

Financial assistance

Some people with epilepsy may be able to claim benefits or may be eligible for other financial assistance depending on how much their epilepsy is affecting their daily life.

For example, if you have a disability or are unable to work you may be entitled to welfare benefits. If you need care or help in your home or getting around, you may be able to access financial help from your local authority. If you are a carer you may also be entitled to financial help.

Below is a summary of what you may be entitled to. These are general guidelines only, and you should always seek professional advice relating to your own individual circumstances.

Welfare benefits

The benefits system is undergoing many changes. To ensure you get the most up to date information on which benefits you may be entitled to, contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau or check out the benefits section of the Citizens Advice website www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/benefits

Some benefits are means tested, which take into account any other income you may have. Non means tested benefits such as Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Attendance Allowance and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are not affected by other income. Certain benefits require you to have a medical assessment. You will be made aware of this when you apply.

Important: please seek advice from a professional benefits adviser **before** completing your benefits application or review. A benefits adviser will know

how to complete the forms to maximise your chances of success, taking into account the unique challenges people with epilepsy face in their daily lives.

You can get independent benefits advice and help with applications and appeals from the following:

- your local authority Welfare Rights Service
- your local Citizens Advice Bureau
- Epilepsy Scotland's Welfare Rights Service - for general enquiries and to find out about available appointments, please phone 0141 427 4911.

Council tax reduction for disabled people

If you have a disability you may be able to claim a discount on your council tax bill. There are certain criteria you have to meet in order to qualify for this discount. Your home should either have a special adaptation or an extra room which is needed because of a disability. To find out more, contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau or your local council.

Scotland specific benefits

If you get Carer's Allowance, you may also get a Carer's Allowance Supplement, which is an extra payment for people in Scotland, paid twice a year, and paid by Social Security Scotland. If you are a young carer, you may also be entitled to a Young Carers Grant.

If you are affected by the Bedroom Tax you may be able to apply for Discretionary Housing Payments in Scotland to cover the loss of housing benefit. Your local council will be able to tell you whether you are eligible for it, and how to apply.

The Scottish Government has also replaced the UK Government's Sure Start Maternity Grant with Best Start Pregnancy and Baby Grant payments providing additional financial support to families on lower incomes.

You may also be entitled to help from the Scottish Welfare Fund for emergencies if you are on a low income.

Other benefits may be available to parents of children with a severe disability or low income families.

The Scottish Government are currently responsible for the administration of the benefits detailed above and others that have already been devolved. Additional benefits will also be devolved in the future. For full details of Scottish specific details, please see their website at <https://www.mygov.scot/benefits/>.

You can also find out more from your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

Financial assistance from social work

If you need adaptations to your home, and/or further help and support to live an independent life, but do not have the funds to pay for this, you can request your local authority to carry out an assessment of your care and support needs. The assessment will decide whether you are eligible for social care or adaptations to your home.

Following the assessment, you or someone you care for will be allocated an amount of money (also called an **individual budget**).

Local authorities in Scotland have introduced **Self-directed Support (SDS)** which allows you to choose how support is provided to you or someone you care for by giving you more flexibility and choice over your care and individual budget.

You can decide how you want to manage your individual budget. You have four options:

- option one is to request **direct payments** from your individual budget, which you then use to buy your own support and services. This gives you more control over who works with you and how;
- option two, sometimes referred to as an **Individual Service Fund**, means you can choose the support you would like, but your local authority or an agency is in charge of the budget and can make arrangements on your behalf;
- option three is to leave it all to your local authority to find the right support for you or someone you care for and to arrange this support;
- option four could be a combination of all three options mentioned above.

A **support plan** will record important details such as the kind of support you or someone you care for wants, how much this will cost, and which of the above four options you have chosen to arrange for the necessary care and support.

To find your local independent support organisation who can help you with self-directed support, check out Self Directed Support Scotland's website at www.sdsscotland.org.uk.

Blue Badge Scheme

The Blue Badge Scheme is designed to help people with severe mobility problems 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 more details and how to apply for a Blue Badge, contact your local council and ask for the concessionary travel department. You can also find general information about this scheme at www.mygov.scot/apply-blue-badge.

