

Benefits

Help with the cost of living

Date: May 2023 | Information updated regularly

Please see our website for up-to date information: downs-syndrome.org.uk

If you have questions or concerns, contact the DSA Helpline's Benefits Adviser:

- Monday & Thursday 10am-4pm, Tues & Weds 10am-12.30pm
 - Telephone: 0333 1212 300
 - Email info@downs-syndrome.org.uk
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In response to rising costs we have put this information together. The government have announced additional help which is detailed below marked *

All DSA links which give a little more detail can be found from the link below.

downs-syndrome.org.uk/about-downs-syndrome/lifes-journey/benefits-finance/

The government has a page called **Help for Households** which you may find helpful

helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/

Household Support Fund. You may be able to get help from your council, with things like energy and water bills, food and essential items and also food vouchers to families during the school holidays.

gov.uk/cost-living-help-local-council

Martin Lewis moneysaving site is an excellent source for all things money saving. It is ad free.

moneysavingexpert.com

Additional Cost of Living Payment *

For those on means tested benefit, this payment will be £900, made in 3 instalments, the first £301 between April 25th and May 17th 2023, the second £300 due in autumn 2023 and a final payment of £299 due early spring 2024 (dates to be announced)

In order to qualify for the first amount, you will need to have been in receipt of a qualifying benefit in the assessment period 26 Jan to 25 Feb 2023.

For those on tax credits, payments will be made by HMRC on these dates. It will not be counted as income or deducted from any future benefit.

Pensioners will again receive an additional £150 -£300 if they already receive the Winter Fuel Payment detailed below (they currently receive between £200 to £300) effectively doubling this year's payment. This will be paid with your normal payment from November 2023.

Those receiving disability benefit such as PIP, ADP,DLA,CDP,AA will receive an additional £150 **Disability Cost of Living** Payment between 20 June and 4 July 2023.

All payments are exempt from tax and not counted toward or affecting benefit. They will be paid directly from the government.

Wales – Winter fuel support scheme

An additional scheme closed 28 Feb 23.If you are still waiting to hear after your application, you need to contact your local authority.

If you are experiencing financial hardship, you can apply to the Discretionary assistance fund

gov.wales/discretionary-assistance-fund-daf

Energy Bill support Scheme *

The government introduced a package of help in 2022, in the form of a non-repayable grant, of at least £400 for all domestic electricity consumers. This support ended in March 2023 .

Heating your home

Help with Energy -Warm Home Discount scheme

Some energy providers can help vulnerable people on low incomes.

Generally, this scheme is for:

- those age 75 or over who receive the guaranteed credit element of pension credit.
- and those on a low income.

However, you can still ask your energy supplier if they are able to help. There are around 18 energy providers in this actual scheme. This is called the warm homes discount scheme and it does not affect the cold weather or the winter fuel payment.

For more information you can go to the government website: gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme/overview

Cold weather payment

You may get Cold Weather Payments if you're getting:

- Pension credit
- Income support

- Income based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal credit

Payments are made when your local temperature is either recorded as, or forecast to be, an average of zero degrees Celsius or below over 7 consecutive days. You should receive this payment if within your benefit you receive an amount for:

- a severe or enhanced disability premium
- a pensioner premium
- a child who is disabled
- Child Tax Credit that includes a disability or severe disability element
- a child under 5 living with you

You'll get a payment of £25 for each 7-day period of very cold weather between 1 November and 31 March.

You should automatically receive these payments but ring your job centre if you qualify and have not received them. If you receive universal credit, call on 0800 328 9344.

gov.uk/cold-weather-payment

Winter Fuel Payment

You could get between £100 and £300 tax-free to help pay your heating bills if you were born on or before 25 September 1957. This is known as a 'Winter Fuel Payment'.

* An extra amount is payable just for the year 2023/4. This is called the '**pensioner cost of living payment**'. This will be paid in addition to the winter fuel payment. This extra amount depends on your circumstances, and you can check on the link below.

gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment/how-much-youll-get

Most payments are made automatically between November and December. You should get a letter advising you in October or November and your money by Christmas if eligible.

