



Borderwise: Social Welfare

The Social Welfare system in Northern Ireland is complex and detailed therefore it is very difficult to provide a comprehensive guide. This information sheet is intended only to provide a general overview of benefits which are available. A more detailed description of the Social Security benefits which are available and how Frontier status will affect your entitlement to these benefits can be found by visiting the Department for Social Developments website at www.dsdni.gov.uk



Social Security Agency

The Social Security Agency is an agency of the Northern Ireland Department for Social Development. It assesses and pays social security benefits and provides services on behalf of the UK Department for Work and Pensions. There are Social Security/Jobs and Benefits Offices in main towns throughout Northern Ireland. You can get application forms and further information about all benefits from these offices. Further information can be obtained by visiting the department's website www.dsdni.gov.uk or by contacting the Benefit Enquiry Line: 0800 220 674



Jobseeker's Allowance

If you are unemployed you may qualify for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). This is either a national insurance based payment (contribution based JSA) or a means tested payment (income based JSA). Effectively it is the equivalent of Jobseekers Benefit and Jobseekers Allowance in the Republic of Ireland (ROI).

You should apply at the Social Security/Jobs and Benefits Office.

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

You may get SSP from your employer for up to 28 weeks if you become ill while you are employed and your earnings are at least on average equal to the Lower Earnings Limit for national insurance contributions (£87 a week from 06 April 2007). SSP is payable from the fourth day of illness. There is no qualifying period of employment but employment must have commenced. You must be aged between 16 and 65 when you start to receive it. It is paid to you and subject to tax in the same way as your normal pay. If you are still ill when your SSP ends, you may qualify for Incapacity Benefit.

Incapacity Benefit

You may qualify for Incapacity Benefit if you are unable to work because of illness or disability; you are under the state pension age, are not entitled to Statutory Sick Pay and have enough social insurance contributions. You get a short term rate for the first 28 weeks, a higher rate for a further 24 weeks and the long term rate after that. Incapacity Benefit is based on your incapacity for work in your normal occupation for the first 28 weeks of incapacity (The own occupation test) and your incapacity for all work from the 29th week of incapacity (The Personal Capability Assessment).

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Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

You may qualify for DLA if you are ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland (NI), aged under 65 and you need help to look after yourself, or if you are aged between 5 and 65 and have difficulty walking or getting around. You must normally have lived in NI for at least 26 of the last 52 weeks. The amount you get depends on how much care you need (care component) and the amount of difficulty you have in getting around (mobility component).

Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)

You may get Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) when you stop work to have your baby. It is paid by your employer. SMP is payable if you have been employed by the same employer for at least 26 weeks ending with the qualifying week, which is 15 weeks before the baby is due. You must also still be in the job in the qualifying week and have average weekly earnings of at least the national insurance lower earnings limit. It is payable for 39 weeks if the expected week of childbirth begins on or after 01 April 07.

Statutory Paternity Pay

Statutory Paternity Pay is subject to PAYE and National Insurance Contributions and can be paid to an employee whose partner is expecting a child/children. Statutory Paternity pay can start at any time from the birth of the child until 56 days after the birth. It is paid for a maximum of two weeks.

Child Benefit

You may get Child Benefit if you are caring for a child under 16 or between 16 and 19 and in full time education. There is no means test. Further information can be found by visiting HM Revenue and Customs website: www.hmrc.gov.uk or by contacting the Child Benefit helpline: 0845 603 2000

Tax credits

Tax credits are an income based credit for people who are in low-paid employment and people who have children. Entitlement to Tax Credits is calculated on a yearly basis and paid by HM Revenue and Customs. For further information contact the Tax credits Helpline: 0845 603 2000

Working Tax Credit

You may claim Working Tax Credit (WTC) if you are employed or self-employed and you are on a low income. You must be working a minimum number of hours each week – people with children and people with disabilities must be working at least 16 hours a week while others must be working at least 30 hours a week. The amount of WTC depends on your income, the number of hours you work, and whether you have children. Extra amounts are payable to people with disabilities.

Contact Details

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