

A guide for parents

Help if you are looking for work,
on low pay, or claiming benefits

jobcentreplus

Part of the Department for Work and Pensions



Is this leaflet for you?

Are you a parent?

Are you thinking about work but don't know where to start?

Are you worried about your finances?

Do you need help with childcare?

If you're a parent, this leaflet will tell you about some of the practical support you can get. It includes information on finding a job, childcare, training and financial help. It will help you choose what's right for you and your children.

We give some phone numbers and web addresses for helpful organisations throughout the leaflet. There is also a section called 'Useful contacts' at the end, which gives full contact details including textphone numbers, where we have them, for people with speech and hearing difficulties.

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Helping you into work

Starting work for the first time, going back to work or changing jobs can be good ways of meeting new people, making new friends and increasing your income.

You have lots of options when you are ready to work or change your working pattern. If you haven't worked for a while, you might want to spend some time getting used to being back in a work environment. Or, you might want to find training to help you get the right job.

Support and advice for you

One of the things you can do first is to get some advice from one of our personal advisers, who can discuss your situation and goals with you, and help you work out what's right for you, and for your children.

If you are having money worries, our advisers can check you're getting all the benefits you're entitled to and put you in touch with other organisations that can help. They can also help you find childcare, or put you in touch with nurseries and play-schemes.

If you are bringing up children on your own and claiming benefits, we can invite you to attend an event where we can share ideas with you about going back to work including childcare. If you are ready for work, we may be able to introduce you to employers with vacancies suitable for you.

If you are a lone parent entering employment after getting benefits, support is available to you in the first 6 months of starting work.

Work to suit your needs

You don't have to work full-time. Other options might suit you better when you have a child to care for.

Your personal adviser will do a 'Better off in work' calculation with you. They will start by confirming what benefits you're currently getting and adding up your weekly income. Then they will look at the amount you could be earning in a job you're interested in and the benefits you could still get, such as Housing Benefit. This will help you decide if a job is financially right for you. Most parents find that they are not only better off financially when they start work, but they get a better quality of life too.

Contact us for more information or to arrange to see a personal adviser. Visit www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk or you can find our phone number in your local phone book.

Help with finding a job

New Deal

New Deal aims to help you get a job if you are out of work. It will give you the chance to train, learn and do work experience so that you:

- get more confident
- get new skills
- can be worth more to people looking for staff, and
- can find and stay in work

There are a number of New Deal programmes including:

- New Deal for young people
- New Deal 25 plus
- New Deal 50 plus
- New Deal for disabled people
- New Deal for musicians
- New Deal for lone parents, and
- New Deal for partners

Depending on your circumstances, participation in some New Deal programmes is mandatory. Other New Deal programmes are entirely voluntary and, as long as you meet the programmes eligibility requirements, you can decide whether to take part or not. A Jobcentre Plus personal adviser will tell you about the New Deal programmes, how they can help you and what you must agree to do to participate.

New Deal for lone parents

New Deal for lone parents is a voluntary programme for people who are bringing up children on their own and are interested in working. If you're not working or working less than 16 hours a week, you may be able to join New Deal for lone parents.

New Deal for partners

If your partner is claiming benefit for you and you work less than 24 hours a week, you may be able to join New Deal for partners and get a whole range of help. It is voluntary, so you can choose whether or not you want to take part.

When you join New Deal for lone parents or New Deal for partners, your personal adviser will work with you to find a job that suits you and your situation. You may also be able to get help with your childcare costs. However, to get help with childcare costs while taking part in a government programme, the childcare you use while on that programme must be registered.

To find out more about New Deal, contact Jobcentre Plus by visiting www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk or you can find our addresses and numbers in your local phone book.

Where to look for job vacancies

There are lots of places where you can look for job vacancies. You could start by

Partner

We will treat you as a couple if you live with your husband, wife or civil partner, or if you live with someone as if they were your husband, wife or civil partner. We call this other person your partner.

searching our database of jobs, which you can find:

- at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
- by calling 0845 6060 234, and
- through Jobpoints in a Jobcentre (Jobpoints are easy-to-use touch screens that match your needs with job vacancies).

You could also:

- check the adverts in local and national newspapers
- use the internet to look for jobs online. If you do not have a computer at home your local library may have one
- visit the Directgov website www.direct.gov.uk to look for jobs
- check the notice board at your local supermarket, and
- ask your friends and family to look out for suitable vacancies.

