

Maximising income

Here at the Citizens Advice Service we are aware how much social isolation and loneliness can affect people. We also understand that a big contributor to this can be lack of spare income which limits the amount people can spend on social activities.

There are lots of ways you can increase your household income and this toolkit is to make you aware of all the options that are available to you.

Benefits

You might be able to claim benefits if you're either:

- on a low income
- looking for work
- sick or disabled
- a carer
- a parent or guardian

Benefits for people aged over 50 can include;

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a means-tested benefit that was introduced in the UK in April 2013 to support working age people, so those under State Pension age. It replaces 6 existing means-tested benefits known as legacy benefits. These are: Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Housing Benefit.

If you currently receive any of these benefits, you do not need to do anything. However, any new applicants for these benefits, or people receiving these benefits who have had a change in circumstances, are expected to apply for Universal Credit.

If you're entitled to claim, Universal Credit needs to be applied for and managed online using the [Apply for Universal Credit website](#). For more information on claiming Universal Credit, visit the [Gov.uk your claim journey](#) website.

New style ESA (Employment and support Allowance)

This is a benefit for people who have limited capability for work due to an illness or disability and are not in receipt of Statutory Sick Pay. You must be over 16 years old and under State Pension age. This is not means tested but is dependent on your National Insurance Contributions and can be paid for 12 months.

[Call the Universal Credit helpline - 0800 328 5644 \(choose option 2\)](#)

New Style JSA (Job seekers Allowance)

This is a benefit for people who are actively seeking employment and are capable of work. You must be under State Pension age to claim this benefit and in the majority of circumstances over 18 years old. This is not means tested but dependent on National Insurance Contributions and ignores income and capital of you and your partner for 6 months.

Call the [Job Centre Plus helpline - 0800 055 6688](tel:08000556688)

Pension Credit

Pension Credit is a means tested benefit for people who are on a low income who have reached Pension Credit age. This benefit tops up your weekly income to £173.75 a week if you are single and £265.20 a week for a couple. Claiming this benefit can also lead to entitlement or increased entitlement to other means tested benefits. (Figures correct as of April 2020).

Call the [Pension Credit helpline on 0800 991234](tel:0800991234)

Attendance Allowance

This is a benefit for people who are over State Pension age who are either physically or mentally disabled and require either assistance or supervision with their personal care needs or require supervision or support to ensure that they are safe.

It is available to people who live on their own or with others and is not dependent on whether the assistance required is being given. It is a non means tested benefit and therefore income and capital is ignored.

If you are in receipt of this benefit it can lead to entitlement or increased entitlement to means tested benefits. This benefit could increase your income by either £59.70 a week if you have either day time or night time needs, or £89.15 a week if you have both and can lead to entitlement or increased entitlement to some means tested benefits. (Figures correct as of April 2020).

Call the [Attendance Allowance claim line on 0800 7310122](tel:08007310122)

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) (which is slowly replacing Disability Living Allowance) is a benefit for people who are between 16 and State Pension age who due to an

illness or disability have additional care needs. This is a non means tested benefit and therefore income and capital is ignored.

There are 2 parts to this benefit, the daily living component and the mobility component. This benefit could increase your income anywhere between £23.20 and £151.40 a week. Claiming this benefit can lead to entitlement or increased entitlement to other means tested benefits. (Figures correct as of April 2020).

To make a claim call the [Personal Independence Payment claim line on 0800 9172222](tel:08009172222)

Carers Allowance

This is available for people who provide care of more than 35 hours a week to someone who has an illness or disability. The person that you care for has to be in receipt of Attendance Allowance, the middle or higher rate of the care component for Disability Living Allowance or the Daily Living element of Personal Independence Payment. The person claiming Carer's Allowance is not able to earn more the £123 per week and the benefit is paid at £67.25 a week. If you are in receipt of State Pension you will not get Carers Allowance but you will get Carers Allowance Addition which can increase any other means tested benefits you receive. (Figures correct as of April 2020).

Claim online or call [Carers Allowance on 0800 7310297](tel:08007310297)

Housing Benefit

This is available to assist with rental costs for people who are on a low income. This benefit is means tested and takes into consideration income and capital.

(This benefit cannot be claimed by new claimants unless they are in receipt of the State Pension or the severe disability premium otherwise Housing costs are included in a Universal Credit claim).

Contact your Local Council ([ELDC](tel:01507601111)) on 01507 601111

Council Tax Support

This is administered by your local Council and designed to assist people with their Council Tax bill if they are on a low income. This benefit can vary depending on where you live. It is means tested and takes into consideration your income and capital. It is available to people who live in rental properties and to home owners.

You can also ask to pay your Council Tax bill over 12 month rather than 10 months to reduce the monthly cost.

Severe Mental Impairment exemption - If you have any mental health issues including Alzheimer's and Dementia and are also in receipt of a health benefit you may be eligible for the Severe Mental impaired exemption from your Council Tax bill.

Disabled band reduction scheme - You may be eligible for the scheme if you live in a larger property than you would need if you or another occupant were not disabled.

