

The Social Fund

If you have Parkinson's, you may have some concerns about how you'll manage financially – if you can't work or if you need help with your day-to-day needs, this can lead to extra costs. But there is some financial support available, so it's important to find out what benefits you're entitled to.

This sheet explains what the Social Fund is, who qualifies, how to claim and what information you need to supply.

What is the Social Fund?

The Social Fund is a government fund that makes financial payments to people in need. It is divided into two separate parts: the Regulated Social Fund and the Discretionary Social Fund.

Regulated Social Fund

This covers payments for maternity expenses, funeral expenses, cold weather payments and winter fuel payments. You can receive a payment if you meet the rules for this fund.

If your claim hasn't been allowed for any reason and you don't agree with the decision, you can appeal to an independent tribunal.

Sure Start Maternity Grants

A Sure Start Maternity Grant of £500 for your first child is available if you satisfy all of the rules when you first apply. These are:

- You (or a member of your family) are pregnant or have given birth in the last three months (including stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy), have been appointed as a guardian, adopted or been granted a residence order for a child under the age of one or have been granted a parental care order for a child born to a surrogate mother
- You receive Income Support, Pension Credit, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Tax Credit paid at a higher rate than the family element, or Working Tax Credit which includes the disability or severe disability element.

- You have received health and welfare advice about having a baby.
- You claim in the 11 weeks before your due date, or in the three months following the date of the birth, adoption, residence or parental order.

The claim is made on form SF100 and must be signed by a health professional. You can contact your local Jobcentre Plus office for this form or download a copy from www.directgov.uk

Funeral Payments

This might be available to help you cover the cost of a funeral. But it depends on a number of conditions, including your relationship with the person who has died.

To qualify for a Funeral Payment you have to meet all of these rules:

- You or your partner take responsibility for the cost of a funeral that takes place in the UK (or other EEA countries or Switzerland, in some cases).
- You or your partner get a 'qualifying benefit' – Pension Credit, Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Tax Credit paid at a higher rate than the family element, Working Tax Credit that includes the disability or severe disability element, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit.
- The person who died was ordinarily resident in the UK when they died.

The payment covers a number of costs, including cremation and burial fees.

Miscellaneous costs of up to £700 can also be claimed (or £120 for expenses not covered by a pre-paid funeral plan).

The Funeral Payment can be taken from the estate of the person who has died if there is enough money available.

This section doesn't cover everything about Funeral Payments – to find out more, you can get an SF200 form from your local Jobcentre Plus office.

Cold Weather Payments

You are entitled to £25 for each qualifying week if:

- the average temperature recorded or forecast over seven consecutive days is 0°C or less, and
- you have been awarded Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance for at least one of those days and you are responsible for a child under five, or you are getting Child Tax Credit which includes a disabled or severely disabled child element, or your Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance or Jobseeker's Allowance includes one of the pensioner or disability premiums, or
- you have been awarded Pension Credit or main-phase income-related Employment and Support Allowance for at least one of those days, and
- you are not in a care home

Payments are made automatically by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Winter Fuel Payments

You can get this annual tax-free payment if you have reached the qualifying age (until April 2010, this was 60, between April 2010 and April 2020, it will increase to 66). It is not affected by your income or savings and does not affect any other benefits you may receive.

You can receive £200 if you are the only person in the household entitled to a payment, or £100 if you share a household with one or more other people entitled to a payment (this rises to £300 or £150, respectively, for the over 80s).

You are not entitled to a payment if:

- you have been in hospital for more than 52 weeks
- you are getting Pension Credit, Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or income-based Jobseekers Allowance and you live in a care home and have been in the home for the 12 weeks before your payment
- you are subject to immigration control
- you are serving a custodial sentence

If you have received a Winter Fuel Payment in the past, any payment for this year should be made automatically and you won't have to claim again. To claim your first Winter Fuel Payment, contact the Winter Fuel Payments Helpline on **0845 915 1515** (charged at a local rate, Monday-Friday, 8.30am-4.30pm). You should get the payment sent to you in December.

Discretionary Social Fund

In some cases, you might be able to get a one-off lump sum payment from the Social Fund if you need it. These payments are made as a grant or as an interest-free loan.

You are not legally entitled to a payment. The payments are discretionary and are limited by budget. You don't have the right to appeal if you don't get a payment, but it is possible to ask for an internal review of the decision by the Department of Work and Pensions. If you're not happy with a review decision, you can ask for another review by a Social Fund inspector.

There are three types of payment:

- Community Care Grants
- Budgeting Loans
- Crisis Loans

The Government intends to replace Community Care grants and Crisis Loans for general living expenses with a new service delivered by local authorities. This will happen in April 2013 at the earliest.

Community Care Grant

- You can apply for this if you receive Pension Credit, Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or income-based Jobseekers Allowance. It's for if you need help to live independently in the community.
- You must not have too much capital (this is usually your income and any savings, minus your debts). Your grant would be reduced if you have savings of over £500 (or £1,000 if you or your partner are aged 60 or over).
- You can't apply for a grant for an item or service for which you have been awarded or refused a

grant within the last 28 days, unless there has been a relevant change of circumstances.