Helping you apply for jobs

A personal adviser can help you compile a CV or there are lots of books which offer practical advice on writing your CV, filling in application forms and how to do well in interviews. Visit www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk or www.direct.gov.uk for other useful tips.

When you're putting together your CV (which sets out your education, job qualifications and work background), you may want to include the skills you've gained while looking

after your children. Skills like organisation, administration, managing your time and juggling priorities are useful in most jobs, and many employers will be interested in your life experience as well as in the jobs you may have done in the past.

You may be able to get free help with job applications at one of our programme centres. Many offer learning and training packages to improve your interview skills and phone techniques, and to develop your experience in how to research, apply for and get a job. To find out whether there's a centre near you and whether you are eligible to use its services, contact a personal adviser.

Getting a taste of work

'Work trial' is a programme that gives you the chance to try out a job with an employer for a short time. You'll carry on getting your benefits while you're on the trial, so it's a risk-free way of finding out if a job is right for you. If you are taking part in New Deal for lone parents or New Deal for partners, you may be able to get a training premium and help with childcare costs while you're on the work trial.

If you are offered a job at the end of your work trial and you accept it, this does not mean that all financial help will end, as you may be eligible for some benefits and tax credits while you are working.

Your working rights

Right to flexible working

If you have a child who is under 6 (or a disabled child who is under 18 years old), you may have the right to ask your employer to consider the option of flexible working or working part-time.

You have this right if you have been working for your employer for at least 26 weeks in a row at the time that you ask for flexible working. You only have the right to apply once every 12 months. The right covers both mothers and fathers.

If you do not have a child under 6 (or a disabled child under 18), you can still ask your employer for flexible working hours. They do not have to consider your request, but many employers support flexible working to keep good staff.

If you have the right to ask for flexible working, your employer must consider your request seriously. However, they can turn your request down on business grounds or they can suggest another flexible or part-time option which works better for them.

You need to bear in mind that, if your employer agrees to your request, this will permanently change your contract of employment.

To find out more visit

www.direct.gov.uk/employees or you can get free confidential advice from the Acas helpline on 0845 747 47 47.

Partner

We will treat you as a couple if you live with your husband, wife or civil partner, or if you live with someone as if they were your husband, wife or civil partner. We call this other person your partner.

Financial support to help you into work

If you have been on certain benefits (such as Jobseeker's Allowance) and you or your partner start full-time work, you may be able to get a job grant.

This is a one-off payment and you do not have to pay tax on it. You could get £250 if you are a lone parent or part of a couple with children.

If you have been claiming Income Support you may be able to get help towards paying for the interest on your mortgage. This can be paid for the first 28 days after you or your partner start full-time work.

Job grants and help towards your mortgage interest are paid automatically – you do not have to claim them. You must tell us as soon as you get a job.

Once you're in work, you may find that you qualify for Working Tax Credit, which could help you to hold on to more of your earnings and pay for childcare. We tell you more about this on page 17 of this leaflet.

In Work Credit

In Work Credit is a fixed tax-free payment, payable for up to 52 weeks on top of your earnings. It may be paid weekly to parents, who have a dependant child living in the household, have been getting certain benefits continually for 52 weeks and who start work of at least 16 hours a week.

If you are a parent and your partner is receiving Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support, In Work Credit may be payable if you start work of at least 24 hours a week and as a result your partner's claim for benefit ends.

Contact us for more information on In Work Credit and to see if you can claim it. Visit www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk or you can find our number in your phone book.

Training

Training for the future

Everybody has skills that they can bring to a job. But if it's been a while since you worked, or if you've been in the same job or type of work for some time, you might be worried that your skills are out of date. Training can help you to:

- develop your skills
- develop new skills, and
- get useful qualifications.

All of these will increase the range of jobs you can apply for. Some employers also give training after you start work.

We can help you decide what sort of training is best for you, and tell you about help with course fees, transport costs or the cost of looking after your children while you're training. If you are taking part in New Deal for lone parents or New Deal for partners you might also receive a weekly training allowance.

What sort of training can I do?

There is training available out there to suit every need. For example, you might need help to improve your basic skills (reading, writing, maths or English language).

Your local council will offer a wide range of part-time courses and evening classes for adults, such as courses in English language and computing. These are often available free if you are claiming benefits like Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support and Housing Benefit. You can find the contact details for your local council in your phone book or at www.direct.gov.uk under 'A-Z of local councils'.

