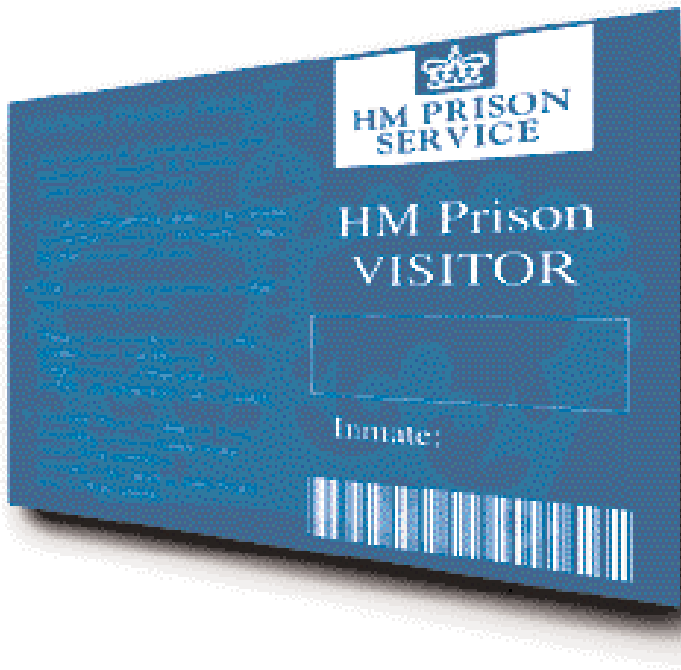


# Prisoners and their families



A basic guide to

- **benefits and tax credits you may be able to get**
- **effects on benefits you already get**

# Prisoners and their families

This leaflet gives basic advice on benefits if you go into or come out of custody, or if a member of your family goes into or comes out of custody. It offers advice on Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Tax Credits, Pension Credit and Child Benefit as well as other benefits. Arrangements for each benefit may be different. This leaflet can help make sure you and your family get the help to which you are entitled.

We use 'member of your family' to mean a parent, son, daughter, brother, sister or partner. We use 'partner' to mean a person you are married to or a person you normally live with as if you are married to them.

We use 'custody' to mean in prison, whether on remand, awaiting trial or sentence, serving a sentence, or moved to hospital from court or prison because of a mental disorder.

We have explained the meaning of some of these terms in the glossary at the back of this leaflet, see page 26.

It is important to tell your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre, social security office or local council as soon as you go into or come out of custody, or a member of your family goes into or comes out of custody. You can do this in writing or by phone.

If you go, or someone in your family goes into custody and you or they are already getting benefits, those benefits may be affected. There are different rules for remand and sentenced prisoners. Your family needs to know what benefits they may be able to get while you are in custody.

If you are in prison, you cannot normally get benefits for yourself. However, this leaflet tells you about some special rules. If your family needs financial help, they cannot normally get money for you while you are in prison, but they may be able to get benefits for themselves if they qualify under the normal rules. They should claim straight away.

If you are coming out of prison and you need financial help for yourself and your family, you may be able to get benefits when you are released. Your family needs to know how your release may affect any benefits they are getting.

If you have a question which is not answered in this leaflet, or if you want more advice, please contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office. For more details, see *Where to get help and advice* on page 22 of this leaflet.

Help may also be available within the prison. Other help may be available from the Probation Service, social work departments in Scotland, the Connexions Service, local councils and voluntary groups.

## Other formats

Information about benefits is available for prisoners and their families in large print, Braille, on audio cassette and in the following languages:

- Arabic
- Bengali
- Chinese
- Gujarati
- Punjabi
- Somali
- Urdu
- Vietnamese
- Welsh.

You can get these from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

You can get more information from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) website at **[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)**, or the Jobcentre Plus website at **[www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)**

To contact us by email, please see the *Contact us* section of these websites.

# Information in this leaflet

## National Insurance (NI)

▶ see page 5

How going into custody affects your National Insurance

## On bail

▶ see pages 6 to 7

How benefits are affected if you or a member of your family are on bail

## Awaiting trial or sentence

▶ see pages 8 to 11

How benefits are affected if you or a member of your family:

- have not been tried or sentenced yet; and
- are in custody, including police custody or imprisonment on remand

## Serving a sentence

▶ see pages 12 to 14

How benefits are affected if you or a member of your family:

- have been sentenced; and
- are sent to prison

## Changes while you are serving your sentence

▶ see pages 15 to 16

How benefits are affected if you or a member of your family:

- are released on temporary release from prison;
- are released on Home Detention Curfew or on licence;
- are moved to hospital because of a mental disorder; or
- have a conviction overturned

## Finishing a sentence

▶ see pages 17 to 20

- How benefits are affected if you or a member of your family are coming out of prison and will need financial help

## Prison visits

▶ see page 21

- Help with the cost of prison visits

## Where to get help and advice

▶ see pages 22 to 25

## Glossary of terms

▶ see pages 26 to 27

## National Insurance (NI)

Most people who work and earn over a certain amount have to pay National Insurance (NI) contributions. These may help you to qualify for some benefits, like basic State Pension. Different types of contributions can count toward different benefits.

