

New look online version

A checklist for parents

England, Scotland and Wales



Information for families
Last updated April 2011

As a parent of a disabled child, you are often entitled to a number of benefits and other help. This leaflet briefly explains some of the more common ones and who can claim them.

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Information in this guide

The information in this guide is based on the current rules. It's possible that changes will be made in the future, so please call our freephone helpline on 0808 808 3555 for an update.

Disability and sickness benefits

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is the main benefit for disabled children and adults:

- if a child needs extra care or supervision they may qualify for the care component
- if a child needs help getting around they may qualify for the mobility component. The higher rate of the mobility component can give access to the Motability Scheme to help hire or buy a car
- it is not means-tested.

Disability Living Allowance Unit Helpline: 08457 123 456 | Textphone: 08457 224 433

Employment and Support Allowance

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is a benefit for people over 16 whose capacity for work is limited by their health problems. It was introduced in October 2008 and replaced most new claims for both Incapacity Benefit and Income Support on the basis of incapacity.

There are two types of ESA: contributory ESA and income-related ESA. Some people will receive both types of payment, others may only get one or the other. If your son or daughter claims ESA any tax credits or benefits you get for them (other than DLA) will stop. Contact our helpline for more information.

Benefits Enquiry Line Freephone: 0800 882 200 | Textphone: 0800 243 355

A benefit for carers

Carer's Allowance

This is extra money for carers who care for someone who gets DLA care component at the middle or highest rate. Eligibility depends on the circumstances and weekly earnings of the carer.

Benefits if you're out of full time work

Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance

Payable for six months for individuals who are unemployed and have recently paid sufficient national insurance contributions.

Income Support and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance

These are means-tested benefits for people who are not working or working less than 16 hours a week. Some carers qualify if they work more hours than this.

Tel: 0800 055 6688 | Textphone: 0800 023 4888

Benefits for working

Working Tax Credit

This is extra money for families with children where at least one parent works 16 hours a week or more (other groups can also claim). The amount you get will depend on your circumstances and annual income, but not savings.

Tax Credits Helpline: 0845 300 3900 | Textphone: 0845 300 3909

Money and vouchers for having children

Sure Start Maternity Grant

A £500 grant for those who have recently given birth or adopted a child and are on certain benefits. You can only get a grant if your baby is your first child or if all your other children are aged 16 or above.

Child Benefit

If you are responsible for a child under 16 or, if they remain in non-advanced education or unwaged training, a young person up to 19 (sometimes 20).

Healthy Start Scheme

If you are pregnant or have a child under four and receive certain benefits, you can get vouchers for milk, fruit, vegetables and vitamins.

Healthy Start Helpline: 0845 607 6823 | Textphone: 0845 607 6078 | www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Child Tax Credit

This can be claimed by anyone with a dependent child. The amount you get is based on your family circumstances and your annual income (but not your savings). Your award may be higher if you have a child on DLA or registered blind.

At school

Free school meals

If your child is registered at a maintained school, the education authority must provide a free midday meal if you claim certain benefits.

School uniforms

Education authorities (or children's departments) have discretion to help with the cost of school clothing for pupils in maintained schools. In Wales, a grant is available to pupils entering Year 7 who are eligible for free school meals, or for pupils aged 11 at the start of the school year attending a special school, special needs resource base or pupil referral unit, who are eligible for free school meals.

School transport

Education authorities must provide transport or help with the cost if they consider it necessary to help children get to the nearest suitable school.

Visiting a child at a special school

Education authorities have discretion to pay some or all of the fares of parents visiting children at a special school a long way from home.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

A weekly payment for 16 to 18 year olds (and some 19 year olds) who stay on at school/college or who undertake certain types of unwaged training. The amount awarded depends on parental income.

The EMA scheme in England will close to new applicants from January 2011. Students who had begun receiving EMA in 2009 -10 will continue to receive payments until the end of the 2011-12 academic year.

Those who had started the first year of a course in 2010 -11 and who get an EMA of £30 a week will receive a reduced payment of £20 a week until the end of 2011-12.

Other students getting EMA are likely to find that their payments stop at the end of the 2010 -11 academic year.

EMA in England is being replaced by a bursary scheme for those young people with the greatest needs. In addition, extra money will be given to individual schools and colleges allowing them to make discretionary payments to students. EMA is expected to continue in Scotland and Wales.

Help with rent, mortgage and council tax

Housing Benefit

People on a low income and savings under £16,000 (or over if in receipt of the guarantee element of Pension Credit) can apply for Housing Benefit to help with their rent.

Help with mortgage interest payments

This is only available as part of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit.

Disability Reduction Scheme

A non means tested reduction on the council tax bill for people who:

- use a wheelchair indoors, or
- have an extra bathroom or kitchen in the house for a disabled occupier, or
- have set aside a room for a disabled person, for example, using a dining room to store equipment.

Council Tax Discount

Your council tax bill is reduced by 25% (50% in some cases) if there are less than two adults in your household. The presence of children and certain adults (including some carers) can be ignored.

Second Adult Rebate

A discount on the bill for some council tax payers who live with an adult (other than their partner) who is on a low income.

Council Tax Benefit

Help for council tax payers on a low income.

Discretionary housing payments

A local authority can make a discretionary payment if you are entitled to some Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit and need further financial assistance to meet your housing costs.

At home

Adapting your home in England and Wales – Disabled Facilities Grant

These are awarded where works are considered essential to enable better access and movement at home. The maximum grant payable is £30,000 in England and £36,000 in Wales.

