

4. MONEY MATTERS



Caring for someone can be expensive, so it is important to make sure you are receiving all the income, benefits and discounts you are entitled to. There is a wide range of benefits available, but we have focussed on the ones most relevant to you as a carer. Getting advice about your entitlements and help with form completion is advisable, as most benefit claim forms are lengthy and can be complex. To qualify for most benefits you must satisfy certain rules about residence and presence in Britain, and any claims may be affected by your immigration status.

Information and Advice

All carers should have a benefits check to find out whether you and the person you are caring for are entitled to any financial support. The Croydon Welfare Rights Team (0800 731 5920) provides telephone advice to Croydon residents on all aspects of benefits. It also provides a comprehensive casework service to families who have a child with a disability, people who are over 60, and those who live in certain areas of the borough. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) runs a Benefit Enquiry Line (0800 88 22 00) that can answer questions on carer and disability benefits, send out claim packs and help with completing application forms. For people aged 60 and over, the Pension Service for Croydon (020 8687 3641) is able to do benefit checks and support people with any resulting benefit applications. For contact details of other organisations that may be able to help with benefits and finances see chapter one.

Benefits for People with a Disability

There are three main benefits for people with a disability or illness.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is for people aged 0-64 who have an illness or disability that affects their mobility and/or their ability to carry out personal care tasks unaided. The claimant must have had the illness or disability for at least three months and expect to have it for at least another six months. DLA has two components: care and mobility; each is paid at varying rates depending on the level of the disability. There are separate claim forms for children aged 15 and under.

Attendance Allowance (AA) is for people aged 65 or over who have an illness or disability that affects their ability to carry out personal care tasks unaided. The claimant must have had the illness or disability for at least six months. AA is paid at two rates depending on the level of the disability.

Payments of AA and DLA will normally stop after the person receiving them has spent four weeks (12 weeks for children under 16) in a hospital or care home. Those who participate in the Motability scheme (see also chapter six) may be able to retain the mobility aspect of their DLA for the duration of their Motability agreement. To claim DLA or AA contact the DWP, Benefit Enquiry Line on 0800 88 22 00.

Special Rules for people who have a terminal illness mean that if a claimant is not expected to live for more than six months their claim will be fast-tracked and they will automatically qualify for the higher rate care component of DLA or higher rate AA. A doctor will need to complete a DS1500 form (doctors have a supply of these), which needs to be sent in with the claim form.

People may be able to claim Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) if they have an illness or disability that affects their ability to work, and they are over 16 but under state pension age, unemployed/self employed, or cannot get/are no longer receiving statutory sick pay. As of October 2008 ESA replaced Incapacity Benefit (IB), although people already receiving IB will continue to do so. ESA claimants are divided into two groups:

- The Work-Related Activity Group is for people assessed as being able to undertake some form of work-related activity.

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- The Support Group is for people assessed as being unable to undertake any form of work-related activity. This group receives a higher rate of ESA.

To claim ESA contact Jobcentre Plus on 0800 055 6688 or apply online at www.dwp.gov.uk/eservice.

The Disability Premium (DP) is available to people who are aged 16-59, who receive a means-tested benefit such as income support or income-related ESA and also receive DLA or another specified disability benefit. Those who receive the higher rate care component of DLA will be entitled to the Enhanced Disability Premium (EDP) as well. Recipients of DP who go into hospital can continue to be paid the DP and/or the EDP for up to 52 weeks.

People aged 16 and over who are receiving AA or the middle or higher rate care component of DLA, who technically live alone and no one receives carer's allowance for looking after them (an underlying entitlement does not count) may be entitled to the Severe Disability Premium (SDP) – this can be paid in addition to the DP and the EDP. Those who go into hospital will be paid SDP only until their DLA or AA is withdrawn (four weeks). These premiums will be automatically added to payments of the qualifying benefits, but it is worth checking this with the agency who pays the benefit.

