##  Benefits

Dealing with where to go for advice, what’s available, and what exactly you should be asking for can be confusing, exhausting, and a bit of a minefield.

It’s always a totally unique experience for every single person.

Not one piece of advice suits all, and as a group of volunteers we legally can not give formal professional advice, or promise what outcomes you would receive from the service you get from the DWP, or the benefits you would receive.

However, some of our members have been through the benefits process themselves, and some have been through it with other members who have ME, assisting them to find the right paths to follow, to gain the advice and support they desperately need for dealing with this often frustrating and tiresome process.

We can therefore help direct you to the help you may need.

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Before we get started, if you are in times of such hardship that you do not have enough money to eat, PLEASE contact your nearest CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau) as soon as possible, if not immediately.

This should happen first and foremost, and above all else.

You can find your nearest CAB by heading to <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/> and inputting your postcode (or town) into their location finder, and it will give you the contact details you need. You can also try contacting them on their new national telephone number on 03444 111 444.

## How do I find out what I could be entitled to?

If you wish to find out which benefits you could be entitled to, visit one of the following websites to find out what could be possible. They're free to use and anonymous:

* [**Turn2us**](https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk/AboutYou?utm_source=BAdviser&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=GovUK) - for information on income-related benefits, tax credits, Council Tax Reduction, Carer’s Allowance, Universal Credit and how your benefits will be affected if you start work or change your working hours

 https://turn2us.org.uk

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* [**Policy in Practice**](https://www.betteroffcalculator.co.uk/#/free) - for information on income-related benefits, tax credits, contribution-based benefits, Council Tax Reduction, Carer’s Allowance, Universal Credit, how these are calculated and how your benefits will be affected if you start work or change your working hour

 https://www.betteroffcalculator.co.uk/

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* [**Entitledto**](https://www.entitledto.co.uk/benefits-calculator/startcalc.aspx?utm_source=BAdviser&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=GovUK) - for information on income-related benefits, tax credits, contribution-based benefits, Council Tax Reduction, Carer’s Allowance, Universal Credit and how your benefits will be affected if you start work

 https://www.entitledto.co.uk/

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When you are ready you can make a new claim for benefit by contacting the Job Centre Plus telephone number on 0800 055 6688.

​Where can I find advice or support?

We always advise people to contact the nearest CAB for advice and support, or any queries you have.

You may have money, benefit, housing or employment problems, and they can advice you whether you are facing a crisis, or just considering your options.

You can find your nearest CAB by heading to <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/> and inputting your postcode (or town) into their location finder, and it will give you the contact details you need.

CAB are in the process of rolling out Adviceline (a national phone service), which even if not active where you live will give you options for recorded information to help you. Contact 03444 111 444.

CAB also offer online guides for completing forms:

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* [Personal Independence Payment (PIP)](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/sick-or-disabled-people-and-carers/pip/help-with-your-claim/fill-in-form/)
* [Employment & Support Allowance (ESA)](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/sick-or-disabled-people-and-carers/employment-and-support-allowance/help-with-your-esa-claim/claiming-esa-filling-in-the-esa1-form/)

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We have also identified the following providers of support locally, who may be helpful to you:

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* [**Richmond AID** provides a Benefits Advice Service designed to help disabled people and people with long-term or terminal conditions with getting their benefit entitlements. The Benefits Service is a free service for people receiving or applying for disability benefits in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. This project is funded by Richmond upon Thames Council and enables us to assist people with benefit reviews so that people receive all the benefits they are entitled to and help with form filling. We can meet people face to face, arrange for telephone consultations or carry out home visits.](http://www.richmondaid.org.uk/benefits-service/)

 http://www.richmondaid.org.uk/benefits-service/

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* [**AgeUK (Surrey)** is an independent local charity providing services across the whole of the county to help people aged 50+ make the most of their life.](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/surrey/about/ageuksurrey/)

​ https://www.ageuk.org.uk/surrey/about/ageuksurrey/

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The following websites offer either online or downloadable guides for assisting you in completing forms for benefits:

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* [**Action for ME** produces a range of factsheets about the benefits available, including information on applying and, if necessary, appealing. You can find links to these on their website.](https://www.actionforme.org.uk/living-with-me/welfare-benefits/)

 https://www.actionforme.org.uk/living-with-me/welfare-benefits/

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* [**Disability Right UK** offer factsheets and guides on their website.](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/benefits-information/factsheets/welfare-reform-factsheets)

 https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/benefits-informati on/factsheets/welfare-reform-factsheets

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* [**Advicenow** offers guides on its website that are easy-to-read and practical. They explain what you need to know, where you need to go, and what you need to do to solve your problem.](http://www.advicenow.org.uk/advicenow-guides)

 ​http://www.advicenow.org.uk/advicenow-guides

* [**M.E. & Chronic Illness Benefits Advice Group** works from a closed Facebook Page with information on](https://www.facebook.com/groups/278260135547189)
* [claiming benefits and support from other members. You can contact the](https://www.facebook.com/groups/278260135547189)
* [group to ask to join. Several of our members already belong to this Group.](https://www.facebook.com/groups/278260135547189)

 https://www.facebook.com/groups/278260135547189

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* [**Child Poverty Action Group** have useful online information on disputing PIP decisions.](http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/ask-cpag-online-disputing-pip-disability-decisions)

http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/ask-cpag-online-disputing-pip-disabilit y-decisions

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* [**seAp**, an independent charity that provides free and confidential advocacy services, provide these online guides.](http://c-app.org.uk/)

 http://c-app.org.uk/

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* **Fight Back 4 Justice** are a non Profit Community Interest Group offering expert welfare benefit advice, help with advocacy & forms for PIP/ESA/DLA.

 They also have a Facebook page (its member feedback - Lawyer is sometimes inundated with appeals).

http://www.fightback4justice.co.uk/

 