

Financial Assistance

Some people with epilepsy are entitled to financial assistance. This is usually based on how much your daily life is affected by your epilepsy. If you are unable to work you may be entitled to benefits. If you need care or help in your home or getting around you may be entitled to money to pay for these things.

Finding out which benefits you may be entitled to can be confusing. Below is a list of benefits that you may be entitled to. At the end is a list of agencies who can give you more information and advice.

Government help

When you apply for some of the benefits listed below, you may be asked to have a medical assessment carried out. You will be made aware of this when you apply. For further advice contact your Welfare Rights Officer (local Social Work Department), Epilepsy Fieldworker or the Benefits Enquiry Line 0800 88 22 00.

You can claim these government benefits by contacting your local Jobcentre Plus office or calling their contact centre on 0800 055 6688 between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday. You can also get further advice by calling the Benefits Enquiry Line on 0800 88 22 00.

Disability Living Allowance

The Disability Living Allowance has two parts or 'components'. There is a care component if you need help to look after yourself, or someone with you to keep you safe. There is also a mobility component if you can't walk or if you need help getting around.

You may be eligible for just one or both components. The care component and the mobility component are paid at different rates depending on how your disability affects you in each area.

Employment and Support Allowance

The Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) started on 27 October 2008. **It replaces Incapacity Benefit and Income Support for all new claimants.** If you already receive Incapacity Benefit, you will continue to receive it. It is intended that people who get Incapacity Benefit now will be moved to the new benefit between 2009 and 2013. Further information about these future changes will become available this year.

To apply for Employment and Support Allowance you need to have a new medical assessment called the Work Capability Assessment. This looks at what you can do and identifies any support you might need.

After your assessment you will be placed in one of two groups. People who are placed in the 'Work Related Activity Group' will be expected to try to find work. You will have a personal adviser. The 'Support Group' is for people who have an illness or disability that severely affects their ability to work. You will get increased financial support and will not be expected to prepare to return to paid work. You will be able to be a volunteer if you want to.

Incapacity Benefit

If you can't work because of illness or a disability that started before 27 October 2008, you may have been given Incapacity Benefit. This is a weekly payment for people under State Pension age who become incapable of work.

If you receive Incapacity Benefit, you may be able to do some types of work. This is called Permitted Work. Earning money while you get Incapacity Benefit, could affect the amount of state money you get and other benefits you receive.

Income Support

Income Support is for people aged 16 – 59 who can't be available for full-time work and don't have enough money to live on. People who are registered sick or disabled as well as carers may qualify. An assessment will be made of your circumstances before any support will be given.

Attendance Allowance

Attendance Allowance is a tax-free benefit for people aged 65 or over who need help with personal care because of a disability.

If you are under 65, you may be able to get Disability Living Allowance instead. Attendance Allowance is not usually affected by any savings or income you may have.

Carers Allowance

Carer's Allowance is a taxable benefit paid to people who look after someone who is disabled. You do not have to be related to, or live with, the person that you care for. You must be 16 years or over and spend at least 35 hours a week caring for a person who gets Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Constant Attendance Allowance or a War Disablement Pension.

Independent Living Funds

The Independent Living Fund can help you, if you are severely disabled, to live independently at home instead of moving to residential care. You can use payments from the fund to employ people to give you personal and domestic care in your home.

To apply to the Independent Living Fund you need to be aged between 16 and 65 and receive the highest level of the Disability Living Allowance Care Component. Other conditions apply and these will be explained to you if you ask for further advice.

Direct Payments

Sometimes people receive money directly and this allows them to pay for care services themselves. This gives you more control over who works with you and how. Once you have been assessed as needing community care services, you can choose to receive the service provided by the local authority or receive the money and buy a service you want or a combination of the two. This option will be offered to you during your assessment.

Blue Badge Scheme

The Blue Badge Scheme provides a national arrangement of parking concessions for people with severe walking difficulties who travel either as drivers or passengers.

The scheme is designed to help severely disabled people to travel independently as either a driver or a passenger. The badge allows you to use special disabled parking spaces and to park where other drivers cannot.

For details of parking and to apply for a Blue Badge, contact your local council and ask for the concessionary travel department.

Free Bus Pass

If you are over 65 or have had a seizure in the last 12 months, you are entitled to free bus travel across Scotland. You will need an application pack which is available by calling Epilepsy Scotland on 0808 800 2200. You will need to get one of the forms signed by your consultant, GP or Epilepsy Specialist Nurse. This states that you have had a seizure within the last 12 months and would be refused a driving licence on medical grounds if you applied for one.

You could choose instead to use a letter from the DVLA revoking your driving license for medical reasons. You can also use an award letter showing that you receive the higher rate of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance and the higher or middle rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance. You can only use documents issued within the last 12 months.

Free Prescriptions

If you have epilepsy and take medication regularly you are entitled to free prescriptions. You need to apply for a Medical Exemption Certificate. Contact your GP Practice and ask for a Medical Exemption (EC92A) form. Your GP will need to complete part of the form to verify that you have a medical condition that entitles you to free NHS prescriptions. Your GP surgery will normally send the form off so that you get your Medical Exemption Certificate.

Prescriptions will be free for everyone in Scotland from April 2011.

Disabled Railcard

If you are unable to drive because you have seizures you can buy a Disabled Persons Railcard for £18 a year. You will need to provide a copy of your prescription showing your anti-epileptic drugs or a copy of your letter from the DVLA saying that you are unable to drive for medical reasons.

You can get your railcard by calling 0845 605 0525 or visiting this webpage:

<http://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/buying-your-railcard>

Taxi schemes

The Taxicard Scheme allows people with permanent and severe mobility difficulties, who are unable to use public transport (i.e. a bus) and who have no other means of transport, to travel by taxi at reduced fares.

There is no UK wide scheme. Each local council decides whether to provide it or not. Please contact your local authority to see if the Taxicard Scheme runs in your area.

Organisations that can help

These organisations are able to help people with a disability find out about the financial assistance they are entitled to.

Update

0131 669 1600

Scotland's National Disability Information Service provides advice on all aspects of disability including questions about benefits.

Benefits Enquiry Line

0800 88 22 00

Confidential advice and information for disabled people and carers on the range of benefits available. The person taking your call will not have your personal papers but will be able to give

you general advice. They can also send out claim packs and arrange for someone to help you fill out your forms if required.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) Scotland

Various

Your local office will be able to give you advice on a wide range of issues including benefits. Check your local directory for details of your closest CAB office.

For more help and advice call our helpline 0808 800 2200
Or email us at enquiries@epilepsyscotland.org.uk