Benefits for Carers

Carer's Allowance (CA) is available if you are aged 16 or over and care, for at least 35 hours a week, for someone who is receiving AA or the middle or higher rate care component of DLA. You do not have to be a relative or live with the person you are caring for, but you must not be in full-time education (over 21 hours a week) or earning over £95 a week (amount correct at time of printing), after some allowable deductions such as tax and national insurance. CA overlaps with certain benefits (such as state pension) leading to what is called an "underlying entitlement", but no actual payment of CA. Other benefits (such as income support) will be reduced by the amount of CA you receive. It is always worth claiming CA even if it does not increase your income as it may entitle you to other benefits such as the carer premium.

You can only receive CA once, even if you care for more than one person. If two people care for someone, only one of them is entitled to claim even though

both are carers. CA can be backdated for three months, so you should claim within three months of the person you care for being awarded AA or DLA. If the person you care for loses their entitlement to AA or DLA, then you will no longer be eligible for CA. If you, the carer, are admitted to hospital then you will continue to be paid CA for 12 weeks. Be aware that if you are awarded CA the person you care for will no longer be entitled to the Severe Disability Premium. To claim CA contact the DWP Benefit Enquiry Line on 0800 88 22 00.

If you receive CA (or have an underlying entitlement) and also receive income support or pension credit, you will be eligible for the carer premium. If you are also caring for a child who is registered blind or receives DLA you will be eligible for the disabled child premium. These premiums will be automatically added to payments of the above benefits.

National Insurance (NI) credits protect your entitlement to a state pension and may help you qualify for benefits in the future. You are automatically awarded NI credits for each week you receive CA. Home Responsibilities Protection (HRP) protects your basic state pension rights for each tax year when you care for someone for at least 35 hours a week and that person is receiving AA or the middle or higher rate care component of DLA, but you are not receiving CA. To apply for HRP contact the DWP Benefit Enquiry Line on 0800 88 22 00 and request claim form CF411 or you can apply online at www.direct.gov.uk.

Benefits for People on a Low Income

You may be entitled to Income Support (IS) if your income does not meet the minimum level set by the government. To claim IS you must be aged 16-59 and either working less than 16 hours a week or be exempt from signing on for work due to a disability or caring/parental responsibilities. To claim IS contact Jobcentre Plus on 0800 055 6688 or apply online at www.dwp.gov.uk/eservice.

You may be entitled to the guarantee element of Pension Credit (PC) if you, or your partner, are aged 60 or over and your income does not meet the minimum level set by the government. To claim contact the Pension Service on 0800 99 1234.

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Housing Benefit (HB) can help you meet your rent payments and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) can help you pay your council tax. You can claim HB or CTB if you are working (and on a low income) or claiming certain benefits such as income support. HB and CTB are affected by savings and are not available if you are a full-time student. To claim contact the Council Tax and Benefits Customer Contact Centre on 020 8726 7000.

You may be entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) if you are 18 or over, unemployed (or working less than 16 hours a week), not in full-time education, under state pension age and are capable of, and actively looking for, full-time employment. If you are a young carer (aged 16 or 17) and have left school you can be paid JSA on a discretionary basis if you can prove you will suffer severe hardship without it. In this instance JSA will normally be paid for a maximum of eight weeks. To claim JSA contact Jobcentre Plus on 0800 055 6688 or apply online at www.dwp.gov.uk/eservice.

Working Tax Credit (WTC) is available if you or your partner are on a low income and are:

- 16 or over and working 16 or more hours a week and either have a disability or are responsible for one or more children,
- 25 or over and work at least 30 hours a week,
- 50 or over and returning to work for at least 16 hours a week after receiving certain benefits.

Child Tax Credit (CTC) is available if you are 16 or over, your income is within certain limits and you are responsible for at least one child who is under 16 (or 19 if in full-time education). CTC payments increase if your child is receiving DLA.

You can request a tax credits claim pack from the Tax Credit Helpline on 0845 300 3900 or apply online at www.taxcredits.inlandrevenue.gov.uk.

