

Benefits for new refugees

Have you recently received a decision on your asylum claim and been granted leave to remain in the UK? If so, any money you were getting from the Home Office will stop within 28 days. If you still need some financial help you may be able to claim benefits instead. Benefits are money that can be paid to you by the government depending on your circumstances. This leaflet tells you what benefits you may be able to claim and what to do if you are having problems getting paid.

This leaflet is for people who have been granted *Refugee Status*, *Indefinite Leave to Remain*, *Humanitarian Protection* or *Discretionary Leave* – as long as one of these applies to you, you have the same rights to benefits as UK nationals.

What benefits can I claim?

If you are able to work

You claim *Jobseeker's Allowance*; you must be looking for work and ready to start.

If you are unable to work

If you are a lone parent with a child aged under 7 (or under 5 from October 2011), or are looking after a disabled person, you may be able to claim *Income Support*. If you are ill or disabled you may be able to claim *Employment and Support Allowance*; you must have been given a certificate by your doctor and undergo a medical test.

If you have children

You should claim *Child Tax Credit* and *Child Benefit* for any children you look after, or young people up to the age of 19 who are still in school or similar. You can claim *Child Tax Credit* and *Child Benefit* whether you are working or not. The amount of *Child Tax Credit* you get will depend on how much other money you have.

If you are working

If you are on a low wage you may be able to claim *Working Tax Credit*. To claim, you must be working 16 or more hours a week and either

- have children, or
- be disabled, or
- be over 50 and starting work after 6 months on benefits, or
- (from April 2011) be over 60

If none of these apply to you, you might still be able to claim if you are over 25 and are working 30 hours or more per week.

If you are aged 60 or over

You may be able to claim *Pension Credit*. You are not required to look for work. From April 2010 the exact age at which you can claim has been gradually increasing and is intended to reach 66 in April 2020.

If you are paying rent and council tax

You may be able to claim *Housing Benefit* and *Council Tax Benefit* to help with these. You can claim these whether you are working or not. The amount you get will depend on what other money you have, the type of accommodation you live in and who else lives with you.

When to claim

Normally, you will only be paid from the date you make your claim. So, it is very important to claim as soon as possible after you get the letter telling you that you have been given leave to remain.

When you claim benefits you will have to supply information along with your claim. You will be asked to show the letter granting you leave to remain and a National Insurance Number. If you have been getting help from the Home Office you will be asked for a NASS 35. If you do not have all the information needed, claim straight away anyway and send in the information as soon as you can – otherwise you might lose out.

If there is a delay in getting the information you need make sure you tell the office dealing with your claim about the delay, otherwise your claim could be closed. It is a good idea to make a note of any phone calls you make about this and keep a copy of any letters you write in case there are any problems later.

Where to claim

To claim *Jobseeker's Allowance*, *Income Support* or *Employment and Support Allowance* contact Jobcentre Plus on 0800 055 6688. Usually, they will complete the claim forms over the phone and you will be given an interview at your local Jobcentre Plus office. To claim *Pension Credit*, call the Pensions Service on 0800 99 1234.

You claim *Working Tax Credit* and *Child Tax Credit* on one form. If you are making a claim for benefits at your local Jobcentre Plus office they can help you make a claim for Tax Credits at the same time. Otherwise, you can claim by phoning the Tax Credits Helpline on 0845 300 3900. *Tax Credits* and *Child Benefit* are paid by Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC).

To claim *Child Benefit* phone 0845 302 1444.

To claim *Housing Benefit* and *Council Tax Benefit* you must contact your Local Council. You can find their details in the phone book or your Local Council website.

What if I am left without any money while my claim is being decided?

If you are left without any money you may be able to get a *Crisis Loan*. When your benefit claim is decided you will have to pay this back out of your benefit.

If you live in Glasgow, Forth Valley, Tayside, Fife, Lanarkshire, East Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh, Lothian or the Borders phone: 0800 587 6716. If you live elsewhere in Scotland phone: 0800 328 3036.

The phone is very busy and it is difficult to get through so keep trying. If you cannot get through, in an emergency, you should go to your local Jobcentre Plus office and tell them you want to apply for a *Crisis Loan*.

You may also be able to get an *Interim Payment* of benefit while you are waiting. However these are usually only paid if you have already provided all the information needed. To ask for an *Interim Payment* phone Jobcentre Plus (see above).

