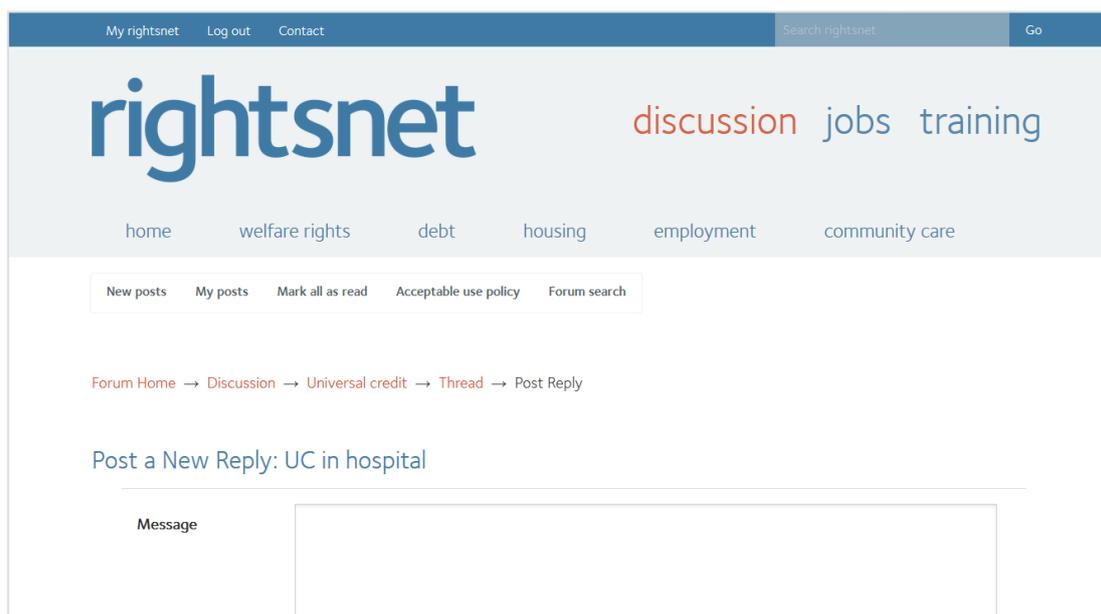


Posting a reply to an existing topic

If you want to reply to an existing topic, you just need to click on the 'post reply' button that appears toward the top (and bottom) of every discussion thread.



Clicking on the 'post reply' button will then bring up a form for you to use to create and post your reply.



Once you've entered your message, you can use the 'preview post' button to see how it will look (and edit it if you need to), before finally clicking on the 'submit post' button.



Your reply will then be live on **rightsnet!**

NB – In addition to using the 'preview post' option to review and edit your message before submitting it, you can also edit your post after it's been submitted and is live on the site. Just click on the 'edit' button.



Getting the most out of the forum

Whilst posting and replying to messages is pretty straightforward with a little practice, the **rightsnet** forum also offers a host of additional features to help you to get the most out of your visits to the site.

In this section, we outline some tips and tricks and shortcuts that other advisers have found useful. If you have any that you'd like to share, we'd love to hear from you. You can reach us via rightsnet@lasa.org.uk

Posting a message

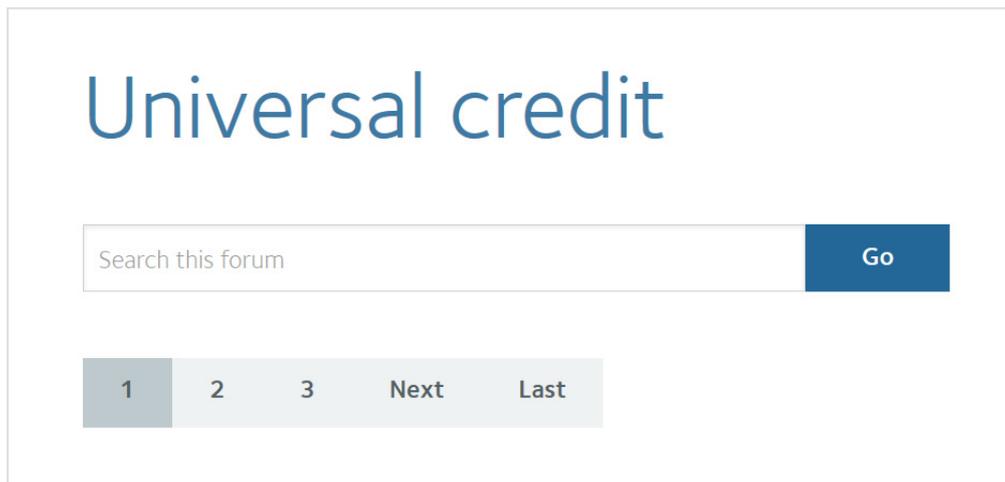
- **Fast Reply:** Choosing 'fast reply' is great if you don't want to use any of the other features available (for example the ability to attach documents or quote the person you're responding to). Note however that you also don't get the opportunity to preview your post, and so the 'fast reply' option is best for short messages.
- **Attachments:** This is useful if you'd like to attach one or more documents (for example a word or pdf file) to your post. Note however that the maximum attachment size is set at 5,000kb. To attach more than one document, you just need to click 'preview post' after each upload.
- **Thread review:** After you've clicked on 'post reply' and started to write your response to an existing thread, you can use the 'Thread review' option to read through and remind yourself of the message(s) you're responding to without navigating away from your own draft message.
- **Quote:** Sometimes you might find it useful to quote another person's message, either in full or in part, as part of your own message. If so, just click on the 'quote' button at the bottom of their post. You'll then see that their message is wrapped within some code that begins and ends with 'quote'. NB – if you don't want to quote the whole of their message in your own post, you can delete those sections that you don't need. (Though be sure not to delete any of the code!)