If you are sentenced, you will not normally pay NI contributions while you are in prison. NI credits are not normally given while you are in prison, except in the following circumstances:

- Young people can get starting credits for the tax year in which their 16th birthday falls, and the two following tax years.
- Men can get credits for the tax year in which they reach age 60 and the four subsequent years.

A break in your NI record because of time in prison may affect your benefit entitlement later on.

If you are sentenced and you go into prison or are moved from prison to a hospital because of a mental disorder, your contributions will be affected. You can make up for contributions you have not paid or been credited while you were serving your sentence by paying contributions voluntarily. You can make these payments either while in prison or when you leave. These can help you qualify for State Pension and Bereavement Benefits.

If you are found to have been wrongly convicted, you may be able to get NI credits for the time you were in prison. You should write to the following address, including any evidence that you have concerning the dates you spent in prison and the quashing of the conviction:

Inland Revenue  
National Insurance Contributions Office  
Contributor Technical Team, Room BP 2301  
Longbenton  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE98 1ZZ.

For more information about NI contributions, including voluntary contributions, contact your Inland Revenue office. For your nearest Inland Revenue office, look in the business numbers section of the phone book.

For more information about whether you may be able to get a contribution-based benefit in the future, or how your benefits are affected, contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## Housing Benefit

### **You**

- If you pay rent on your normal home, you may be able to get Housing Benefit to help with your rent on this home for up to 52 weeks.
- If you are bailed to a hostel, you will not normally have to pay the hostel charges yourself.
- To find out if you can get help with rent or hostel charges, it is important to check with your local council as soon as possible.

### **Your family**

- If your family is still living in your normal home while you are in a hostel, it is important that they tell the local council as soon as possible.
- If your family already get Housing Benefit, they may still qualify for help under the general rules. If they do not get Housing Benefit already, they may be able to get Housing Benefit to help with their rent. They should claim straight away.

If you want more information about the general rules for Housing Benefit, get leaflet **GL16** *Help with your rent* from your local council offices, Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## Council Tax Benefit

### **You**

- If you have to pay Council Tax, you may be able to get Council Tax Benefit to help with Council Tax on your normal home for up to 52 weeks.
- If you are bailed to a hostel, you will not usually have to pay Council Tax on your normal home while you are away, as long as no one is living there.
- To find out if you need to pay Council Tax or if you can get help with your Council Tax, it is important to check with your local council as soon as possible.

### **Your family**

- If your family is still living in your normal home while you are in the hostel, it is important that they tell the local council as soon as possible.
- If they already get Council Tax Benefit, they may still qualify for help under the general rules. If they do not get Council Tax Benefit already, they may be able to get Council Tax Benefit to help with their Council Tax. They should claim straight away.

If you want more information about the general rules for Council Tax Benefit, get leaflet **GL17** *Help with your council tax* from your local council offices, Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## Other benefits

If you are on bail, or bailed to a hostel, you can claim other benefits in the usual way. For example, you can still claim Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support or Child Benefit or apply for Pension Credit.

If you are getting Jobseeker's Allowance and you cannot sign on as usual at the Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre, you should let them know as soon as possible. If the Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre has not been notified within five working days from the day when you normally sign on, your claim will be closed and you may lose benefit.

## Bail hostels

With Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support, you may be able to get help with housing costs, if you were already getting this help and if you have to stay in a bail hostel as a condition of bail.

For more information on how these and other benefits are affected, contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

# Awaiting trial or sentence

You will not normally be entitled to most benefits while you are in custody.

You may still be able to get certain benefits if you:

- are in custody, including police custody or imprisonment on remand awaiting trial or sentence; or
- have been moved to a hospital from court or prison because of a mental disorder. (For more information, see *Moved to hospital because of a mental disorder* on page 16.)

If your benefit is paid by giro and it is sent out while you are in custody, you can sign the back of the giro so that a family member or friend can cash it for you.

However, you may not be entitled to receive that benefit payment because you are now in custody. If you are in any doubt whether you should cash a giro, then you or your family should contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

You cannot normally get the following benefits while you are in custody:

- Attendance Allowance
- Bereavement Benefits
- Disability Living Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit
- Industrial Injuries Benefits
- Maternity Allowance
- State Pension
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- War Pensions
- Carer's Allowance.

If you do not receive a sentence of imprisonment or detention, the money may be paid when you are released.

If a member of your family is in custody, including police custody or imprisonment on remand awaiting trial or sentence, you should contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office straight away to find out which benefits you may be able to get while they are away.

For more information on how these and other benefits are affected, contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## Income Support and Pension Credit

### You

- You cannot get Income Support or Pension Credit for yourself if you are in custody awaiting trial or sentence.
- You may still be able to get Income Support or Pension Credit help with your mortgage interest payments if you were getting help before you went into custody on remand.
- You may be able to get help with housing costs if you were already getting this help and if you have to stay in a bail hostel as a condition of bail.