Scotland – Scheme of Assistance

In Scotland, mandatory grants are available for work deemed essential to meet the needs of a disabled person. A grant must cover at least 80% of approved costs, with the other 20% being means-tested. However, you will receive 100% of costs if you or a household member receives Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or the guarantee credit of Pension Credit. A mandatory grant cannot be made to cover the costs of an extension to create additional living space.

Council tenants and Scottish Homes tenants should approach their landlords. Housing associations should arrange to have the work carried out for tenants assessed as needing the adaptation.

Insulating your home and cutting energy bills

In England, there is a Warm Front Scheme providing grants towards insulation and heating improvements. In Wales, help with heating measures is available from the NEST Fuel poverty scheme. In Scotland, assistance is available from the Energy Assistance Package.

Tel for England: 0800 316 2805 | Tel for Scotland: 0800 512 012 | Tel for Wales: 0800 512 012

Energy Efficiency: some energy suppliers have offers which reduce the cost of installing energy efficient measures. Some also have utility trusts for their customers who have arrears.

Furniture reuse schemes

These schemes provide low cost second hand and reconditioned furniture and white goods for families on a low income.

TV Licence

If you or someone you live with is registered blind, you qualify to receive a 50 per cent concession on the cost of your TV licence. If the person who is registered blind is not the current licence holder, you will need to transfer the licence into their name first.

TV Licensing Tel: 0844 800 6790 | Textphone: 0844 800 6778

Transport

Free road tax for your car

This is available if you qualify for, or have a child aged three or over who qualifies for, Disability Living Allowance mobility component at the higher rate.

A Blue Badge for your car

This allows some parking concessions for those on DLA mobility component at the higher rate and others with severe walking problems who are aged two or above. In England and Scotland only, you may also qualify if your child is under three and has a condition which means they either need to be accompanied by bulky equipment or kept near a vehicle at all times. In Wales at the time of writing, these special rules for under three's needing bulky equipment or immediate access to a vehicle do not apply - although the government in Wales has proposed introducing this.

Help with bus travel

In some areas, an essential, named escort would also get free travel.

In Scotland, ask about the travel 'Entitlement Card'. Young people in Scotland aged 16 to 18 are entitled to reduced fares.

Disabled Person's Railcard

Buying this railcard entitles disabled people up to a third off most train fares.

Tel: 0845 605 0525 | Textphone: 0845 601 0132

Other help

NHS costs, glasses, hospital fares, free prescriptions

There are a range of benefits for prescription costs, glasses, going to hospital for treatment (including accompanying a child) and certain dental costs. The criteria are different for each.

Direct payments

Cash payments given to you instead of services that would otherwise be provided by your local authority. With this money, you can employ your own care assistant or buy in services from private care companies.

Cinema Exhibitors' Association card

Free tickets for a person to accompany a child to the cinema if they receive DLA or are registered blind. Also, many local attractions offer discount schemes and queue jump passes for disabled people and their carers. Ask when you book.

Tel: 0845 123 1292 | Textphone: 0845 123 1297

Practical help with your child

Contact a Family produces a number of detailed guides, which include practical information such as:

- extra help at school
- practical help at home and short breaks
- specialist equipment
- health services such as physiotherapy or speech therapy.

Visit our website www.cafamily.org.uk or call our helpline for more information.

Emotional support

Ring Contact a Family for details of support groups and counselling services.

Grants and loans

There are several sources of help from grant making organisations:

- Social Fund – loans and grants for those on certain benefits
- Family Fund – grants for families on certain benefits, whose child is severely disabled and aged 17 or under
- charities – there are thousands of funds for certain occupations, disabilities or those in certain geographical areas. For more information and a list of charities, ring our helpline.

Other benefits

Ring the Contact a Family helpline on 0808 808 3555 if:

- you are sick or disabled as a result of an accident or illness at work, or after service in the armed forces
- your spouse (including common law spouse in Scotland) or civil partner has died – there are special benefits for bereavement
- you care for an orphaned child or one whose parents are in prison
- you are 60 or over. There are a range of pensions and pension credits that you may be entitled to
- you are disabled and 65 or over. You might get Attendance Allowance.

Also some larger families or those with particular disabilities may be able to get help with metered water charges.

Further information

Contact a Family is a charity which provides support, advice and information for families with disabled children. We offer:

- freephone helpline
- guides and other publications
- information on specific conditions and rare disorders
- local offices, all of which provide newsletters, workshops and local information
- advice for parents starting or joining local or national support groups
- an online linking service for families
- family workers providing home visiting services
- volunteer parent representatives offering local support and information.

Getting in contact with us

Freephone helpline

0808 808 3555

Open Monday–Friday

Access to over 170 languages

www.cafamily.org.uk

www.makingcontact.org



Contact a Family Head Office:

209-211 City Road, London EC1V 1JN

Tel 020 7608 8700

Fax 020 7608 8701

e-mail info@cafamily.org.uk

Contact a Family is now on social networking sites. Join us at:

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/contactafamily

Twitter

twitter.com/contactafamily

Podcasts

You can download podcasts from our website at:

www.youtube.com/cafamily.org.uk/news/podcasts.html

iTunes users can listen to our podcasts at:

www.cafamily.org.uk/itunes

Videos

You can watch videos on our YouTube channel at:

www.youtube.com/cafamily

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Wales No. 1633333

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