



## **Your Rights and Social Security Benefits**

You cannot receive benefits in your own right until you reach the age of sixteen.

At this age you are entitled to apply for and receive most of the benefits, which adults can apply for and receive. Some benefits, however, require that you have paid what is called National Insurance (this is paid to the Government by all workers earning over a certain amount).

At 16, 17 or even 18 it is doubtful if you would have paid enough National Insurance to access benefits like Incapacity Benefit.

There are lots of benefits, though, which do not require you to have paid National Insurance. You will still have to satisfy the conditions of entitlement and sometimes this can be difficult.

### **Child Benefit**

If you are responsible for a child then you are entitled to claim and receive Child Benefit.

### **Disability Living Allowance**

If you have a disability, which means you need help with your personal care, things like getting up, dressing, cooking a meal, taking medication etc. OR you have difficulty with

walking or getting around then you may be entitled to Disability Living Allowance in your own right from age 16.

### **Invalid Care Allowance**

If you are aged 16 or over and regularly care for a disabled person such as a disabled parent and they are in receipt of either Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance then you may be entitled to Invalid Care Allowance for looking after them.

### **Incapacity Benefit**

If you are over 16, not in full time education, but not able to work, due to some disability, then you might be entitled to incapacity benefit. This can be fairly complicated and you should seek advice from the Children's Law Centre if you feel you may be entitled.

### **Job Seekers Allowance**

If you are 16 or 17 and have left school you usually have to sign up for a Jobskills training programme but in certain circumstances you might be able to claim Jobseekers Allowance when you are unemployed. If you think you might qualify seek advice from the Children's Law Centre.

### **Income Support**

If you are over 16 and pregnant, or responsible for a child, or disabled,

or estranged from your parents or someone acting in place of your parents then you may well be entitled to Income Support even while still at school. Like Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support is a weekly amount of money for you to live on. Income Support can be very complicated and if you think you might be entitled seek advice from the Children's Law Centre.

### **Working Families Tax Credit**

If you are over 16 and responsible for a child and you work more than 16 hours per week you will probably be entitled to some Working Families Tax Credit on top of your wages. This can be claimed either by someone bringing up a child on their own or by a couple. Claims for this benefit are made to the Inland Revenue.

### **Disabled Person's Tax Credit**

If you are over 16 and suffer from a physical or mental disability, which puts you at a disadvantage in getting a job then you may be entitled to Disabled Persons Tax Credit on top of your earnings if you work for more than 16 hours per week. Claims for this benefit are made to the Inland Revenue.

### **Housing Benefit**

If you are over 16 and a tenant in rented accommodation like a Housing Executive property or

privately rented property or you rent a room in a shared house then you might be entitled to Housing Benefit for help with the costs of the rent and rates. Claims for this benefit are made to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

### **Maternity Allowance**

If you are not working and pregnant but have previously worked for an employer for at least six months then you may be entitled to Maternity Allowance. If you are working and are pregnant then you should receive Statutory Maternity Pay from your employer. If either of these situations applies then contact the Children's Law Centre for advice, as there may be other things you are entitled to.

### **Other Benefits**

You are entitled to free prescriptions up to the age of 16 (19 if in full-time education).

You are entitled to free dental treatment up to the age of 18.

You are entitled to free sight tests and help with glasses or contact lenses up to the age of 16 (19 if in full-time education).

Remember you can phone the Children's Law Centre for advice and information. Our details are on the back of this leaflet.