- If you receive Income Support or Pension Credit help with your mortgage interest payments while you are in custody on remand, you may have to wait for a fixed period before you can be paid.

### **Your family**

- Your family may be able to receive Income Support or Pension Credit while you are in custody if they meet the general rules.
- Your partner can apply for Pension Credit if they are aged 60 or over by contacting the Pension Credit Application Line on 0800 99 1234.
- For more information, contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

If you want more information about the general rules for Income Support or Pension Credit, get leaflet **WK1** *Financial help if you work or are looking for work* from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office. For more information about Pension Credit, get leaflet **PC1L** *Pension Credit. Pick it up. It's yours.*

## **Jobseeker's Allowance**

### **You**

- You cannot get Jobseeker's Allowance while you are in custody.
- You may be able to get help with housing costs if you were already getting this help and if you have to stay in a bail hostel as a condition of bail.

### **Your family**

- Your family may be able to receive Jobseeker's Allowance while you are in custody if they are available for and looking for work.
- For more information, contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

If you want more information about the general rules for Jobseeker's Allowance, get leaflet **WK1** *Financial help if you work or are looking for work* from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## **Housing Benefit**

### **You**

- You cannot normally get Housing Benefit while you are in custody.
- However, if you are in custody on remand and you expect to be away from your normal home for less than 52 weeks, you may be able to get Housing Benefit to help with your rent on this home. You may be able to get Housing Benefit for up to 52 weeks while you are away.
- To find out if you can get help with your rent, it is important to check with your local council as soon as possible.

### **Your family**

- If your family is still living in your normal home while you are in custody on remand, they may be able to get Housing Benefit to help with their rent while you are away. They should claim straight away.
- If your family already gets Housing Benefit, it is important that they tell the local council as soon as you go into custody.
- If a member of your family is going into prison, it is important that you tell the local council straight away.

If you want more information about the general rules for Housing Benefit, get leaflet **GL16** *Help with your rent* from your local council offices or Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## **Council Tax Benefit**

### **You**

- You cannot normally get Council Tax Benefit while you are in custody.
- However, if you are in custody on remand and you expect to be away from your normal home for less than 52 weeks, you may be able to get Council Tax Benefit to help with your Council Tax for up to 52 weeks while you are away. To find out if you can get help with your Council Tax, it is important to check with your local council as soon as possible.

- If your home is unoccupied while you are in custody, you can apply for it to be exempt from Council Tax. Check with your local council as soon as possible.

### **Your family**

- If your family is still living in your normal home while you are in custody on remand, they may be able to get Council Tax Benefit to help with their Council Tax while you are away. They should claim straight away.
- If your family already gets Council Tax Benefit, it is important that they tell the local council as soon as you go into custody.
- If a member of your family is going into prison, it is important that you tell the local council straight away.

If you want more information about the general rules for Council Tax Benefit, get leaflet **GL17** *Help with your council tax* from your local council offices, Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## **Child Benefit**

### **You**

- You may get Child Benefit if your child is living with you while you are held in custody, or if your baby is born while you are in custody.

- If your child is not living with you and you pay towards the cost of bringing up your child, you may still get Child Benefit. To qualify, you must pay at least the amount of the weekly Child Benefit. Child Benefit may be paid to another adult on your behalf.
- If you are in custody for some time, you may want to arrange for Child Benefit to be claimed by the person who is looking after your child. This might be particularly helpful if that person also needs to claim Income Support or Pension Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance.

### ***Children in custody***

- Child Benefit is not paid after the eighth week of detention for any child who has been held in custody, prison or other form of detention such as a secure establishment, secure training centre or young offender's institution.

If you want more information about the general rules for Child Benefit, get leaflet **BC1** *Babies and children* from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## **Child Tax Credit**

### ***You***

- You may get Child Tax Credit if your child is living with you while you are held in custody, or if your baby is born while you are in custody.
- You cannot get Child Tax Credit if your child is living with someone else.

### ***Children in custody***

- Child Tax Credit may not be payable if your child is sentenced by a court to serve a custodial sentence.

For more information about Child Tax Credit, phone the information helpline on 0845 300 3900 (Great Britain) or 0845 603 2000 (Northern Ireland).

# Serving a sentence

## You

- You cannot usually get benefits while you are serving a sentence in prison. You may be able to get Child Benefit for a child who is living with you in prison.

## Your family

- If a member of your family is serving a sentence in prison, you should contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office straight away to find out which benefits you may be able to get while they are away.

## Housing Benefit

### You

- You may be able to get Housing Benefit to help with your rent for your normal home while you are serving a sentence in prison. You may get Housing Benefit if you expect to be away from your normal home for 13 weeks or less after any remission.

### Your family

- If you are no longer entitled to Housing Benefit, your partner or any other person occupying your home may be able to claim Housing Benefit. It is important that you tell your local council as soon as you know how long you will be in prison.
- If a member of your family is going into prison, tell the local council straight away. You may still be able to get Housing Benefit if you are staying on in your home.