The grant would normally cover things like:

- helping you to settle into the community if you've just left a care home
- helping you to stay out of a care home or hospital
- easing exceptional pressures on a family
- helping towards the cost of travel expenses within the UK to visit someone who is ill, or to ease a domestic crisis

When you apply for a Community Care Grant, your personal circumstances will be looked at. The person making the decision will look at whether you're thought to be vulnerable or if you have particular needs, including restricted mobility and chronic physical or mental illness

You might also be considered for a grant if your family is under exceptional pressure. These include a breakdown or reconciliation of a relationship.

The amount of money available from a Community Care Grant varies. There is no maximum award.

The minimum amount is £30, but this does not apply to grants for travelling and daily living expenses.

To apply for a Community Care Grant: contact your local Jobcentre Plus office and ask for form SF300. If you apply for a grant, it is important that you show how your personal situation may be seen as a high priority.

Budgeting Loans

A Budgeting Loan is only available for specific expenses. These include:

- furniture and household equipment
- clothing and footwear
- improvement, upkeep and security of the home
- rent in advance and/or removal expenses to get new accommodation
- money you have to pay out when either seeking work or starting a new job

- hire purchase and other debts related to any of the above

To qualify for a Budgeting Loan:

- You must have been receiving Income Support, Pension Credit, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance for at least 26 weeks when your application is considered.
- You must not have too much capital. The amount of any loan you get will be reduced on a pound-for-pound basis by any savings you or your partner have over £1,000 (or £2,000 if you or your partner are aged 60 or over).

Awards are made by taking your personal circumstances into account. Who qualifies for an award varies in different areas.

Note: The decision maker will only make an award that you are able to pay back. You normally have to back back the loan within 104 weeks (two years).

To apply for a Budgeting Loan ask for claim form SF500 from your local Jobcentre Plus office.

Crisis Loans

You don't have to be receiving a qualifying benefit to get a Crisis Loan, but all your personal resources are taken into account, including most types of savings. To qualify:

- you must be aged 16 or over
- you must need the loan because of an emergency or disaster or to pay rent in advance
- you must be unable to meet your immediate short-term needs from any money you already have

There are certain items that are not allowed to be claimed for under rules for Crisis Loans.

The rules can be found in the application pack, available from your local Jobcentre Plus office.

You can also apply for a crisis loan by calling **0845 603 6967**.

More information and support

We have information sheets on other benefits you may be entitled to. You can download these from our website at **parkinsons.org.uk** or see the back page of this sheet for details of how to order these for free.

Our helpline

For more help and information on rights and benefits, you can contact our dedicated employment and benefits adviser on the Parkinson's UK helpline on **0808 800 0303** (calls are free from UK landlines and most mobile networks) or email **hello@parkinsons.org.uk**

Information and support workers

Our UK-wide network of information and support workers can also provide details about benefits and help you with the application process. You can find your local information and support worker online at **parkinsons.org.uk/isw** or call our helpline for details.

Local groups

Speak to others about their experiences at your local Parkinson's UK group. Visit **parkinsons.org.uk/localgroups** or call our helpline for details of your nearest meeting.

Online forum

Speak to others in a similar situation through our online discussion forum at **parkinsons.org.uk/forum**.

Thank you

Thank you to Disability Alliance for updating this information sheet.



The Social Fund

If you have comments or suggestions about this information sheet, we'd love to hear from you. This will help us ensure that we are providing as good a service as possible.

We'd be very grateful if you could complete this form and return it to [Information Resources, Parkinson's UK, 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ](#). Or you can email us at publications@parkinsons.org.uk. Thanks!

Please tick...

- I have Parkinson's. When were you diagnosed?
- I'm family/a friend/a carer of someone with Parkinson's
- I'm a professional working with people with Parkinson's

Where did you get this information sheet from?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> GP, specialist or Parkinson's nurse | <input type="checkbox"/> Information and support worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parkinson's UK local group or event | <input type="checkbox"/> Ordered from us directly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our website | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

We're the Parkinson's support and research charity. Help us find a cure and improve life for everyone affected by Parkinson's.

Can you help?

At Parkinson's UK, we are totally dependent on donations from individuals and organisations to fund the work that we do. There are many ways that you can help us to support people with Parkinson's. If you would like to get involved, please contact our Supporter Services team on **020 7932 1303** or visit our website at **parkinsons.org.uk/support**. Thank you.

Parkinson's UK

Free* confidential helpline **0808 800 0303**

Monday to Friday 9am–8pm, Saturday 10am–2pm. Interpreting available.

Text Relay **18001 0808 800 0303**

(for textphone users only)

hello@parkinsons.org.uk

parkinsons.org.uk

*calls are free from UK landlines and most mobile networks.

How to order our resources

01473 212115

resources@parkinsons.org.uk

parkinsons.org.uk/publications

We make every effort to make sure that our services provide up-to-date, unbiased and accurate information. We hope that this will add to any professional advice you receive and will help you to make any decisions you may face. Please do continue to talk to your health and social care team if you are worried about any aspect of living with Parkinson's.

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How useful have you found the information sheet? (1 is not useful, 4 is very useful) 1 2 3 4

Have you found the publication easy to read/use? Yes No

What aspects did you find most helpful?

Were you looking for any information that wasn't covered?

Do you have any other comments?

If you would like to become a member of Parkinson's UK, or are interested in joining our information review group, please complete the details below and we'll be in touch.

Membership Information review group (who give us feedback on new and updated resources)

Name

Address

Telephone Email