You could also check your local college or university for study options, from vocational programmes (like NVQs) to degree-level courses.

Getting help to pay for training

If you and your personal adviser agree it as a part of your action plan, you might be eligible for support if you decide to do a training course. This might include help with the cost of course fees, help with paying for transport to the course or registered childcare. To qualify for this help you must identify what help you need and agree it with your adviser before you start the training.

learndirect

learndirect offers high-quality learning at a time and place that suits you. You choose what to learn and when to learn. And you can learn at your own pace.

Find out more at www.learndirect.co.uk or call **0800 101 901** for advice on thousands of courses from hundreds of providers

nationwide. In Scotland, you can visit www.learnndirectscotland.com or call 0808 100 9000.

Financial and practical support

Sometimes, it can be difficult making ends meet, and you may need extra financial help. You may need to claim benefits or tax credits to help you support yourself and your family, or help pay your rent or mortgage. You may also be able to get help with health costs, or with childcare.

Work focused interviews

You may be asked to attend a work focused interview where an adviser will tell you about the complete package of support that is available to help parents into work. If you receive an appointment for a work focused interview, you must attend when asked to do so or any claim for benefit that you make may be affected.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Jobseeker's Allowance is the main benefit for people who are out of work. If you are eligible, it is paid when you don't have a job and you are looking for work.

There are 2 types of Jobseeker's Allowance.

- The first is based on how much National Insurance you have paid in the last 2 tax years. We can pay you this for up to 182 days. It is called 'contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance'.

To make a claim

Phone:

0800 055 66 88

Textphone:

0800 023 48 88

Monday to Friday

8am to 6pm

Online:

www.dwp.gov.uk/eservice

- The other is based on your income and savings. This is called 'income-based Jobseeker's Allowance'.

To get Jobseeker's Allowance you must be actively looking for work and meet a number of conditions.

We have a leaflet which gives you more information about Jobseeker's Allowance. Visit www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk to see a copy of this leaflet or you can contact us for more information (see page 32 for contact details).

Income Support

If you are on a low income, or have no income, and have few savings, you may be able to get Income Support. You do not need to have paid National Insurance to claim it. You must be working less than 16 hours a week, or have a partner who is working less than 24 hours a week.

You may be able to claim Income Support if you are a lone parent. If you are part of a couple, you may be able to claim if you are unable to work because of sickness, you are disabled or registered blind, or because you are caring for someone with a disability.

If you are claiming Income Support, you should also make a claim for Child Tax Credit (see page 17).

If you get Income Support and are pregnant or have a child under 4 years old, you may also be able to get free milk, fresh fruit and vegetables and vitamins. There are details at www.healthystart.nhs.uk or call 0845 607 6823 for a claim form.

To find out more about tax credits

Phone:
0845 300 3900

Textphone:
0845 300 3909

Open daily 8am to 8pm

Online:
www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits

Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit

Tax credits are there to help people who work but are on a low income, and to help parents on a low income to make ends meet.

Working Tax Credit is there to help you if you work and are on a low income. The amount you get depends on a number of things, such as your yearly income and the number of hours you work.

Working Tax Credit can include help with paying for childcare. You could get back up to 80% of your eligible childcare costs, up to a weekly limit.

Child Tax Credit can help you if you are responsible for a child or young person. Whether you can get it and the amount you might get depend on a number of things, such as your household income and the number of children you have.

Child Benefit

Child Benefit is paid to the person responsible for looking after a child. It is not affected by your income, National Insurance contributions or savings.

You can receive it until your child reaches 16, and perhaps for longer if they are in full-time further education.

The rate of Child Benefit is reviewed every year and HM Revenue & Customs publish the new rates.

If you have any questions about Child Benefit, call HM Revenue & Customs. You can find the number in your local phone book. Or, phone the Child Benefit Centre on **0845 302 1444**.

Housing

Whether you rent or own your home, your local council can give you advice on housing issues, including how to find temporary housing if you need it.

If you are on a low income, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit can help towards your rent and council tax. You do not have to be getting other benefits to qualify.

For more information, or to apply for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit, contact your local council. Their contact details are in your local phone book or on the internet at www.direct.gov.uk under 'A-Z of local councils'.

If you qualify for Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Pension Credit, you may be able to get help towards paying the interest on your mortgage and other housing costs that are not covered

Help with heating or
insulating your home

In England or Wales,
call the Winter
Warmth Advice Line
0800 085 7000

In Scotland, call
Scottish Gas for
information.