For information about the general rules for Housing Benefit, get leaflet **GL16** *Help*

*with your rent* from your local council offices, Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## Council Tax Benefit

### You

- If you are serving a sentence in prison, you will not normally have to pay Council Tax.
- However, you may be able to get Council Tax Benefit if you expect to be away from your normal home for 13 weeks or less after any remission. You should tell the local council as soon as you are sentenced to prison.
- If your home is unoccupied while you are in prison, you can apply for it to be exempt from Council Tax. You should check with your local council as soon as possible.

### Your family

- If a member of your family is going into prison, it is important that you tell the local council straight away. The local council will then check your entitlement to Council Tax Benefit.

For information about the general rules for Council Tax Benefit, get leaflet **GL17** *Help with your council tax* from your local council offices, Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## Child Benefit

### You

- You may get Child Benefit if your child is living with you while you are held in custody, or if your baby is born while you are in custody.

- If your child is not living with you and you pay towards the cost of bringing up your child, you may still get Child Benefit. To qualify, you must pay at least the amount of the weekly Child Benefit. Child Benefit may be paid to another adult on your behalf.
- If you are in custody for some time, you may want to arrange for Child Benefit to be claimed by the person who is looking after your child. This might be particularly helpful if that person also needs to claim Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance or Pension Credit.

### **Children in custody**

- Child Benefit is not paid after the eighth week of detention for any child who has been held in custody, prison or other form of detention such as a secure establishment, secure training centre or young offender's institution.

If you want more information about the general rules for Child Benefit, get leaflet **BC1** *Babies and children* from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

### **Guardian's Allowance**

- If someone else is looking after your child because you are serving a prison sentence of five years or more, and the child has no other living parent, that person may be able to get Guardian's Allowance.
- The average weekly amount you contribute to the cost of looking after your child will affect the Guardian's Allowance paid.

- When you are released, you may be asked to pay back any Guardian's Allowance paid for your children while you were in prison.

If you want more information about the general rules for Guardian's Allowance, get leaflet **BC1** *Babies and children* from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

### **Child maintenance**

- If you have been assessed by the Child Support Agency and ordered to pay maintenance for your children, you may not have to make those payments while you are in prison. If you are sentenced to prison, tell the Child Support Agency straight away.

### **Working Tax Credit**

#### **You**

- You cannot get Working Tax Credit while you are in prison, because you are not in 'qualifying remunerative work' during that time.

#### **Your family**

- Your partner (if you have one) can still claim Working Tax Credit while you are in prison, provided (s)he works the necessary number of hours. If (s)he is responsible for a child or qualifying young person **or** has a disability **or** is aged 50 or over and is returning to work after receiving certain out-of-work benefits for at least 6 months, (s)he must work at least 16 hours a week to qualify for Working Tax Credit. Otherwise, (s)he must be aged 25 or over and working at least 30 hours a week.

- If you are sentenced to prison for more than 12 months **and** neither you nor your partner has responsibility for a child or qualifying young person **and** your partner is awarded Working Tax Credit, (s)he cannot claim the couples element of that tax credit as long as you remain in prison.

To find out more about Working Tax Credit, phone the Tax Credit Helpline on 0845 300 3900 (Great Britain) or 0845 603 2000 (Northern Ireland).

## Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, Reduced Earnings Allowance, Retirement Allowance

- You cannot be paid Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, Reduced Earnings Allowance or Retirement Allowance while you are serving a sentence in prison.
- If you were entitled to Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit while you were serving your sentence, you may be paid up to a maximum of a year's benefit when you are released.
- For information about the general rules for industrial injuries benefits, get leaflet **SD6** *Ill or disabled because of a disease or deafness caused by work?* or leaflet **SD7** *Disabled because of an accident at work?* from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## Winter Fuel Payments

### You

- You cannot get a Winter Fuel Payment for any winter when you are in

custody under sentence during the qualifying week. The qualifying week for winter 2003/2004 is 15–21 September 2003. You must be 60 years or older in the qualifying week. For more information about Winter Fuel Payments, see leaflet **WFPL1** *Your guide to Winter Fuel Payments*.

### Your family

- If a member of your family has received a Winter Fuel Payment before and their circumstances have not changed, they will usually get a Winter Fuel Payment automatically. If they have not qualified for a Winter Fuel Payment before and get a social security benefit in the week 15–21 September 2003, they should get their payment automatically.
- However, if a member of your family only gets Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Child Benefit, they will need to claim a Winter Fuel Payment. If they have not qualified for a Winter Fuel Payment before and do not get a social security benefit in the week 15–21 September 2003, they will also need to claim. They should complete and return the claim form before 30 March 2004.
- If a member of your family has received a Winter Fuel Payment before and their circumstances have not changed, they usually get a Winter Fuel Payment, including the 80+ Annual Payment if aged 80 or over, automatically.