- **Adding formatting:** If you want to add formatting to your message, you can do so using special code. The main formatting that people like to add to their messages include –
 - **Bold:** To add bold to your message, you just need to surround the words that you want appear in bold with [b] [/b].
So, for example, ‘the quick, [b]brown[/b] fox’ ... will appear as ‘the quick, **brown** fox’
NB – using [strong] [/strong] will also add bold.
 - **Italics:** To add italics to your message, you just need to surround the words that you want to italicise with [i] [/i] or [em] [/em]
So, for example, ‘the quick, [i]brown[/i] fox’ ... will appear as ‘the quick, *brown* fox’
 - **Quote:** If you want to add a quote to your message, you just need to surround the words that you want to appear as the quote with [quote] [/quote]
 - **Hyperlinks:** adding links to your post is easy. Just type or copy and paste the link into the message box. Don’t worry if you include a link without the ‘http://’ bit at the front, the forum software will know that anything that starts with ‘www’ is a web link and will add it for you. Then, when you preview your post, you can test that your link works. (NB – try right clicking on it and opening it in a new tab or window to ensure that you don’t lose your draft forum post).
NB – You can also format your message so that part of your message forms the hyperlink. For example:
There’s more info on [how to claim Attendance Allowance](#) as well as lots more about ...
To do this, you just need to use the following code:
Place your link (including the ‘http://’ bit) between the two quote marks and the words ‘how to claim Attendance Allowance’ between the two pointy brackets, like this:
There’s more info on how to claim Attendance Allowance as well as lots more about ...
- **Edit:** In addition to using the ‘preview post’ option to review and edit your message before submitting it, you can also edit your post after it’s been submitted and is live on the site. Just click on the ‘edit’ button.



Searching the forums

- **Searching a single forum:** You can carry out a simple search within a specific forum by using the search box that appears near the top of every individual forum.

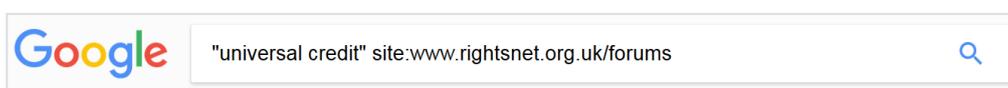


- **Advanced search:** You can access our advanced forum search, by clicking on the 'Forum search' button.



The advanced search option allows you to search using a combination of words or phrases, in multiple forums, by member name, by date, and to dictate the order of your sort results

- **Google search:** you can also use Google to search the **rightsnet** forum. For example to search the forum for the phrase 'universal credit', use the following search term in Google.



- **My posts:** If you want to find a message that you've posted to the forum, you can use the 'My posts' button.



