

Helping you, to help families



A brief guide to the wide range of
benefits available to families

April 2010

INTRODUCTION

This guide was produced by the Financial Support Steering Group which includes representatives from; Cabinet Office, Department for Children, Schools and Families, Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs, HM Treasury, Child Poverty Unit, the devolved administrations, Local Government Association, local authorities and the third sector.

Do you work with parents, carers or others responsible for looking after children?

Did you know that hundreds of thousands of people aren't claiming all the benefits that they're entitled to? This can be the difference between children growing up in poverty or not. You probably know the harmful effects this can have on the children in these families.

What you may not know is that many people don't claim all the benefits they're entitled to simply because they don't know they can!

Many families don't have any dealings with 'government' but some of them may be people you see regularly as part of your work – people who trust you.

We know how busy you are, but if you can have a quick look through this leaflet you'll get an overview of the types of benefits that parents and carers may be entitled to and how they go about claiming.



Making a difference

As part of your job, you may identify parents who are struggling a bit financially. This guide will help you to encourage those parents to find out if they're claiming all they're entitled to. To do this, you could help parents work through the benefits chart on the centre pages of this guide.

There's lots of advice out there, Directgov (www.direct.gov.uk) is a great place for parents to start to get more information, or they can ring one of the phone numbers in this guide. There are loads of organisations who want to help.

It'll only take a few minutes to look through this guide. You could keep it on your desk, or even take it with you when you're meeting with parents.

Telling just one parent may mean a big difference to their children's lives.

CASE STUDIES

Abdul and Sabanna are both 28 and married, they rent a house from a private landlord for £124 a week and their council tax is £1,023 a year.

Abdul works full time and earns £270 a week, they have a five year old girl at school and Sabanna is 30 weeks pregnant. Their low income means they can claim housing and council tax benefit, as well as tax credits.

Sabanna can also claim two one-off grants now, even before the baby is born, and neither needs paying back. The Sure Start Maternity Grant is £500 and the Health in Pregnancy Grant is £190, these will really help with the extra expense.

They do get some benefits now but when the baby is born they will get around £12,200 a year:

- £105 a week** – Child Tax Credit
- £30 a week** – Working Tax Credit
- £34 a week** – Child Benefit
- £65 a week** – Housing Benefit
- £60 a year** – Council tax reduction



Did you know!

Council Tax Benefit is available to people who own their own home as well as those who rent.



Derrick and Ana own their own home.

They're both in their 40s and both are self-employed. Derrick works full time hours and earns about £15,000 a year, Ana works part time and earns about £5,000 a year.

They have three children – two older ones who are at school and a two-year-old who goes to a nursery at a cost of £120 a week.

They are entitled to around £13,800 a year:

- £140 a week** – Child Tax Credit
- £80 a week** – Working Tax Credit for childcare
- £47 a week** – Child Benefit

Myth-Bust!

Housing Benefit isn't just for people renting from a council; it's also available if you rent from a private landlord.

| Are you or your partner | What's the help called? | Which people get this help |
|---|---|---|
| Pregnant or have you recently had a baby | Health in Pregnancy Grant | Expectant mums, if you get health advice |
| | Statutory Maternity Pay | Expectant and new mums who have been employed by their current employer continuously for at least 26 weeks |
| | Maternity Allowance | Expectant and new mums who work but are not eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay |
| | Sure Start Maternity Grant | Expectant or new mums on a low income |
| Responsible for at least one child | Child Benefit | Anyone responsible for a child |
| | Child Tax Credit | People with children and a low income |
| A parent of at least one dependent child and you want to study. The rules may be different in Scotland and Wales, see contact details on page 7 | Childcare Grant | If you live in England or Wales and are studying full time at university level. Have dependent children under 15 (or under 17 if they have special needs) |
| | Parents' Learning Allowance | If you live in England or Wales and are studying full time at university level and have a low income |
| | Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work | If you live in England, don't work (or work less than 16 hours a week), have a partner who works and have a household income of less than £20,000 |
| | Care to Learn | If you live in England and are under 20 and want to study below university level |
| On a low income and have savings of £16,000 or less | Housing Benefit | People who pay rent for where they live |
| | Council Tax Benefit | People who pay council tax and have a low income |
| Working | Working Tax Credit | If you work, but earn low wages, you may qualify for Working Tax Credit |