To claim a Winter Fuel Payment, ring the Winter Fuel Payment Helpline on **08459 15 15 15** or get a claim form from our website: [www.dwp.gov.uk/winterfuel](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/winterfuel)

# Changes while you are serving your sentence

## Temporary release

- If you are serving a sentence in prison but are released for a short period on temporary release or release on resettlement licence, you cannot normally get benefits for yourself for the time you are away from prison. This is because you are still under the care of the Prison Service.
- When a member of your household returns home on temporary release, you will need to contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office. They will advise you how your benefits will be affected.
- If a member of your family is serving a sentence in prison but comes to live in your home while released on temporary release or release on resettlement licence, you may be able to get a Social Fund Community Care Grant. You may qualify if you get Income Support, Pension Credit or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance and are supporting the family member while they are on release or resettlement licence in your home. The grant will only cover daily amounts for the family member's living expenses.

If you want more information about the general rules for Community Care Grants, get leaflet **GL18** *Help from the Social Fund* from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## Home Detention Curfews and release on licence

- If you have been released from prison early on licence or life licence, or you are electronically tagged until your sentence ends, you can claim some benefits. These benefits are available under the usual rules and include Income Support, Pension Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance, and benefits to help with your housing costs. For information about benefits that you may be able to get, contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.
- If your Home Detention Curfew means you cannot get Jobseeker's Allowance because of the times you are available for work, you can apply to the courts to have the terms of your curfew order changed. For more information, contact your Probation Officer.

If you want more information about the general rules for Jobseeker's Allowance, get leaflet **WK1** *Financial help if you work or are looking for work* from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## **Moved to hospital because of a mental disorder**

If you have been moved from court or prison to a hospital because of a mental disorder, and you are held under the Mental Health Act 1983 or the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984, you may be treated as a hospital in-patient. However, for certain benefits you may still be treated as a prisoner until the date you were expected to be released from prison.

- You can claim Income Support or apply for Pension Credit. You may be paid a weekly amount of Income Support or Pension Credit at a reduced rate for hospital in-patients, as long as you qualify under the normal rules.
- If you are getting help with your rent or Council Tax, you should tell your local council when you move from prison to hospital.

If you are held under any other Act, you will be treated as a prisoner serving a sentence and will not normally get benefits, apart from those referred to under the 'Serving a sentence' section of this leaflet.

For more information, contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## **Conviction overturned**

If your conviction is overturned, you should contact your local Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office, as you may be entitled to certain benefits and National Insurance credits for the period you were in prison.

# Finishing a sentence

## Form B79

### *Notification of discharge from prison*

On your release, you should receive form **B79** *Notification of discharge from prison*, which gives details of your stay in prison. You should keep this form safe and take it with you when you go to the Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office or contact the Pension Credit application line or your local authority. If you do not take it with you, it may delay any payment of benefits due to you.

No document on its own can prove who you are, but the **B79** may be used with other information to help staff to make a decision about your identity. If you have any other papers, such as a birth certificate or passport, you should take them with you to the office as well. If you have no other papers, you may be asked for more information in an interview to sort out your claim.

If you want more information about how to prove who you are, get leaflet **GL25** *How to prove your identity for social security* from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## Discharge Grant

You may receive a Discharge Grant from the prison authorities. This is a sum of money paid on leaving prison to assist with living costs before you claim benefit.

## Benefit claims – general

### **You**

If you were getting benefit before you went into prison and you did not apply for any arrears you were due at the time, you may still be owed benefit arrears when you are released. Check with the Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre, social security office or local council office that paid your benefit.

If you claim benefit after you are released from prison, you may not get your payment for up to two weeks. If you cannot wait for your first payment because you have no other money, you may be able to get:

- some of your benefit early. This is called an interim payment; or
- a Crisis Loan from the Social Fund, see page 20.

Both of these payments have to be paid back when your normal benefit starts.

For more information, contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

### **Your family**

When a member of your family is released, you should tell your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office straight away. It may affect your benefits.

## Jobseeker's Allowance

If you will be looking for work when you are released and you need financial help, you should claim Jobseeker's Allowance.

You need to make an appointment for a New Jobseeker Interview with your Jobcentre Plus office or jobcentre. A member of the Prison Service staff or Connexions Service may be able to help you make this appointment.

You should contact the Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre nearest to where you will be living.

You can phone the Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre to make an appointment before you are released from prison. They will give you an appointment for the day you expect to be released, if they can. It is important that you go to interviews at the Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre. If you do not, you may lose money.

Procedures are different for 16 or 17-year-olds. For further information, please see the section headed '16 or 17-year-olds', below.

If you wish, you can fill in your Jobseeker's Allowance claim form before you are released from prison. Ask the Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre to send you a claim form.

If you get a Discharge Grant, it will not normally affect your first Jobseeker's Allowance payment.

Savings over £3,000 (£6,000 if you or your partner are aged 60 or over) usually affect how much income-based Jobseeker's Allowance you can get. Savings over £8,000 (£12,000 if you or your partner are aged 60 or over) usually mean you cannot get income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.

If you want more information about the general rules for Jobseeker's Allowance, get leaflet **WK1** *Financial help if you work or are looking for work* from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## Freshstart

Freshstart is an initiative between the Prison Service and Jobcentre Plus. It guarantees all offenders, of all ages and from all prison establishments a pre-arranged New Jobseeker Interview on release from custody. Prison establishments will identify those prisoners being released who wish to claim Jobseeker's Allowance. This will happen two or three weeks before a prisoner is released. The relevant Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre will then be contacted and an appointment made.

