Headway

the brain injury association

factsheet

Financial support when returning to work

Introduction

There are a number of benefits and other forms of ongoing support or one-off payments you may be entitled to when returning to work. This factsheet provides a brief overview of the main ones.

Benefits and entitlements change over time and your entitlements will depend on your individual circumstances. At the time of writing (November 2010) the government has announced plans for a new Universal Credit scheme, which will affect people from 2013. You should always seek advice from your local Jobcentre Plus and Disability Employment Advisor before claiming any financial assistance. Other useful sources of information and advice are included at the end of the factsheet.

Remember, it is worth asking your Jobcentre Plus for a 'better-off' calculation before taking a job. This works out the effect of taking the job on the benefits you currently earn, in order to work out if you will be better off in work.

Sources of Financial Support

Employment & Support Allowance (ESA)
ESA replaced Income Support and Incapacity Benefit for people claiming after October 2008. The benefit provides financial assistance while claimants are helped back into work through the Jobcentre Plus Pathways to Work scheme. It is sometime possible to continue receiving ESA while working, within certain limits. This is called **Permitted Work**. (For further information on the Pathways to Work scheme see the Headway factsheet *Finding New Employment after Brain Injury*.)

Disability Living Allowance
If you are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA*),* you should seek advice before starting any work. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) would expect to be notified of a return to work, so that it can decide whether to reassess your position. It is possible to work and receive DLA, however, a lot might depend on the reasons for you getting DLA and the nature of the proposed work.

Benefit linking rules
There are various rules, designed to help you reclaim your previous benefits (at the same rate), without delays, after a trial period of work.

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Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) extended payments
Both of these benefits can be paid for 4 weeks, at the previous rates, if you start work and come off an incapacity-related benefit, or Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance(JSA), or if your hours or pay increase. You need to inform Jobcentre Plus or your Local Authority within four weeks, that you or your partner have started work, are about to start work, or that the hours or earnings have increased. After the extended payments, any HB and CTB will be based on your new circumstances.

'Housing costs' run-on
Any mortgage assistance can also continue for four weeks, after starting a new job. You must let the Jobcentre Plus know you are starting work.

Job Grant
This is a one-off payment, if you start full-time work after at least 26 weeks on an incapacity-related benefit, or Job Seekers Allowance, (or New Deal Allowances based on these). The amount is £100, or £250 if you have children.

Return to Work Credit
This is a tax-free payment of £40 per week which can be payable for up to 52 weeks when starting a new job. You will be eligible for this if the job is expected to last at least five weeks, you have been on incapacity benefits for 13 weeks or more, will be working over 16 hours a week and will earn no more than £15,000 per year.

Work-Related Activity Premium
This is a £20 premium, available for up to 6 months, for lone parents with children aged 11 or over, who have been on Income Support or income-based Job Seekers Allowance for over 26 weeks.

Social Fund Budgeting Loan
If you have been getting Income Support, Income-Based Job Seekers Allowance, or Income-Related Employment & Support Allowance, for at least 26 weeks, you can apply for a Social Fund Budgeting Loan. This could help with the expenses of looking for work or starting work.

Child Tax Credit
This is a means-tested payment, and you might be entitled if you are responsible for a child or young person and your income is beneath a set limit. The conditions of entitlement vary according to family circumstances.

Working Tax Credit
This is another means-tested payment. You might be entitled if you or a partner are working for 16 or more hours a week, and your income is within a set limit. Again, the conditions of entitlement vary according to family circumstances. There are 'disability' and 'severe disability' elements, which are included in the calculation where appropriate.

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Childcare costs
Working Tax Credit includes a childcare tax credit of 80% of certain childcare costs. Also, certain childcare costs can be ignored from your earnings in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit assessments.

Income Support
If you started claiming before October 2008 then you will still receive Income Support, rather than ESA. In some circumstances, you can stay on Income Support even if you work for 16 hours a week or more: For instance, if your hours or earnings are reduced to 75% or less than those of a person without your disability, in the same job. (However, earnings above £20 will affect the level of award).

Independent Living Fund
This is a resource to help disabled people pay for home care services. Payments are discretionary and depend on meeting certain criteria. To qualify you must be on the higher rate care component of DLA and receive £320 per week of social services support. The amount you receive is based on the cost of the care you need and your savings, income and other benefits. The maximum available payment is £455 per week.

Priority is given to applications from people working at least 16 hours per week, whether employed or self-employed and earnings are disregarded. For more information ask your Local Authority Social Services Department, visit the ILF website at www.ilf.org.uk, call 0845 601 8815, or email funds@ilf.org.uk.

Charitable grants
There are many charitable institutions that provide grants for individuals, depending on their circumstances. You can find appropriate charities from the organisation Turn2us (see contact details below). Also, the Directory of Social Change produces a helpful book called *The Guide to Grants for Individuals in Need*, available at www.dsc.org.uk.

Jobcentre Plus Schemes

Jobcentre Plus provides a range of schemes to help disabled people back into work, some of which include assistance with various expenses when you return. Of particular relevance are Access to Work, Work Trials, Pathways to Work, New Deal for Disabled People and the Travel-to-Interview scheme.

For more information on all these schemes see the Headway factsheet *Returning to work – help and support services*.

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Further Information

For further information and advice on financial assistance, see the following:

- Local Jobcentre Plus offices and Disability Employment Advisors
- Local Citizens' Advice Bureau offices – details can be found in your local telephone directory or at www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- Local Authority Social Services departments – details are provided in local telephone directories
- The government website at www.direct.gov.uk
- The Jobcentre Plus website at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
- The Benefits Enquiry Line on 0800 882 200
- Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance Helpline on 08457 123 456
- Tax Credits Helpline on 0845 300 3900
- Local Disability Information and Advice Line (DIAL UK) offices – details are available at www.dialuk.info or on 01302 310 123
- The Independent Living Fund (ILF) at www.ilf.org.uk, on 0845 601 8815, or by email at funds@ilf.org.uk
- You can apply for benefits online on the Department for Work and Pensions website at www.dwp.gov.uk/eservice
- Turn2us (information on benefits and grants) – visit www.turn2us.org.uk, or call 0808 802 2000

To discuss any issues raised in this factsheet, or to find details of our local Groups and Branches, please contact the Headway helpline free of charge on 0808 800 2244, or by email at helpline@headway.org.uk. You can also find more information and contact details of Groups and Branches on our website at www.headway.org.uk.

Headway produces a range of booklets and factsheets covering brain injury related issues. Booklets cost £3.50 each and can be ordered from the website or on 0115 924 0800. Factsheets are freely downloadable from the website. Brain injury survivors and carers can receive free copies of appropriate booklets from the helpline.

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