

Benefits advice in BSL

- Hello and welcome to this Citizens Advice BSL film about benefits.
- This film will give you basic information about benefits. For more detailed information, please go to our website www.adviceguide.org.uk, or to your local Citizens Advice Bureau.
- You can find your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau by searching online at www.citizensadvice.org.uk.
- Lots of people find benefits confusing. People are often put off applying for benefits because the paperwork can be complicated and sometimes the forms are hard to understand.
- But lots of people are entitled to benefits who don't think they are, and help is available if you get stuck with your application.
- There are lots of different benefits available that you might be eligible for. For example, you might be able to get benefits if:
 - you are working
 - you are disabled
 - you have children
 - you are over sixty
 - to help with housing costs.
- It's important to remember that you can be working and might be able to claim some benefits. Often we see clients who are worse off working because they have not claimed the right benefits.
- One of the most common problems Deaf people find is getting help with housing costs. Many part-time workers assume they can't claim housing allowances, when often they can. Or often young Deaf people leave home and don't realise they are entitled to severe disability premium and Disability Living Allowance.
- The easiest way to find out what you are entitled to is to get a **benefits check** or a **better off calculation**. You can do this by going to your local Citizens Advice Bureau or your local benefits agency.
- You can also check what benefits you can get online at www.direct.gov.uk.
- When you have checked what benefits you can get, you will need to apply for the benefits you are entitled to.

- You can get the forms to apply for benefits from your local benefits agency, online at www.direct.gov.uk or from your local Citizens Advice Bureau.
- You can fill in the forms yourself, but if you have any problems you can ask your local Citizens Advice Bureau for help. You can also get help from a benefits agency, who must provide an interpreter if you need one to help you fill in the forms.
- Not all Citizens Advice Bureaux have advisers who can use BSL. But when you come in to a bureau you can ask to book an appointment with an adviser and ask for an interpreter. Or you can come with a friend or a colleague if you feel more comfortable.
- If you come to a Citizens Advice Bureau for an appointment, make sure you bring any paperwork, or medical documents that are relevant. For example, if you have medical issues, bring a letter from your consultant, and a list of medication you might use. If you already have some benefits, bring information from the Department for Work and Pensions, evidence of how much rent or mortgage you pay and if appropriate, a wage slip.
- The adviser will ask you a few questions about your circumstances. This will help the adviser get an idea of your circumstances. We might need to know a few details about your family life – such as your age, the age of your children and your health. We might also ask about your partner's income as well. Don't worry, this information is confidential, and is to give us a picture of how best to help you.
- Sometimes, applications for benefits are turned down. If you want to appeal a decision about your benefits, an adviser at a Citizens Advice Bureau should be able to help you.
- Remember – don't leave your appeal too long. If you don't hear from the benefits agency, come into your local Citizens Advice Bureau and we can help you chase up your appeal. One client waited for seven months, and was refused his appeal because the delay was too long.
- People also come to Citizens Advice about claiming Working Tax Credits. There are sometimes problems with overpayments of tax credits, and people are told they have to pay money back. This can be complicated, so if you are in this situation get advice, for example from a Citizens Advice Bureau, as soon as you can.
- Many clients assume they can't challenge tax credit overpayments, but they also can't pay the money back. It is definitely worth checking your tax credits are right, so you can challenge the decision if necessary.

www.adviceguide.org.uk

- As we said at the beginning, this is just a basic guide. So for more specialist information, please contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau or look at our information on the internet at www.adviceguide.org.uk.
- You can also get more detailed information about benefits in BSL from Community Legal Advice, on their website at www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk.

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