## 16 or 17-year-olds

If you are aged 16 or 17 when you are released, you should first contact your Connexions Service office if you live in England, your local Careers Wales centre if you live in Wales or, if you live in Scotland, Careers Scotland should be able to help you. At these places, you can register for work or training before going to the Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre.

## Support Services for young people

Youth Support Services are available to young people through personal advisers who work closely with youth justice agencies. This includes supporting young prisoners while in prison and in their resettlement back into the community upon release.

Your local Connexions Service or Careers Wales or Scotland Service should also be able to help you. To contact your local **Connexions, Careers Wales** or **Careers Scotland Service**, look for 'Connexions Service' or 'Careers Service' in the business numbers section of the phone book, or look on these websites:  
**[www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)**  
**[www.careerswales.com](http://www.careerswales.com)**  
**[www.careers-scotland.org.uk](http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk)**

## Sick or disabled

If you cannot work because of illness or disability when you are released from prison, and you and your family need financial help, you should contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office straight away. They will be able to tell you which benefits you may be able to get.

For general information about benefits for people who have a physical or a mental illness or disability, get leaflet **SD1 Sick or disabled?** from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

## Income Support or Pension Credit

If you are sick, are caring for someone or over State Pension Age when you are released from prison, and you need financial help, you should claim Income Support or apply for Pension Credit.

You can fill in your Income Support claim form or Pension Credit application form before you are released from prison. Phone your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office and ask them to send you a claim form. A member of Prison Service staff or the Connexions Service may be able to help you make this call.

It is important that you return the completed form and go to any interviews you are asked to at the Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office. If you do not, you may lose money.

If you are aged 16 or 17 when you are released, ask your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office for advice straight away.

If you get a Prison Service Discharge Grant, it will not normally affect your first Income Support or Pension Credit payment.

Savings over £3,000 (£6,000 if you or your partner are aged 60 or over) usually affect how much Income Support you can get. For Pension Credit only, savings over £6,000 will affect your entitlement. For more information, contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office or the Pension Credit application line on 0800 99 1234.

To see if you can get Income Support or Pension Credit because you have a low income, check with your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office or the Pension Credit Application Line.

For more information about the general rules for Income Support or Pension Credit, get leaflet **WK1** *Financial help if you work or are looking for work* from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office. For more information about Pension Credit, get leaflet **PC1L** *Pension Credit. Pick it up. It's yours.*

## Social Fund

You may be able to get help from the Social Fund when you are released from prison. For example, you may be able to get an interest-free Crisis Loan:

- for money to live on before your first benefit payment if there is a serious risk to the health and safety of you or your family; or
- for money to pay advance rent to a private landlord if you qualify for a Community Care Grant to set up home.

If you get a Discharge Grant, this may affect how much help you can get.

If you get a Crisis Loan, you will have to pay it back.

You may be able to get a Community Care Grant to help with needs like clothing or furniture for a home you will be renting. You can apply for a grant:

- as soon as you are released from prison; or
- while you are still in prison, if you will be released in six weeks or less.

To get a Community Care Grant, you have to be getting, or be likely to get, Income Support, Pension Credit or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance when you are released from prison.

If you get a Community Care Grant, you will not have to pay it back.

If you want more information about the general rules for Community Care Grants, get leaflet **GL18** *Help from the Social Fund* from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

# Prison visits

You may be able to get help with the cost of prison visits from the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme if:

- you are visiting a partner or close relative in prison, or you are the only adult visiting; and
- you are on a low income; or
- you are escorting the prisoner's children, or an adult who needs assistance.

For Assisted Prison Visits, 'partner' means a person you are married to or a person you were living with for at least four months immediately before their sentence started. 'Close relative' means a parent; son or daughter; sister or brother; or a step-, foster- or adoptive parent or child.

The scheme covers visits to:

- prisons;
- remand centres;
- young offender institutions managed by HM Prison Service; and
- people held in prison under the Immigration Act 1971.

To get help from the scheme, you must be getting one of the following:

- Income Support or Pension Credit;
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Working Tax Credit; or
- help with healthcare costs.

If you qualify for help from the scheme, you may get help with travelling costs for up to 26 visits a year. You may also get help with meals and overnight expenses.

For more information or an application form, contact:

## **Assisted Prison Visits Unit**

**PO Box 2152**

**Birmingham B15 1SD**

**Tel: 0121 626 2797**

Textphone **0845 304 0800**

Lines are open Monday to Friday, 10.15–11.45am and 2.15–3.45pm.

Information about the scheme is also available from the above address in languages other than English, in Braille and on audio cassette.

You can also get information from the prison you are visiting, Jobcentre Plus offices, Jobcentres or social security offices, Probation Service offices, social work departments in Scotland, Citizens Advice, and prisoners' families support groups (see page 24).

# Where to get help and advice

For more information or other leaflets, contact your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office.