Warm Deal
0800 316 6009

Central heating
programme
0800 316 1653

by Housing Benefit. You can find out more from us or The Pension Service (see the 'Useful contacts' section later in this leaflet).

If you own or privately rent your home, you may be able to get help with the costs of heating or insulation (or both).

Help in special situations

The Social Fund

If you are on a low income and faced with costs that are difficult to pay for out of your normal income, the Social Fund may be able to help.

The Social Fund can give you a payment, a grant or a loan to help with things like:

- items for the house
- clothes and footwear
- travel
- urgent costs to keep you and your family safe
- items for a new baby
- a funeral
- heating costs in very cold weather, and
- heating costs during the winter to people aged 60 or over.

We have a leaflet which gives you more details about the help you can get from the Social Fund. Visit www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk to see a copy of this leaflet or you can contact us for more information (see page 32 for our contact details).

If you are disabled, or caring for a disabled child

You may be able to get Disability Living Allowance if you or your child have a severe physical or mental disability, and as a result need personal care, or have trouble walking (or both).

If you are spending at least 35 hours a week caring for someone who is severely disabled (whether they are a child or an adult), you may be able to claim Carer's Allowance.

If you want to know more, phone the Benefit Enquiry Line on 0800 88 22 00 (textphone 0800 24 33 55), or visit www.direct.gov.uk

Adoption and foster care

If you are working and you adopt a child, you may also be able to take adoption leave and get Statutory Adoption Pay when the child comes to live with you.

You can get more information about this from HM Revenue & Customs. You can find the number of your nearest office in your local phone book. The Directgov website www.direct.gov.uk will give you more information on your rights as an adoptive parent under the section 'Parents'.

If you are thinking about adopting a child, or if you already have, Adoption UK provides advice and support at all stages of the process, and links to a range of

other adoption and fostering organisations. Find out more at www.adoptionuk.org

If you are a foster carer or are interested in fostering, The Fostering Network can help you. You can find out more at www.fostering.net or phone 0207 261 1884.

Unpaid leave to care for a young or disabled child

If you've been at work for a year or more, you may be entitled to take up to 13 weeks unpaid leave to look after a child under 5, or 18 weeks unpaid leave to look after a disabled child under 18. This is called 'parental leave'. Visit www.direct.gov.uk to find out more.

Maternity and paternity pay and leave

All new mothers who are in work have the right to maternity leave. You may also be able to get Statutory Maternity Pay or Maternity Allowance while you are off work.

New fathers who are in work may also be able to get Statutory Paternity Leave and pay.

Visit the Directgov website www.direct.gov.uk for more information about maternity and paternity pay, leave and benefits.

Work and childcare

If you're starting work or training, you may need to think about who will look after your children.

You may find that formal childcare isn't as expensive as you thought. Many people can receive help with the costs through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit.

Your local Families Information Service (formerly called the Children's Information Service) can tell you about local childcare, early education and other care and support services for children and parents.

Phone **0800 234 6346** or
Visit www.childcarelink.gov.uk for more information.

Children's centres provide information and offer access to services for families with young children under 5 years old.

Each centre offers a variety of services to cater for the needs of the community, but can include the following:

- childcare provision
- early education integrated with childcare
- encouragement and support for parents thinking about training or finding a new job
- ante-natal classes and baby clinics
- information and advice about breast-feeding, parenting and speech and language

- family support and outreach to parents
- drop in sessions for parents and children
- services for children with special needs and disabilities
- links with Jobcentre Plus
- links with voluntary agencies
- links with local schools.

You will find the contact details of your local children's centre in your phone book.

Divorce and separation

Citizens advice bureaus provide information on what to do when a relationship ends, including making arrangements about money and childcare. Visit www.adviceguide.org.uk or check the phone book for your local office.

One Parent Families/Gingerbread can also provide information for parents who have day-to-day care of children on what to do when a relationship ends. Visit www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk or phone their lone parent helpline on 0800 018 5026.

If you need advice from a solicitor who specialises in family law, Community Legal Advice can help you find a local legal adviser or solicitor. The service also provides free information, help and advice on a range of common issues. Visit www.clsdirect.org.uk or call 0845 345 4 345.

If you are already separated or divorced or your civil partnership has legally ended (dissolved) and you would like information about child maintenance for your children, contact Child Maintenance Options.