Council Tax

If you live in a property that is the main residence of an adult or child who is “substantially and permanently disabled” and the property either has an additional room needed by and mainly used by the person with the disability, or enough space for that person to use a wheelchair indoors, you may be entitled to have your existing council tax band lowered to the band below and this will reduce your bill. This is called the Disabled Band Reduction Scheme.

Council tax bills are based on two adults living in a property - properties with a single occupant receive a 25 per cent discount, empty properties a 50 per cent discount. Certain carers and people who are severely mentally impaired are not counted for council tax purposes. You can be not counted if you spend at least 35 hours a week caring for someone who lives with you, and that person receives higher rate AA or the higher rate care component of DLA. You cannot be the partner of the person with the disability, or their parent if they are aged under 18; if more than one person in the household meets this criteria they can be not counted as well. If the person you care for is severely mentally impaired, and they live with you, they can be not counted if they have a medical certificate from a doctor confirming their disability and are receiving certain benefits.

If you have been eligible for either of these schemes in the past, but did not apply, your claim should be backdated to when you were first eligible. Properties solely occupied by people who are severely mentally impaired, and properties left empty because the occupant has moved elsewhere to care for someone, or be cared for, are all exempt from council tax. Contact the Council Tax and Benefits Customer Contact Centre on 020 8726 7000 for more information or to apply for a discount.

Financial Hardship and Debt

The social fund makes one-off payments, loans and grants to those on means-tested benefits or those on low incomes and in crisis. The social fund also administers Sure Start maternity grants, cold weather and winter fuel payments and can help cover the costs of the funeral of a close friend or relative. The social fund is administered by Jobcentre Plus (Social Fund) (0845 608 8661).

If you are experiencing problems with debt then you may want to contact

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National Debtline (0808 808 4000, www.nationaldebtline.co.uk) or the Consumer Credit Counselling Service (0800 138 1111, www.cccs.co.uk). Both these organisations can offer information and practical advice on dealing with debt.

There are grant-giving organisations that may be able to help if you are struggling financially. The Directory of Social Change (08450 777 707, www.dsc.org.uk) produces *A Guide to Grants for Individuals in Need*, which lists many such organisations. However the guide is expensive so you may want to view it at Croydon central library or visit www.turn2us.org.uk or www.guidestar.org.uk - both of which give information on charities and grants. Some of the organisations listed in chapter one may be able to offer assistance with grant applications and you may also find our *Grants* factsheet helpful.

Discounts and Reductions

It is worth making the most of any opportunities you have to get discounts as a result of your caring status. Carers can often get free or discounted entry to tourist attractions; proof of the disability of the person you care for may be required. People who are blind can apply for a 50 per cent reduction on the costs of their television licence. If your child is blind, you can register the licence in their name and also get the reduction. You only need one license per household, so if the person you care for is entitled to any concessions, you can register in their name. For more details, contact TV Licensing on 0844 800 6790, or go to www.tvlicensing.co.uk.

Managing Someone Else's Money

If you need to take charge of some or all of the financial affairs of the person you care for, there are various options open to you. If the person currently has "mental capacity" (the ability to make one's own decisions) and only wants to give someone authority to access specific accounts they could set up a third party mandate - a written instruction to a bank giving you access to their account. If they have a Post Office card account they can apply for someone else to be the Permanent Agent, giving him or her their own card and PIN. If they choose to give someone greater authority over their affairs they can set up an Ordinary Power of Attorney. If the person you care for wants someone to

be able to act for them once they have lost capacity they will need to set up a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA).