For your nearest Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office, look in your local telephone directory under 'Jobcentre Plus'.

You can also phone the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) public enquiry office on **020 7712 2171**.

You can get more information from the DWP website at **[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)** or the Jobcentre Plus website at **[www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)**

To contact us by email, see the *Contact us* section of these websites.

## Other leaflets

You can also get information about benefits in other leaflets available from your Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre or social security office, including:

- **BC1 Babies and children**

A basic guide to benefits and tax credits for anyone expecting a baby or bringing up children.

- **GL16 Help with your rent**
- **GL17 Help with your council tax**
- **GL18 Help from the Social Fund**
- **GL23 Social security benefit rates**

- **GL25 How to prove your identity for social security.**

- **RM1 Retirement**

A basic guide to benefits for people who are retiring or have retired.

- **PC1L Pension Credit. Pick it up. It's yours**

- **SD1 Sick or disabled**

A basic guide to benefits and tax credits for people of all ages with a physical or mental illness or disability – and for people who look after them.

- **SD6 Ill or disabled because of a disease or deafness caused by work?**

- **SD7 Disabled because of an accident at work?**

- **WK1 Financial help if you work or are looking for work**

A basic guide to benefits and back-to-work schemes if you are working, looking for work or starting a job – including voluntary work.

## **Jobseeker's Allowance**

### **Who to contact:**

Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre

### **Address and phone number:**

For your nearest Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre, look in your local telephone directory under 'Jobcentre Plus'.

If you are aged 16 or 17, for your nearest Connexions, Careers Scotland or Careers Wales Service look for 'Connexions Service' or 'Careers Service' in the business numbers of the phone book, or look on the websites:

**[www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)**

**[www.careers-scotland.org.uk](http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk)**

**[www.careerswales.com](http://www.careerswales.com)**

## **National Insurance (NI)**

### **Who to contact:**

Inland Revenue office

### **Address and phone number:**

Look for 'Inland Revenue' and the heading 'National Insurance Contributions Office' in the business numbers section of the phone book.

## **Working Tax Credit**

### **Who to contact:**

Working Tax Credit Helpline

Tel **0845 300 3900**

Textphone **0845 300 3909**

## **Rent (Housing Benefit) and Council Tax Benefit**

### **Who to contact:**

Your local council

### **Address and phone number:**

Look under the name of your local council in the business numbers section of the phone book.

## **Child support maintenance**

### **Who to contact:**

Child Support Agency (CSA)

PO Box 55

Brierley Hill

West Midlands DY5 1YL

Tel **0845 713 3133**

## Other useful numbers

**Please note: this is not an exhaustive list and other local or national organisations may be able to offer help.**

### **Action for Prisoners' Families (Formerly FPFSG)**

Riverbank House  
1 Putney Bridge Approach  
London SW6 3JD

**Tel: 020 7384 1987**

### **Prisoners' Families Helpline (freephone): 0808 808 2003**

**Website: [www.fpfsg.org.uk](http://www.fpfsg.org.uk)**

*Action for Prisoners' Families is the national federation of services supporting prisoners' families. They can refer families on to local support services. They co-ordinate the Prisoners' Families Helpline, a freephone service that provides information and support to anyone with a relative or friend in prison anywhere in England or Wales. Please visit their website for further information at [www.fpfsg.org.uk](http://www.fpfsg.org.uk)*

### **Department for Work and Pensions London Homeless Services Team**

Room 608  
Tavis House  
1–6 Tavistock Square  
London WC1H 9NB

**Tel: 020 7200 6141**

*The London Homeless Services Team was set up to address the needs of the London homeless, running benefit surgeries in day centres, hostels, rolling*

*shelters and prisons, with an aim of securing benefits for homeless customers. They also give advice and training to various organisations on welfare benefits, to support a smooth gateway into the benefit system.*

### **Help and Advice for Relatives of Prisoners (HARP)**

**Tel: 0800 389 3003**

**Website: [www.harpinfo.org.uk](http://www.harpinfo.org.uk)**

*HARP is a regional telephone helpline service (East Anglia) that provides information and support to anyone with a relative or friend in prison. This service can also be used by professionals. HARP is managed by Ormiston children and families trust.*

### **NACRO Resettlement Plus Helpline**

169 Clapham Road  
London SW9 0PU

**Tel: 020 7840 6464**

**Freephone 0800 0181 259**

*The helpline is an information and advice line for prisoners, ex-offenders and those involved with them, including their families.*

### **North East Prison After Care Service (NEPACS)**

22 Old Elvet  
Durham DH1 3HW

**Tel: 0191 375 7278**

*Visitors' centres and play projects support families visiting prisoners. NEPACS also offers small grants and caravan holidays, available via the Probation Service.*

### **Partners of Prisoners Support (POPS)**

Suite 4b  
Building 1  
Wilson Park  
Monsell Road  
Manchester M40 8WN  
**Tel: 0161 277 9066**

*POPS is available free to all family and friends of prisoners at any stage of their sentence, whether it is arrest, remand, sentence or release.*