In an emergency, you can also go to your local social work department and ask for help.

If you do not have any money for your children and there is a delay in getting payment of your *Child Tax Credit* you can go to your local HMRC Enquiry Centre and ask them to make an emergency payment while you are waiting. However, if they pay you too much you may have to pay the money back. You can find their address in the phone book.

Is there any other help I can get?

As well as the benefits described above, there are others you might be able to claim. Some of these are described below. To find out more seek further advice (see below).

If you are setting up home you may be able to claim a *Community Care Grant* to help with this. This is a single payment which you do not have to pay back. If you live in Glasgow, Forth Valley, Tayside, Fife, Lanarkshire, East Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh, Lothian or the Borders phone: 0845 608 8763. If you live elsewhere in Scotland phone: 0845 608 8629.

If you have been granted *Refugee Leave* or *Humanitarian Protection* you may be able to get an *Integration Loan*. This is a single payment which will have to be paid back, and repayments can be deducted from benefits. You should receive an application form along with your letter granting you leave to remain.

If you are under 65 and have a long-term illness or disability you might be able to get *Disability Living Allowance*. You may get it if you need help from someone else, have difficulty walking, or need someone with you when you are walking. You might be able to claim *Disability Living Allowance* for a child who has a long-term illness or disability and needs this sort of help too. People over 65 who need help to look after themselves may be able to claim *Attendance Allowance*. You can ask for a claim form by phoning 0800 882200. It is a good idea to get help with these forms from an advice agency if you can.

If you look after someone who is getting *Disability Living Allowance* or *Attendance Allowance* you might be able to claim *Carer's Allowance* and *Income Support*. If you think you might be able to claim *Carer's Allowance* it is a good idea to get advice as it can affect the person you care for's benefits. You can ask for a claim form by phoning 0800 882200. For *Income Support* see above.

If you are pregnant or have children, you may be able to get

- *Sure Start Maternity Grant* (from April 2011 limited to your first child),
- *Healthy Start Vouchers*
- free nursery place for 3 to 4 year olds,
- local council leisure pass (*Kidz Card* in Glasgow)
- free school meals
- free prescriptions and dental treatment.

Speak to an advice agency to check if you may be entitled to any of these.

Can I claim any benefit for the time I was waiting for my asylum decision?

If you have been granted *Indefinite Leave to Remain*, *Discretionary Leave* or *Humanitarian Protection* you can only get benefits from the date you were granted leave.

If you have been granted *Refugee Status* you can get *Child Benefit* and *Tax Credits* for the time when you were waiting for a decision on your asylum claim. To get payment for this period, (known as backdating) you must claim within three months of the letter informing you that you have *Refugee Status*.

There is a question on the *Child Benefit* claim form asking about when you were given leave to remain which you should complete. You should get the full amount of *Child Benefit* for the period while you were waiting.

For backdated *Child Tax Credit* send a letter in with your claim form asking for backdating to the date when you claimed asylum. Not everyone will get backdated benefit, it will depend on what money you had while you were waiting for your claim for asylum to be decided.

If you had permission to work whilst waiting for your asylum claim to be decided, and you have done some work, you might be able to claim backdated *Working Tax Credit*. Send in a letter with your claim asking for backdating. It would be good idea to get help from an advice agency with this (see below).

Help with interpreters

When you are claiming benefits over the phone, you can ask for an interpreter, if you need one. You can also bring someone along to interpret at any interviews you have to go to, or ask the Jobcentre Plus office to arrange one for you.

For most benefits you claim over the phone but if you have problems using the phone because, for example, of a disability or ill health you can go to your local Jobcentre Plus office (or HMRC Enquiry Centre for Tax Credits), explain why it is difficult for you to use a phone, and ask to make a claim there.

Further help

Benefits advice

You can go to a local Citizens Advice Bureau, the Local Council Welfare Rights Service or other advice agency in your area. You can find these in the phone book or your Local Council website.

If you live in Glasgow, contact Glasgow Advice and Information Network on 0808 8011011.

Other advice and support for asylum seekers and refugees

You can get a range of help and advice from the Scottish Refugee Council on 0800 085 6087.

If you live in Glasgow you can get a range of help and advice from Positive Action in Housing on 0141 353 2220

Warning! The information in this leaflet is correct at the date below. However benefit law changes often and so will need updating after some time.

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