National Entitlement Card (free bus pass)

Adults (16 and over)

Generally, anyone aged 60 or over is entitled to a free National Entitlement Card (bus pass) in Scotland, whether you have epilepsy or not.

You can also apply for a free National Entitlement Card if you are 16 years and over, have epilepsy, and have had at least one seizure in the last 12 months. You do not need to be in receipt of benefits to get the free bus pass. If you are, however, in receipt of either rate Personal Independence Payment (PIP) daily living component or the middle or higher rate Disability Living Allowance (DLA) care component, you can also have a 'plus one' card. This allows a companion to travel with you free of charge.

The card is issued on the basis that you would not be legally allowed to drive.

We have an information pack which provides step by step instructions on what you need to do to get your free bus pass, just phone us on 0808 800 2200.

The information we will send you includes form NCT003, which will need to be signed by your consultant, GP or Epilepsy Specialist Nurse. This is your proof of eligibility and states that you have had one seizure within the last 12 months, that you are receiving treatment for your epilepsy and that you would be refused a driving license on medical grounds if you applied for one. You also need the main application form NCT001, which you will need to request directly from your local authority.

It is also possible to use a letter from the DVLA revoking or refusing a driving license for medical reasons, and issued in the last 12 months, instead of the NCT003 form, as proof of eligibility.

Young person (5 to 15)

Any young person of fare paying age (5 to 15) can get a free bus pass if they meet other criteria, such as receiving DLA. You can use a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) awards letter showing you/your child receives the higher rate of the mobility component of DLA or the higher or middle rate of the care component of DLA. You can only use documents issued within the last 12 months.

Please note, at the time of reviewing this factsheet, Transport Scotland have announced that the free bus pass scheme will be extended to also include eligible children **under** 5. This will allow parents to apply for a companion card allowing them to travel with their child for free. The date for implementation has not been confirmed yet, but we will update this factsheet as soon as this comes into effect.

The Scottish Government is also currently consulting on free bus travel for all young people under the age of 22. Further updates will be provided when this becomes law.

Disabled Persons Railcard

If you are unable to drive because you have seizures, you can buy a Disabled Persons Railcard for £20 for one year or £54 for three years. If you are a resident in Scotland, you will only need to provide a copy of your prescription showing your anti-epileptic drugs as proof of eligibility.

You can get your railcard by calling 0845 605 0525 or visiting their webpage: www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk.

Taxi schemes

The Taxicard scheme allows people with permanent and severe mobility difficulties, who are unable to use public transport 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.

Concession charges and discounts

Many local attractions such as your local zoo, botanic gardens or leisure centre may give discounted rates or free entry to someone with a disability and/or their carer. Check with the venue direct, or with your local council for any available discount schemes.

If you love going to the cinema, check out the CEA Card issued by The UK Cinema Association. This is a national card scheme and allows anyone with a disability to claim a complimentary ticket from participating cinemas for another person to go with them if they need assistance. In order to qualify, you need to be either in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance. For more information and to apply go to their website www.ceacard.co.uk

Trusts and charities

Financial help in the form of grants may be available from a number of trusts and charities. Organisations such as Turn2us www.turn2us.org.uk 0808 802 2000 can help you find those trusts which may be able to help.

The Family Fund www.familyfund.org.uk can provide grants to children aged 0-17 who have a disability or severe illness. For more information visit their website or phone 01904 550055.

Further help and advice

If you are not sure what kind of financial help you may be entitled to in Scotland, you can get further information and guidance from:

Disability Information Scotland

Scotland's National Disability Information Service provides advice on all aspects of disability including local services and questions about benefits. You can phone them on 0300 323 9961 or check out their website www.disabilityscot.org.uk.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) Scotland

Your local office will be able to give you advice on a wide range of issues including benefits. Check your local directory or www.cas.org.uk/bureaux for details of your closest CAB office. You can also contact Citizens Advice Direct on 0808 800 9060.

Our resources are always free. If you would like to support our work, please text FACTS to 70085 to donate £3. Texts cost £3 plus one standard rate message.



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