You'll have to show that you've either:

- an extra bathroom, kitchen or other room that you need for the disabled person
- extra space inside the property for using a wheelchair

The property must be the main home of at least 1 disabled person. This can be an adult or a child - it does not have to be the person responsible for paying the Council Tax.

Contact your Local Council ([ELDC](#)) on 01507 601111

Benefit Premiums

Disability premiums are extra amounts of money added to your:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)/(UC)
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) /(UC)
- Housing Benefit
- Pension Credit
- Universal Credit

Any money you get is added to your benefit payments automatically so you usually do not have to apply for a disability premium.

If you need further help or a benefit check call into your local Citizens Advice or call Adviceline on 0300 3309 034

Employment

Tax codes and rebates

If you are employed or receive a Private pension you will have a tax code, it may look like an innocuous set of digits, but your tax code can have a big impact on your finances. Every year, many people are hit by errors – and some are due £1,000s back. Use the [Money Saving expert Tax Code Calculator](#) to check you're on the right tax code, and read their guide for how to handle underpaid and overpaid tax.

You also might pay less tax if:

- you're married or in a civil partnership
- you're registered blind
- you spend money on things that are essential for your job

Tax Help for Older People is a charitable service providing free, independent and expert help and advice for older people on lower incomes who cannot afford to pay for professional tax advice.

Tax Help number 01308 488066

Minimum wage

Check you are being paid the National living wage (p/h) for your age.

- £8.72 for over 25 year old
- £8.20 for 21-24 year olds
- £6.45 for 18-20 year olds
- £4.55 for Under 18s
- £4.15 for Apprentices

(Figures correct as of April 2020)

If you need further help call into your local Citizens Advice or call Adviceline on 0300 3309 034

Utilities

Energy – Gas and Electric

Check **Uswitch** and make sure you are receiving the best deal/ Tariff (check if you are still in contract as there may be an exit fee for leaving before this time).

Warm home Discount - You could get £140 off your electricity bill for winter 2020 to 2021 under the Warm Home Discount Scheme.

The money is not paid to you - it's a one-off discount on your electricity bill, you may be able to get the discount on your gas bill instead if your supplier provides you with both gas and electricity. Contact your supplier to find out.

The discount will not affect your Cold Weather Payment or Winter Fuel Payment.

There are 2 ways to qualify for the Warm Home Discount Scheme:

- you get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit - known as the 'core group'
- you're on a low income and meet your energy supplier's criteria for the scheme - known as the 'broader group'

How you apply for the Warm Home Discount Scheme depends on how you qualify for the discount.

You can still qualify for the discount if you use a pre-pay or pay-as-you-go electricity meter.

Anglian Water Tariffs

WaterSure - This is for metered homes where you may be experiencing particular hardship and need to use large amounts of water, due to health issues etc. It has a higher fixed charge than the Standard tariff but no charge for the volume of water used.

LITE - A Low Income Tariff for Eligible (LITE) households supports you if you have a low disposable income and are struggling to pay your water bill. This helps by discounting your water charges by up to 80%.

If you need further help call into your local Citizens Advice or call Adviceline on 0300 3309 034

Housing

If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (Housing cost element) then a Discretionary Housing Payment can provide extra money to meet your housing costs.

These payments can help people who are struggling with housing costs as a result of the following welfare reforms:

- Benefit Cap
- Spare Room Subsidy
- Local Housing Allowance
- Universal Credit

Payments are short term, and they will need to know that you are looking for help to manage your money and prioritise rent.

Contact your Local Council ([ELDC](#)) on [01507 601111](#)

Non dependant deductions

You may be reluctant to ask for money from any grown up children that live with you, but you may be having an amount deducted from your Housing Benefit, Housing costs or Council Tax Support.

The deduction is made on the assumption that the non- dependant should make a contribution to your housing and council tax costs. The deduction is made whether or not a contribution is actually made.

If you need further help or a benefit check call into your local Citizens Advice or call Adviceline on 0300 3309 034

Debts

No debt problems are unsolvable. It might not be easy or quick, but there's always a route. And the earlier you deal with them, the easier they are to deal with. There are different ways to deal with problem debt. Which one is right for you depends on whether you're in debt crisis or if you have worrying or large debts.

For free debt advice call into your local Citizens Advice or call Adviceline on 0300 3309 034

National Debtline – 0808 808 4000

Debt advice foundation – 0800 622 6151

Payplan – 0800 280 2816

Personal Pensions

If you're over 55 and have a personal pension

You might be able to take some money from your pension savings to help pay for essential costs, or to pay off your debts.

Taking money from your pension will mean you've less income when you retire. If you're getting benefits it could also affect your claim.

You should get financial advice before taking any money from your pension savings - you'll have to pay. Check how to find a financial adviser - they can tell you which option is best for you.

You can also get free guidance on your pension options from [Pension Wise](#). They'll explain the different options so you can decide which is best for you.

Charitable grants and Loans

Many charities offer non-repayable grants to help individuals on low incomes. To be eligible you have to meet their particular rules and these may be based on your location, age, gender, current or past jobs or health condition.

Use the [Turn2us website](#) to complete a grant search.

If you need further help call into your local Citizens Advice or call Adviceline on 0300 3309 034