### **Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)**

Lincoln House  
Kennington Park  
1–3 Brixton Road  
London SW9 6DE  
**Tel: 0800 085 3021**

*Prison Advice and Care Trust is the new name for the organisation, resulting from the merger of the Bourne Trust and Prisoners' Wives and Families Society.*

### **Prisoners' Families and Friends Service (PFFS)**

20 Trinity Street  
London SE1 1DB  
**Tel: 0808 808 3444 (freephone)**

*Providing information and support and a freephone helpline.*

### **Prisoners' Families information line Freephone 0500 83 93 83**

*Free, confidential telephone helpline offering information, support and a signposting service to families and friends of prisoners and professionals throughout Scotland.*

### **Safeguarding Communities – Reducing Offending (SACRO)**

1 Broughton Market  
Edinburgh EH3 6NU  
**Tel: 0131 624 7270**

### **Shelterline**

**Freephone 0808 800 4444**

*Shelterline is a 24-hour, freephone, national housing advice line for anyone with a housing problem. It provides advice to anyone in housing difficulties, whenever they need it. Callers to Shelterline receive round-the-clock help from advisers who can explain the options and help people take action. Shelterline also provides a gateway to Housing Aid Centres, enabling callers to get further advice and support from trained caseworkers in their local area.*

### **Support Help and Advice for Relatives of Prisoners (SHARP)**

83a Wyle Cop  
Shrewsbury  
Shropshire SY1 1UT  
**Tel: 01743 245365**

*SHARP offer support, both practical and emotional, from the time of initial arrest, through court hearings, prison sentences and the rehabilitation of the prisoner back into their family home or society. They offer advice on the prison system and can liaise with professional bodies, for example solicitors, mental health bodies, prisons.*

# Glossary of terms

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<i>Bail</i>	A person who is arrested and charged for an offence may either be released on bail on payment of a sum as surety or remanded in custody.
<i>Bail hostel</i>	The purpose of approved hostels is to provide a high level of residential supervision to protect the public by reducing the level of offending. Approved hostels are for bailees, those subject to community orders with a condition of residence and post-custody licensees. Bail hostels are used when the risk of an individual causing serious harm to the public or the likelihood of reoffending means that no other form of accommodation in the community would be suitable.
<i>Conviction</i>	Finding of guilt by a Court of Law.
<i>Conviction overturned</i>	Ruling by a Court of Law that a conviction was wrongly found.
<i>Curfew order</i>	An offender may be ordered to remain at a specified place for a certain period. Electronically monitored curfew orders are now being used in England and Wales.
<i>Custody</i>	In prison or police custody, whether on remand, awaiting trial or sentence, serving a sentence, or moved to hospital from court or prison because of a mental disorder.
<i>Detention</i>	Held in a young offenders' institution. A court may order a young offender aged between 15 and 20 to serve a custodial sentence in a young offenders' institution.
<i>Discharge Grant</i>	Amount of money issued to some prisoners on discharge. It is roughly equivalent to one week's benefit payment. Civil prisoners and those sentenced to 14 days or less do not receive a Discharge Grant. Prisoners released from court receive nothing.
<i>Electronic tagging</i>	Sections 12 and 13 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 provide for curfew orders enforced by electronic monitoring. The sentence was made available to all courts in England and Wales on 1 December 1999.

continued overleaf

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<i>Home detention curfew</i>	Allows selected short-term prisoners to spend up to the last two months of their custodial sentence at home, subject to an electronically monitored curfew of at least nine hours per day. It was introduced across England and Wales on 28 January 1999.
<i>Life Licence</i>	Conditions on which a life sentence prisoner is released from custody to supervision in the community.
<i>Release on Resettlement Licence</i>	The purpose of release on resettlement licence is to enable prisoners to maintain family ties and links with the community and to make suitable arrangements for accommodation, work and training on release.
<i>Remand</i>	A person who is arrested and charged for an offence may either be released on bail on payment of a sum as surety or remanded in custody. A person can be remanded in custody either awaiting trial or sentence.
<i>Remand centre</i>	Establishment holding unconvicted and court prisoners.
<i>Secure establishments</i>	There are three types: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• young offenders' institutions;</li> <li>• local authority secure units; and</li> <li>• secure training centres.</li> </ul>
<i>Secure training centres</i>	Establishment holding juveniles aged between 12 and 14 and sentenced to a secure training order.
<i>Sentence</i>	Held in custody as a result of receiving a sentence of imprisonment or detention in a criminal court.
<i>Temporary Release</i>	A licence which provides the authority for prisoners to be temporarily released, unescorted, for specific needs. There are three types of temporary licences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compassionate;</li> <li>• facility; and</li> <li>• resettlement.</li> </ul>
<i>Young offenders' institution</i>	Available for boys and girls aged 15 and over. On release, the offender is supervised by a supervising officer for a period dependent on the length of the detention and training order.

This leaflet is only a general guide to benefits and is not a full and authoritative statement of the law. We have made every effort to ensure that the information in this leaflet is correct at the date shown on the cover. But, changes in the law may make the leaflet become gradually less accurate.

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