An LPA must be created while the person still has mental capacity, and appoints someone to act on his or her behalf once they can no longer make decisions. More than one person can be granted LPA and they can act singly or jointly. There are two types of LPA. A property and affairs LPA gives someone authority to make decisions about financial affairs. A personal welfare LPA gives someone authority to make decisions about health and personal welfare. Enduring Powers of Attorney (EPA) have now been replaced by LPAs (under the Mental Capacity Act 2005) and can no longer be set up, but an EPA created before 1 October 2007 is still valid. Before it can be used an EPA or LPA has to be witnessed and registered with the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG); a fee applies. If someone loses capacity without setting up an EPA or LPA, it may be necessary to go to the Court of Protection to appoint a deputy to act on his or her behalf. Applying to the Court of Protection is more expensive and complicated than setting up an LPA. The OPG (0845 330 2900, www.publicguardian.gov.uk) can give information and advice on EPAs, LPAs and the Mental Capacity Act, and support those making decisions for someone else.

Wills and Funerals

Making a will is important because it can save family and friends the distress of legal entanglements after a death. If you are a carer it is even more important to make a will so that if the person you care for outlives you, they will continue to be provided for in the way you would prefer. Even in the case of straightforward wills it is recommended that you use a solicitor to ensure everything is done correctly.

There are useful leaflets available free from the Law Society (0870 3333 084, www.lawsociety.org.uk) which publishes *Your Guide to Making a Will* and Community Legal Advice (Helpline: 0845 345 4 345, Leaflet Line: 0845 3000 343, www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk) which publishes *Wills and Probate: Dealing with Someone's Affairs When They Die*.

The Mencap Wills and Trusts Team (020 7696 6925, www.mencap.org.uk/willsandtrusts) provides information and advice to people

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with a learning disability and their carers. Free support includes access to a solicitor for advice, seminars across the country, a recommended solicitor directory and publications including *Leaving Money by Will*. Age Concern Croydon (020 8680 5450, www.ageconcerncroydon.org.uk) offers a free wills service on a monthly basis - a solicitor is available for half hourly appointments to answer questions about will-making; these slots must be booked in advance.

If the person you care for dies and you need financial support to meet the costs of the funeral there are schemes that may be able to help. The deceased may have a pre-paid funeral plan or insurance policy, which would cover the costs, or they may be entitled to a death-in-service payment (if they were working) or help from an employer's benevolent fund. If you are on certain benefits you may be able to get a funeral payment from the social fund. If the person you were caring for was in the armed forces, you may also be able to request help from organisations such as the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) (0845 1300 975, www.ssafa.org.uk). Sometimes the hospital where the person died will arrange and pay for a simple funeral. If the person did not die in an NHS hospital, and you are not eligible for the social fund, Croydon Council may help organise and fund the funeral. Contact Croydon Council on 020 8726 6000 and ask for the Funerals Officer. If you are having problems finding the money to pay for the funeral, talk to the funeral director who may agree to be paid by installments. The leaflet *What To Do After A Death In England and Wales* is available from Croydon Register Office on 020 8726 6300.

When Your Caring Role Ends

If your caring role comes to an end because the person you cared for has died, or your caring role is now less intense than it was because the person you care for is living elsewhere, you may have less money coming in and be worried about your finances. It is worth checking to see if you are entitled to any benefits, such as bereavement benefits, which could increase your income. If you were receiving CA you will continue to do so for eight weeks after the person you cared for has died, or four weeks after they move into a care home, provided that you still meet the other conditions. Carers UK publishes *When Caring Comes to an End* which you can request by contacting their publications line on 0845 241 0963 or visiting www.carersuk.org. Contact us if you would like information about sources of bereavement support and counselling.

Key Contacts	
Age Concern Croydon	020 8689 5450
Community Legal Advice	0845 345 4345
Consumer Credit Counselling Service	0800 138 1111
Council Tax & Benefits Customer Contact Centre	020 8726 7000
DWP Benefit Enquiry Line	0800 88 22 00
Jobcentre Plus	0800 055 6688
National Debtline	0808 808 4000
Pension Service	020 8687 3641
Jobcentre Plus (Social Fund)	0845 608 8661
Tax Credit Helpline	0845 300 3900
Croydon Welfare Rights Team	0800 731 5920
If you cannot find what you are looking for please contact the Carers' Information Service on 020 8649 9339, option 1.	