You usually get a Winter Fuel Payment automatically if you get the State Pension or another social security benefit (not Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction or Child Benefit).

If you qualify but don't get paid automatically, you'll need to make a claim, please ring Winter Fuel Payments helpline for new claimants:

- Telephone: 0800 731 0160
- Textphone: 0800 731 0464
- Monday to Friday: 8:30am to 6.00pm
- gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment

Energy help and advice

The Simple Energy Advice website has information about ways to help you save money with things like upgrading an old boiler or insulation. You can call on 0800 444202

simpleenergyadvice.org.uk

It also has a section where you can look locally and nationally for help with paying your bill or replacing windows, insulation, or boilers.

The British Gas Energy Trust is an independent charitable trust funded by British Gas. It can provide help regardless of who provides your energy

britishgas.co.uk/energy/british-gas-energy-trust.html.

Fuel vouchers

If you have a pre-payment meter and cannot afford to top it up, you may be able to get a fuel voucher from your local council

gov.uk/find-local-council

Help paying energy bills

Gas and electricity companies cannot cut off your supply unless they have first offered you a range of payment methods to help you pay. They must only disconnect your supply as a last resort, and they must give you proper notice first.

British Gas can help whoever your provider is, they also have hints and tips on how to save money.

britishgas.co.uk/energy/british-gas-energy-trust.html

The national debt line has some useful information if you are in energy arrears.

nationaldebline.org/fact-sheet-library/gas-and-electricity-arrears-ew/

Council tax

Council Tax rebate 2022 *

£150 rebate was paid to all people in band A to D. Those who pay through direct debit should have received it automatically, those who pay in other ways needed to get in touch with their council to receive the money.

Some people who were not eligible for this scheme may be eligible for other help as councils were allocated an additional pot of funding to help the most vulnerable. Contact your council about this.

gov.uk/find-local-council

Council Tax help -25% or 50% reduction – not means tested

Are you getting your full exemption? Applies to parents and carers caring for their child aged 18 or over who receives either DLA middle/ higher rate Care or PIP care component. Details are on our website under Council Tax support

downs-syndrome.org.uk/about-downs-syndrome/lifes-journey/benefits-finance/

Food Banks

The Trussell Trust support a nationwide network of food banks and provide emergency food and support to those locked in poverty. They actively campaign for change to end the need for food banks in the UK. There is a search facility to find your nearest food bank.

trusselltrust.org/

There will also be food banks closer to home if you search on the internet for local food banks.

Please call if you are unable to search and need help.

Broadband lower tariff

Some people on Universal credit or low income may qualify for a lower broadband tariff. Not all broadband providers have this tariff, but many do, and a lot of families are unaware and missing out. More information can be found from the link below.

<https://www.uswitch.com/broadband/guides/broadband-deals-for-low-income-families/>

Water

The Water Sure scheme is available for some people with a water meter. It allows you to have your bills capped. This is to make sure that you don't cut back on how much water you use because they are worried about how you will pay your bill. You must be getting a qualifying benefit, and in addition, be responsible for three or more children under 19 in full time education who live with you; OR you or someone living with you must have a medical condition that significantly increases the amount of water used. If you qualify for WaterSure, you will pay no more than the average household bill for your company, even if you use more than the average amount of water.

unitedutilities.com/watersure

Pets

Help with Vets fees

PDSA – free care for your pets if you are on a low income

The animal charity PDSA gives free vet care to pets whose owners are on a low income. (You will be asked to donate.)

To qualify, you have to:

- Live in the catchment area of a PDSA, Pet Aid hospital or Pet Aid practice, and
- Get Housing Benefit/ UC housing costs or Council Tax support and provide proof.

For information, visit

pdsa.org.uk/taking-care-of-your-pet/eligibility

The Down's Syndrome Association

The Down's Syndrome Association provides information and support on all aspects of living with Down's syndrome. We also work to champion the rights of people with Down's syndrome, by campaigning for change and challenging discrimination. A wide range of Down's Syndrome Association publications can be downloaded free of charge from our website.

Contact us

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