| How much could you get | Did you know? | How do you get more information – www.direct.gov.uk |
|---|--|---|
| Lump sum of £190 | If you have reached your 25th week of pregnancy, you can get a claim form from your midwife or doctor | Speak to HMRC on 0845 366 7885 |
| 90% of your earnings for six weeks then 33 weeks at up to £124.88 a week | Some employers offer more | Speak to your employer |
| Standard rate is £124.88 a week | Self-employed people may also be entitled | Speak to Jobcentre Plus on 0800 055 6688 or visit www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk |
| Lump sum of £500 for each baby | You can apply anytime between your 29th week of pregnancy and 3 months after the birth | |
| £20.30 a week for first child plus £13.40 a week for other children | This is over £1,000 a year | Speak to HMRC on 0845 302 1444 |
| You get more if you have a lower income, if your child is under one year old or if you have more than one child | Families earning up to about £58,000 a year may get Child Tax Credit | Speak to HMRC on 0845 300 3900 |
| You can get up to 85% of registered or approved childcare costs | This won't affect other benefits | Speak to Student Finance England on 0845 300 50 90 or Wales on 0845 602 8845 |
| May get up to £1,508 toward study materials and travel | This doesn't have to be paid back | |
| You could get up to £175 per week per child to pay for childcare | This could even be up to £215 per week per child in London | Speak to the Learner Support Service on 0800 121 8989 |
| Could get up to £160 (£175 in London) per week per child to pay for childcare and additional costs of travelling to your childcare provider | The money for childcare is paid directly to your childcare provider and the money for additional travel to your childcare is paid through your learning provider | |
| What you get depends on the size of your family, the rent you pay, rents in the area as well as how much you earn | Child Benefit is no longer counted as income when working out how much Housing Benefit (or Council Tax Benefit) you can get | Speak to your local council – the number will be in the phone book |
| What you get depends on the size of your family, the Council Tax you pay as well as how much you earn | Council Tax Benefit won't affect other benefits you get | |
| You may get more money, if you pay for childcare, are disabled or are 50 and over and returning to work after coming off certain benefits | You can get help with up to 80% of your childcare costs – subject to a maximum limit in the amount of childcare costs you can claim each week | Speak to HMRC on 0845 300 3900 |

CASE STUDIES

Other benefits!

There are lots of other benefits available to people with different circumstances, such as disabled people or those with a disabled child. See www.direct.gov.uk for more information.

Sophie is 38 and a single parent looking after a teenage son and a six year old daughter.

Sophie works full time and earns £12,000 a year. Because she is single her council tax bill is reduced to £825 a year, but Sophie pays around £550 a month rent to her local council for her 3-bed house and about £63 a week for after-school childcare.

Sophie is entitled to around £15,000 a year:

- £95 a week – Child Tax Credit
- £95 a week – Working Tax Credit (including help with childcare costs)
- £34 a week – Child Benefit
- £68 a week – Housing Benefit towards rent



Myth-Bust!

Benefits and tax credits are not just for the unemployed. Many are also available to people who are working, to ensure they have the necessary money to look after their families.



Carol is 21 and her partner James is 25. He earns £19,000, and they have a mortgage on their flat. They currently get about £90 a week Child Tax Credit.

She's been at home for three years looking after her two small children. She now wants to go to work, but feels she needs more skills to help her get the sort of job she wants.

The cost of putting her children in nursery is about £150 a week for each child. If she applies under the Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work scheme she will be able to get this £300 a week paid as well as receiving Child Tax Credits. This will allow her to get the training she needs to move on to a well paid job.

How much?

Over a third of people who are entitled to, but not getting, Housing Benefit are missing out on over £2,600 a year.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Lots of people have different circumstances

This leaflet is designed to help you help families and describes a range of benefits they may be entitled to.

Where do I get more information?

The families you work with may also have other entitlements that are not featured in this guide.

www.direct.gov.uk provides more information or why not also check out the Parent's Guide to Money at www.parentsguidetomoney.co.uk

For people who are new to benefits or already on benefits, the benefits adviser tool can help by checking which benefits are available to families and giving an estimate of how much parents could claim. It's available to use at www.direct.gov.uk/benefitsadviser

If parents are struggling to find the information they need online, they can also ring the relevant phone number from the chart on the centre pages.

There are lots of other organisations who are able to give advice to parents to help them get all they're entitled to. They include:

Jobcentre Plus helpline for people who are out of work and wish to make a claim – call **0800 055 6688**

Moneymadeclear is a new service that can give customers impartial sales-free information to help with money matters. To speak to a Money Guide call the helpline on **0300 500 5000** or visit at www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk

Learndirect Scotland, for advice on learning or what to do about childcare while learning call **0808 100 9000** or www.learndirectscotland.com

Student Finance Wales
www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Turn2us exists to help people access the money available to them – through benefits, grants and other financial help.
www.turn2us.org.uk



This guide is intended to educate people who work with families and children about the range of benefits available and where parents can get more information.

Entitlements used in all case studies are estimates based on fictional circumstances. The guide is not to be used to attempt to calculate actual entitlements for individual circumstances.

Benefit rates included are correct as of April 2010.

'Parent' when used in this guide refers not only to birth parents but all those with parental responsibility (as defined by the Children Act 1989). It may also refer to those who do not have parental responsibility but who have full time care of a child that resides with them.

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Directgov

Public services all in one place
www.direct.gov.uk

Please visit www.direct.gov.uk or one of the other sources of advice mentioned in this leaflet for more detailed information.



Further information on tackling child poverty is available from www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/childpoverty