



Gingerbread Recession Bulletin

0808 802 0925
Gingerbread Single Parent Helpline

NEWS FOR SINGLE PARENTS

Gingerbread action on Child Benefit delays

Single parents calling our helpline have been telling us about problems claiming Child Benefit.

Of particular concern are delays transferring the Child Benefit claim from one parent to another when the main carer of the child changes.

Before Child Benefit can be paid to someone else, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) must check with the other parent that the child no longer lives with them. To make the process faster, it is helpful if the parent giving up Child Benefit can phone HMRC to tell them of the change in circumstances. However, this is not always possible, for example if the other parent cannot be found or refuses to act.

We know that delays are still causing problems for many of our callers. We have written to Stephen Timms MP, the Minister in charge, to ask for an urgent meeting to discuss what is going wrong and how to fix it. We are working with Citizens Advice to tackle this as we know parents using their services are also seeing problems.

Child maintenance changes

From 12 April 2010 any money you receive in child maintenance payments will no longer be taken into account when calculating your entitlement to Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance.

Before this date, any child maintenance you get over £20 per week will affect the amount of these benefits that you can receive.

From 12 April 2010, single parents will be able to keep all of their benefit and all of their child maintenance. This means that if you already claim these benefits, you may receive more. If you have previously not qualified for these benefits because of the amount of child maintenance you receive, you should make a new claim for them by contacting Jobcentre Plus on 0800 055 6688.

News for single parents who used to receive Income Support

Single parents unable to work due to ill-health or disability are being invited to return to Income Support if their claim was ended between 27 October 2008 and 30 December 2009.

Your Income Support claim may have stopped during this period because your youngest child was aged 10 or over. Some single parents were advised to claim another benefit such as Employment and Support Allowance or Jobseeker's Allowance instead. However, if at the time your claim ended, you were unable to work due to ill-health or disability, you may have been able to stay on Income Support.

Before your Income Support ended, you should have been asked about your health and if you were able to work. The government has said they made a mistake because they did not ask many single parents about their health condition.

If you qualify, you can apply to receive Income Support again. Single parents affected by this mistake should receive a letter from Jobcentre Plus telling them what to do. Before returning to Income Support, you should check whether you will be better off receiving another benefit.

The rules are complicated. For more information and to find out if they apply to you, call the Gingerbread Single Parent Helpline on Freephone 0808 802 0925.

Healthy Start vouchers

Are you missing out?

Healthy Start vouchers are available for qualifying parents and pregnant women. To qualify you must be:

- > Pregnant and/or have a child under the age of four and be receiving one of the following benefits:
 - Income Support
 - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
 - income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Child Tax Credit but not Working Tax Credit and your household income for tax credit purposes is less than £16,190; **or**
- > Be under the age of 18 and at least 10 weeks pregnant.

If you qualify, you can get vouchers that can be exchanged for vitamins, cows milk (including infant formula), fresh fruit and vegetables.

If you are pregnant and not claiming one of the benefits above, check to see if you become entitled to the vouchers after the birth of your baby. For example, you may qualify if you claim Child Tax Credit after the birth.

To claim, complete the form in the Healthy Start leaflet available from maternity clinics and some doctors surgeries, or by calling their helpline on 0845 607 6823. A health professional such as your midwife, doctor, or health visitor must also sign the form. More information is available at www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Free computers and internet access

Home Access is a government scheme to help low-income families to get access to a computer and the internet at home.

If you qualify, you could get a grant to buy a computer and/or pay for a minimum of one year's internet access. The programme targets families who do not have access to a computer or the internet at home.

To qualify for a grant, your child must live with you, be in school (Years 3 to 9) in a state maintained school in England, and you must claim Child Benefit for them.

In addition, you must be receiving one of the following benefits:

- > free school meals for your child
- > Income Support
- > income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- > income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- > Pension Credit
- > Child Tax Credit but not Working Tax Credit with an annual household income of £16,190 or less.

You can also apply if you fall within Part Six of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999.

For more information visit www.homeaccess.org.uk or call 0333 200 1004.

More from Gingerbread

The following related Gingerbread factsheets are available to download from our website, www.gingerbread.org.uk, or can be requested from our Single Parent Helpline on 0808 802 0925:

- > Claiming Income Support and Child Tax Credit
- > Claiming Jobseeker's Allowance
- > Making arrangements for child maintenance
- > Money during maternity and adoption

Become a Gingerbread member!

Membership is available to all single parents in England and Wales. Join a community of thousands of single parents who benefit from the mutual support, free advice and information provided by Gingerbread. You can also meet other single parents at one of our local support groups.

Visit our website, call 0800 018 4318 or email membership@gingerbread.org.uk

Gingerbread
Single parents, equal families

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The Gingerbread Single Parent Helpline is accredited by the Telephone Helplines Association with the Family Information Direct Quality Standard.

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