They can help parents who need to think about sorting out maintenance for their children. They will help you understand what options are available and can help you put maintenance arrangements in place. They can also help you to find out where to go to and who to speak to if there are other problems you need help to sort out, like debt or housing.

You can find out more at www.cmoptions.org or phone Child Maintenance Options on 0800 988 0988.

If someone dies

We can give you information on benefits you may be eligible for, including bereavement benefits which you may be able to get if you were married or in a civil partnership. Visit www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk or talk to one of our advisers.

If your partner is in prison

If your partner is in prison and they normally pay the rent, you may be able to get help with the cost of rent while they are in prison. You can find out more from one of our advisers.

You may be able to get financial help to visit your partner or a close relative in prison. Phone the Assisted Prison Visits Unit on **0845 300 1423**, or visit their website www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk.

Dealing with debt

If you're struggling with debts visit www.direct.gov.uk where you can find help and advice. Some local councils and independent advice centres give free advice on debt. Look in your local phone book or visit your local council's website.

Your health and your child's health

The National Health Service (NHS) provides a range of services to help keep you and your children healthy.

If you are getting:

- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support, or
- Pension Credit Guarantee Credit,

you are entitled to help, including NHS prescriptions, NHS dental treatment and some travel costs. If you are entitled to or named on an NHS tax credit exemption certificate you can also receive help. If you are on a low income, you may be able to get help with some health costs.

To find out more about help with health costs from the NHS, visit the website for the area where you live:

- England
www.dh.gov.uk/helpwithhealthcosts
- Wales
www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/healthinformation
- Scotland
www.scotland.gov.uk/publications

Health advice and information

NHS Direct is a confidential health advice and information phone service in England and Wales. You can call at any time of the day or night on **0845 46 47** if:

- you are feeling ill and are not sure what to do
- you would like information about an existing health problem, or
- you want details of local health services.

NHS 24 is a confidential health advice and information phone service in Scotland.

Phone: **0845 424 2424**

Immunisation

Immunisation (or vaccination) protects your children against diseases that can kill them or cause lasting damage to their health.

Talk to your doctor or health visitor, or visit www.immunisation.nhs.uk to find out more

about immunisation and when your children should be vaccinated.

Your child's education

Your child's education is important. Parentscentre is a website especially for parents and carers in England. It provides information, advice and support on a range of topics such as:

- choosing a school
- what and how your child is learning at school, and
- what you can do to help them.

Visit www.parentscentre.gov.uk to find out more.

For information on schools and education in Scotland, and advice on helping your child with their learning, you can visit the Parentzone website www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk.

If you want to know about education in Wales, the Welsh Assembly's website www.wales.gov.uk has a range of useful information.

Looking ahead and planning for the future

State Pension age may seem a long way off, but as you approach it you will have a number of options that will directly affect your finances. The sooner you start planning, the more likely it is that you will be financially secure in later life.

The State Pension

Did you know that there is no age at which you have to retire? All too often people assume that State Pension age is the age that they must retire, but you can carry on working and start claiming your State Pension, or you can put off claiming it and increase the amount you are entitled to receive (or get a lump-sum) when you do decide to claim.

The State Pension age is currently 60 for women and 65 for men. However, this is changing gradually from 2010 so that, by 2020, the earliest age that both men and women will be able to get their State Pension will be 65. Between 2024 and 2046, the State Pension age will go up again, in stages, from 65 to 68.

Finding out how much State Pension you'll be able to get is a good way to start planning for the future. If you will reach State Pension age on or before 5 April 2010 you can get a pension forecast application

form from www.thepensionsservice.gov.uk or phone the State Pension Forecasting Team on 0845 3000 168. This is used to work out how much State Pension you will get when you reach State Pension age.

Forecasts are not currently available for those reaching State Pension age on or after 6 April 2010.

Adding to your State Pension

The State Pension is made up of 2 parts – basic State Pension and additional State Pension, which is also known as the State Second Pension. Additional State Pension helps people build up extra pension income.

You can choose to put off (defer) claiming your State Pension and get a higher weekly State Pension when you do finally claim it, or you can choose a one-off lump-sum payment (you will have to pay tax on this amount).

If you are going into work, ask your employer if they have a company pension scheme and whether or not you can join it. If your employer does not provide a company pension scheme, or you do not want to join it, you could think about getting a stakeholder pension or personal pension. You can contribute to a stakeholder or personal pension scheme even if you are not working at the moment.