Keeping up to date

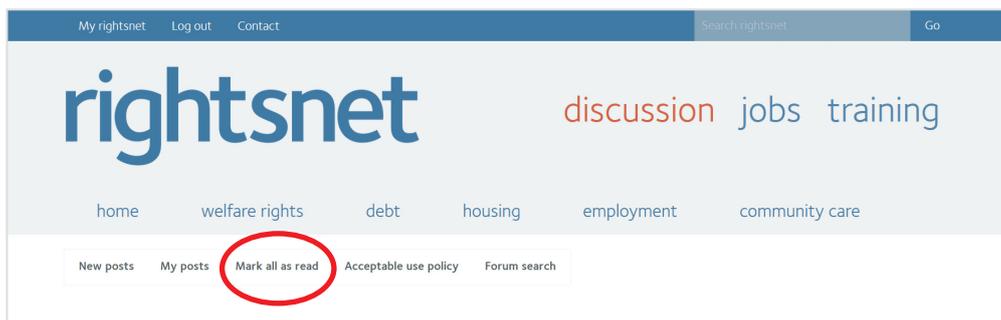
- **New posts:** As an alternative to clicking into the different areas of the forum to read the contributions that advisers have made, you can also just look at any new posts that have been submitted since you last visited. One way to do this, after logging in, is to look out for the colour of the folder icons that appear alongside each forum thread. Where they appear a darker colour, they contain new posts.



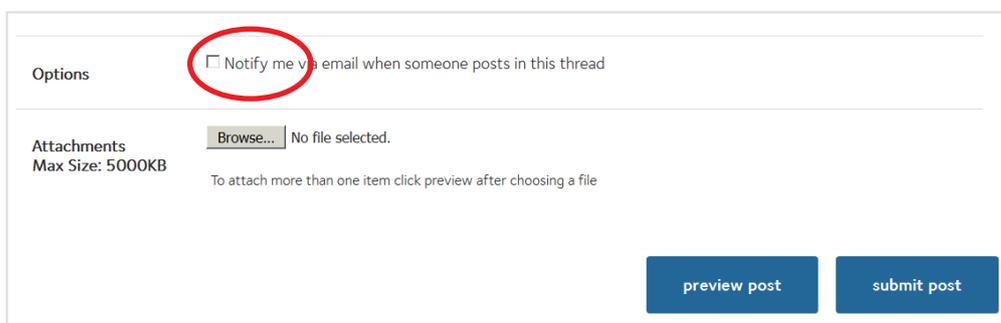
Alternatively you can click on the 'New posts' button that appears towards the top of every forum page.



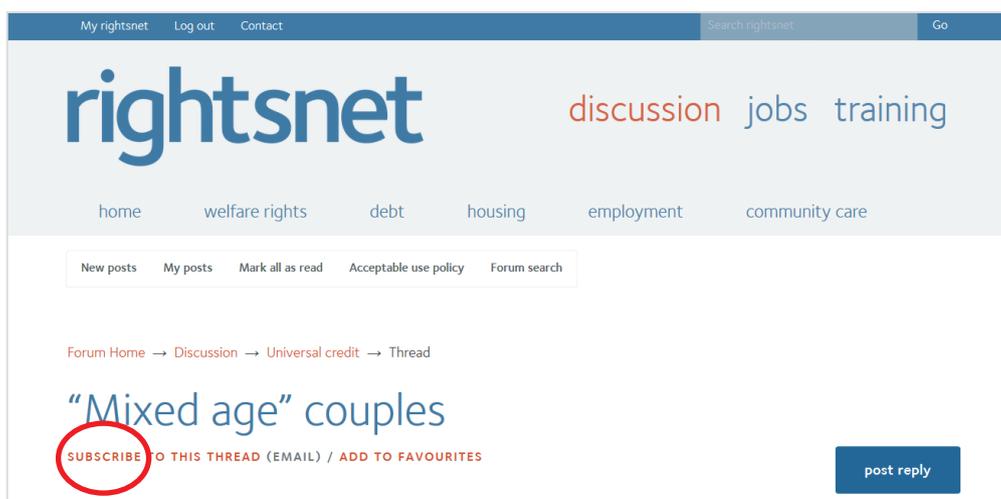
NB – Once you've looked at any new posts, you can use the 'Mark all as read' button so that the same posts will not be flagged up again on your next visit.



- **Notify me via email:** When you post a new message to the forum, you can ask to be emailed to alert you when someone posts a reply to the same thread. To do this you just need to tick the check box before submitting your post.



- **Subscribe to this thread:** You can also ask to be alerted by email when new messages are posted to a thread (regardless of whether you have contributed to the thread) by 'subscribing' to the thread.



- **Add to favourites:** If you want to save a discussion thread to read again later, you can do so by using the 'Add to favourites' feature. This adds a link to the thread to your 'My rightsnet' account.



- **Forum feed(s):** We also offer feeds of the latest messages posted to the forum. You can either sign up to the whole forum (at www.rightsnet.org.uk/forums/rss) or an individual forum (for example, here's the feed for our universal credit forum: www.rightsnet.org.uk/forums/rss/30). Look out for the 'Forum feed' link at the bottom of each forum page.

Join the rightsnet community @ www.rightsnet.org.uk