FACTSHEET: FAMILIES WITH DISABLED CHILDREN & BENEFITS

Benefits are complex. The following is a general guide to some benefits which families with disabled children who work or wish to work may need to be aware of. It is advisable to seek specific advice about your own family’s circumstances, particularly if you are from abroad or not normally resident in the UK.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP): PIP has replaced DLA for new claimants aged 16-64. For people already on DLA, including children who reach 16, whether you have to transfer to PIP depends on where in the country you are living. DLA and PIP can both be claimed by people who have substantial care and/or mobility needs, although the exact criteria are different. Disabled children aged three months to 15 years will still be able to claim DLA. A child’s care needs have to substantially greater than a non-disabled child of the same age. DLA and PIP are ‘passports’ to other benefits and services. DLA and PIP, claimed for you or your children, do not depend on income so are not affected when you move into or out of paid work.

Carer’s Allowance (CA): CA can be claimed by parents and carers if they earn less than £110 a week and they care for someone receiving the daily living component of PIP or middle or higher rate care component of DLA. The threshold of £110 a week is after tax, National Insurance and some pension contributions and childcare costs have been deducted. If you are thinking of taking up lower paid work you may want to consider the effect it may have on your entitlement to CA.

Universal Credit (UC): UC is being introduced gradually by post code. Once on UC, you stay on UC even if you then move into a category of people not yet covered by it. It will eventually replace income based Job Seekers Allowance, Income based Employment Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Income Support and Housing Benefit.

Working Tax Credit (WTC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC): WTC and CTC can be claimed by a lone working parent or a couple of which one or both work. They are calculated together. The basic amount you are awarded is tapered off as your income increases. Be sure to tell HM Revenue & Customs if your child gets DLA/PIP and at what level. It increases the basic award. You can also include 70% of your childcare costs (registered or approved childcare) in the calculation up to £175 a week for one child, £300 a week for two or more children, if you are a lone working parent, if the non-working parent is incapacitated or a carer for a disabled person, or if you both work. The detail and the calculations are complex. You may need to get personal advice. (If you, your partner or a child you claim for are disabled you may be entitled to extra tax credits. Seek advice.)

Direct Payments (DP): If your disabled child, having been assessed by your local authority, is entitled to services, you can choose to have DP and buy the services yourself. DP are for the stipulated services and are not affected by what you earn.
Disabled Facilities Grant:  
If your local authority provides a grant to alter your home to suit your disabled child’s needs it is not affected by your income.

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction:  
Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction (help with the council tax from your local authority) depend on your income. If you move into work, you may, depending on your income, still be entitled to such help but you need to inform your local authority for the benefits to be recalculated.

Family Fund  
The Family Fund gives discretionary grants to families with severely disabled children under 18. They have their own definition of ‘severely disabled’. The grants are for things not supplied by statutory authorities. Families on certain benefits can apply – the benefits include tax credits, Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance, Income Support, Pension Credit and Housing Benefit. See www.familyfund.org.uk.

Help with health costs  
You can qualify for help with health costs, for example prescriptions and sight tests, if you receive some benefits such as Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, and Guarantee credit of Pension Credit. Some people on Universal Credit may be entitled, and you may also be able to apply for help if you are on a low income. See www.gov.uk.

Useful contacts:  
Working Families  
Cambridge House  
1 Addington Square  
London SE5 0HF  
020 7253 7243  
office@workingfamilies.org.uk  
Low income families’ helpline:  
0300 012 0312  
Waving not drowning  
Working Families’ Project for Carers and Parents of Disabled Children who work or wish to work. Free newsletter, e-bulletin, dedicated helpline:  
020 7017 0072.

Working Families’ publications:  
From Child to Adult: a guide to disability, transition and family finance  
download from www.workingfamilies.org.uk  
GOV.uk www.gov.uk  
Your local authority  
Citizen’s Advice Bureau, www.citizensadvice.org.uk  
Turn2Us www.turn2us.org.uk  
Local disability advice services and Independent Living Centres can often advise about benefits for disabled people and their families. See your local authority’s website.