Visit the Directgov website www.direct.gov.uk for more information on State Pension deferral and a full explanation of what stakeholder and personal pensions are and how they work.

Home Responsibilities Protection

At the moment, if you do not work or are on a low income and you are looking after a child, you can protect your future State Pension by claiming Home Responsibilities Protection.

Home Responsibilities Protection means that you need to have fewer years of National Insurance contributions to get a basic State Pension if you are looking after a child under 16 and you are receiving Child Benefit for them.

From April 2010, National Insurance credits will replace Home Responsibilities Protection. This will mean that you get credited with National Insurance contributions for each week that you are getting Child Benefit for a child under 12 and you are not working or earning enough to pay National Insurance contributions. These credits will also count towards your additional State Pension.

For more detailed information about pensions, visit www.thepensionservice.gov.uk or call The Pension Service on 0845 60 60 265.

Useful contacts

This section includes the contact details of organisations that you may find useful. You can also look under 'Charitable and Voluntary Organisations' or 'Social Service and Welfare Organisations' in the Yellow Pages.

Jobcentre Plus

To contact us, visit
www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
or see our entry in the phone book.

To look for work

If you are looking for work, you can search our list of jobs online at
www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Or you can call us:

Phone: 0845 6060 234

Textphone: 0845 6055 255

Childcare

Care Commission

The Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (Care Commission) was set up to regulate and inspect Scottish care services.

Phone: 0845 603 0890

Website: www.carecommission.com

Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales

The Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales regulates childminders and other childcare

providers caring for children under 8 years old, as well as other types of care.

The phone numbers for their regional offices are on their website and in your local phone book.

Website: www.csiw.wales.gov.uk

Families Information Service (formerly the Children's Information service)

For national and local childcare information

Phone: 0800 234 6346

Website: www.childcarelink.gov.uk

In Scotland

Website: www.scottishchildcare.gov.uk

National Childminding Association

For details of registered childminders in your area of England and Wales

Phone: 0800 169 4486 (lines are open from 10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday)

Website: www.ncma.org.uk

Scottish Childminding Association

For details of registered childminders in your area in Scotland

Phone: 01786 449063 (lines are open from 1pm to 4.30 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays)

Website: www.childminding.org.uk

Sure Start

These are government schemes that bring together a range of policies and programmes delivering early education, childcare, health and family support.

Sure Start - England

Website: www.surestart.gov.uk

Sure Start - Scotland

Website:

www.scotland.gov.uk/surestartscotland

Cymorth - Wales

Contact your local Families Information Service for information on services in Wales

Website: www.wales.gov.uk

Advice on debt

National Debtline

This is a national helpline that provides free, confidential and independent advice on how to deal with debt and financial problems.

Phone: [0808 808 4000](tel:08088084000) (lines are open from 9am to 9pm, Monday to Friday, and from 9.30am to 1pm on Saturdays)

Website: www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Government

Assisted Prison Visits Unit

For information on help with the cost of travel when visiting a close friend or relative in prison.

Phone: 0845 300 1423

Textphone: 0845 304 0800

Lines are open from 10.15am to 11.45am and 2.15pm to 3.45pm, Monday to Friday.

Website: www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk

Benefit Enquiry Line for disabled people or carers

Phone: 0800 88 22 00

Textphone: 0800 24 33 55

Lines are open from 8.30am to 6.30pm, Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm on Saturdays.

Website: www.direct.gov.uk

Child Benefit helpline

For help and advice on Child Benefit claims

Phone: 0845 302 1444

Textphone: 0845 302 1474

Lines are open from 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week.

Website: www.hmrc.gov.uk/childbenefit

Child Maintenance Options

Child Maintenance Options will form part of the Child Maintenance Enforcement Commission which is a new child maintenance organisation from Summer 2008.

Phone: 0800 988 0988

Textphone: 0800 988 9888

Lines are open from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday and 9am to 4pm on Saturdays.

If English is not your first language, you can use your own interpreter or one that the Information and Support Service provide.

Website: www.cmoptions.org

Directgov

This is a website that offers the latest and widest range of public service information from the UK Government, as well as advice on charities and organisations that can provide support and advice for parents.

Website: www.direct.gov.uk

National Minimum Wage

With a few exceptions, all workers in the UK aged 16 or over are legally entitled to be paid a minimum amount an hour.

For information on the National Minimum Wage including the current rates:

Phone 0845 6000 678, or

Textphone 0845 915 3296.

Website: www.direct.gov.uk

Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

This is the government organisation responsible for registering formal childcare providers and inspecting schools in England. You can find the phone numbers of their regional offices on their website and in your local phone book.

Early years helpline: 0845 601 4771

Lines are open from 8.30am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Tax credits helpline

For information on Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit

Phone: 0845 300 900

Textphone 0845 300 3909

Lines are open from 8am to 8pm every day except Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day and Easter Sunday.

Website: www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits

The Pension Service

Phone: 0845 60 60 265

Textphone: 0845 60 60 285 or

Visit the website

www.thepensionerservice.gov.uk

Lines are open from Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm.

Scottish Government website

This is a website for people in Scotland that includes information on a range of topics.

Website: www.scotland.gov.uk

Welsh Assembly website

This is a website for people in Wales that includes information on a range of topics.

Website: www.wales.gov.uk

Health and wellbeing

NHS Direct

This is a confidential health advice and information service in England and Wales

Phone: [0845 46 47](tel:08454647)

Lines are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Website (if you live in England):

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Website (if you live in Wales):

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

NHS 24

This is a confidential health advice and information service in Scotland.

Phone: [0845 424 2424](tel:08454242424)

Lines are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Website: www.nhs24.com

NHS immunisation information

www.immunisation.nhs.uk

This is an NHS website of up-to-date information on vaccines, disease and immunisation.

Learning and training

Connexions

This is a service that provides confidential advice and support to people in England aged 13 to 19.

Phone: 0808 001 3219

Textphone: 0800 096 8336

Lines are open 8am to 2am, 7 days a week.

Website: www.connexions-direct.com

If you live in Scotland, contact Careers Scotland

Phone: 0845 850 2502

Lines are open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Website: www.careers-scotland.org.uk

If you live in Wales, contact Careers Wales.

Phone: 0800 100 900

Website: www.careerswales.com

learndirect

learndirect offers hundreds of courses and runs a network of learning centres.

learndirect in England and Wales

Phone: 0800 101 901

In England, lines are open 7am to 11pm, 7 days a week. In Wales, lines are open 9am to 9pm, Monday to Friday, and 10am to 6pm at weekends.

Website: www.learndirect.co.uk

learndirect Scotland

Phone: 0808 100 9000

Lines are open 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday, and 10am to 6pm at weekends.

Website: learndirectscotland.com

Careers advice service

learndirect careers advice is now called the Careers advice service.

Phone: 0800 100 900

Lines are open 8am to 10pm, 7 days a week.

Website: www.careersadvice.direct.gov.uk

Call charges

Calls to 0800 or 0808 numbers are free from BT land lines but you may have to pay if you use another phone company, a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad.

From September 2008, calls to 0845 numbers from BT land lines should cost no more than 4p per minute with a 7p call set up charge. You may have to pay more if you use another phone company or a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad.

Calls from mobile phones can cost up to 40p per minute, so check the cost of calls with your service provider.

Textphones

Where textphone numbers are provided, these are for people who find it hard to speak or hear clearly.

If you do not have a textphone, some libraries or citizens advice bureaus may have one.

Textphones do not receive text messages from mobile phones.

Important information about this leaflet

This leaflet is only a guide and does not cover every circumstance. We have done our best to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct as of October 2008.

It is possible that some of the information is oversimplified, or may become inaccurate over time, for example because of changes to the law.

Jobcentre Plus is committed to applying the principles of equal opportunities in its programmes and services.

Produced by Jobcentre Plus, part of the Department for Work and Pensions

ISBN 978-1-84763-210-4

DWP 1030 | v1.0 (October 2008)

We would like your views on this leaflet.

Please answer the questions below, tear off this slip and return it to the freepost address over the page. Your answers are completely confidential and will be used to improve the leaflet.

How helpful was this leaflet in answering your questions?

very quite not very not at all

How easy was it to find the information you required?

very quite not very not at all

Are there any pages of this leaflet you would improve in any way?
If so, which pages and how?

Do you think you will refer to this leaflet again in the future?

yes no

Do you have any other comments about this leaflet?

You do not have to fill in this part, but it helps us to understand more about our customers.

Are you: male female

What is your age? ____

What is your postcode? _____

This form should only be used to comment on the leaflet. Replies go to a company that provides us with reports about the forms they get, and we only use them to get a better idea of how to improve. The Department for Work and Pensions cannot answer individual questions regarding benefits or allowances asked on this form.

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