



Benefits for kinship carers

Are you a grandparent raising your grandchild, or a friend or relative bringing up a child who is not your own? If so, you are likely to be entitled to certain benefits.

This factsheet includes information on **Child Benefit**, **Child Tax Credit**, **Universal Credit**, **Guardian's Allowance** and other sources of financial help. Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to claim other benefits - see our website for details.

1. Child Benefit

Child Benefit is paid to people who are bringing up a child aged under 16, or a young person aged under 20 if they are in full-time non-advanced education or on an approved training course.

You can claim Child Benefit for each child for whom you are responsible unless you are being paid a fostering allowance for that child. Child Benefit is £21.05 a week for the eldest or only child and £13.95 for each additional child. You don't pay tax on Child Benefit and it doesn't affect your entitlement to means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, Universal Credit or Income Support.

If you claim Child Benefit for a child aged under 12 and you're not working or you don't earn enough to pay National Insurance, you'll qualify for National Insurance credits that can protect your future entitlement to State Retirement Pension.

You do not have to be the child's parent to be awarded Child Benefit, but only one person can be awarded Child Benefit for a particular child. If more than one person claims Child Benefit, the person the child lives with will have priority.

You may be able to receive up to three months' arrears (back payments) of Child Benefit. However, if someone else has been receiving benefit for the child, you are not usually entitled to arrears. Instead, if your claim takes priority, you will have to wait four weeks from the date of your claim before you can be paid, unless the other person withdraws their claim or stops

Useful Contacts

Child Benefit Office

0300 200 3100
gov.uk/child-benefit

Tax Credit Helpline

0345 300 3900
gov.uk/child-tax-credit

Guardian's allowance Helpline

0300 322 9080
gov.uk/guardians-allowance

Universal Credit

0800 328 5644
gov.uk/universal-credit

qualifying for Child Benefit for another reason. It can take several weeks to process a Child Benefit claim - particularly if there are competing claims for the same child.

Eligibility for Child Benefit does not depend on your income. However, you may be liable to pay a High Income Child Benefit Charge if you or your partner has an individual income of more than £50,000 a year. The charge may also apply if someone else receives Child Benefit for a child who lives with you. See [gov.uk/child-benefit-tax-charge](https://www.gov.uk/child-benefit-tax-charge) for more information.

To obtain a Child Benefit claim form go to [gov.uk/child-benefit](https://www.gov.uk/child-benefit) or phone the Child Benefit Helpline on 0300 200 3100.

Q

My grandson has been living with me for the last six months. My daughter doesn't live with us, but she still receives Child Benefit for him. She buys him some clothes every now and then, but hardly ever gives me any money towards his keep. It would really help if I could get the Child Benefit for him, but I don't know if I'm entitled to it?

A

There are limits laid down in law for how long people can keep getting Child Benefit once a child is no longer living with them. Your daughter lost her entitlement to receive Child Benefit for your grandson once he had lived with you for eight weeks, unless she continues to contribute to the cost of supporting him. To satisfy this condition, she must contribute at least the amount of Child Benefit payable for him. Even if your daughter were contributing to your grandson's maintenance, any claim you make would have priority, because he is living with you – but you may need to provide evidence of this. It's also worth bearing in mind that receiving Child Benefit could mean that you become eligible for other financial help - such as free school meals or extra Housing Benefit.

2. Child Tax Credit

Child Tax Credit is a benefit for people who are bringing up a child, or a young person aged under 20 who is in full-time non-advanced education or on an approved training course.

However, Child Tax Credit has now been replaced by Universal Credit for most people (please see below).

From 1st February 2019, you will no longer be able to make a new claim for child tax credits if you are state pension age. People of state pension age who become responsible for a child or young person will receive an additional amount called a 'child addition' by claiming Pension Credit.

You can only make a claim for Child Tax Credit in limited circumstances – please refer to [gov.uk/claim-tax-credits](https://www.gov.uk/claim-tax-credits).

If limited circumstances apply - you can claim Child Tax Credit for children who normally live with you unless you are receiving a fostering allowance for them. If more than one claim is made for the same child, it will be paid to the person who has main responsibility for the child.

You can get Child Tax Credit whether or not you are working. Payments depend on your family circumstances and income. If you have a partner living with you, you must make a joint claim.

Not all income is taken into account when calculating entitlement to Child Tax Credit. For example, Special Guardianship, Residence and Child Arrangements Order allowances are ignored, as are certain benefits.

You can get extra Child Tax Credit for a child who is getting Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or is registered blind.

From April 2017 payments of Child Tax Credit have been limited to two children. This means that in most cases third or subsequent children born after April 2017 will not be eligible for support (although they may still receive a disability element and/or the childcare element of Working Tax Credit).

There are certain exceptions to this rule, including children who are living long-term with family and friends. The two child limit will not apply if a child is living with you under a formal caring arrangement or if they would otherwise have been looked after by a local authority. For more information see [gov.uk/guidance/child-tax-credit-exceptions-to-the-2-child-limit](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/child-tax-credit-exceptions-to-the-2-child-limit).

You can use the online calculator at [gov.uk/tax-credits-calculator](https://www.gov.uk/tax-credits-calculator) to get an estimate of your tax credits entitlement. Alternatively, call our advice service for a benefits check.

A tax credit claim can usually be backdated by up to one month. You should make it clear on the application form if you want the claim to be backdated.

The amount of tax credits you receive is reviewed each year. If your circumstances change in the meantime (for example, your income goes up or down) you should tell the Tax Credit Office as soon as possible. This is important because otherwise you may not be paid all the tax credits you are entitled to, or you may receive too much and have to pay it back.

To apply for Child Tax Credit you need to complete a claim form. You can apply for Working Tax Credit on the same form. To obtain a form go to [gov.uk/claim-tax-credits](https://www.gov.uk/claim-tax-credits) or phone the Tax Credits Helpline on 0345 300 3900.

3. Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a new benefit for people of working age. It is currently being rolled out across the country, and will eventually replace Child Tax Credit as well as several other benefits.

Universal Credit is a single benefit that includes amounts for adults, children and housing costs. The amount of Universal Credit you can receive depends on your circumstances, income and savings. It replaces the following benefits and can be paid to both working and non-working households:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit.

As with Child Tax Credit, the child element of Universal Credit will not usually be paid for third or subsequent children born after April 2017, although the same exceptions apply. The two child limit will not apply if a child is living with you under a formal caring arrangement or if they would otherwise have been looked after by a local authority.

What you'll get

How much Universal Credit you get will depend on your earnings and personal circumstances.

Your Universal Credit payment is made up of a standard allowance and any extra amounts that apply to you, for example if you:

- have children
- have a disability or health condition which prevents you from working
- need help paying your rent

You can obtain further information about how much Universal Credit you will get via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/what-youll-get>.

The child element of Universal Credit is not payable if you are receiving a foster allowance for a child.

See our website page on Universal Credit for further information about this benefit:

<https://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/for-kinship-carers/advice-and-support/benefits-and-tax-credits/universal-credit/> - To make a claim go to [gov.uk/apply-universal-credit](https://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit). For help making a claim, you can call the Universal Credit helpline on - 0800 328 5644.

4. Pension Credit (Child Element)

From 1st February 2019, people of pension credit aged who become responsible for a child or young person, will received an additional amount called 'child addition' within their pension credit award. You will no longer be able to make a new claim for child tax credits if you are state pension age.

The basic requirements are:

- You are 'responsible' for a child or qualifying young person
- The child or qualifying person lives with you
- You do not already have an award of (and you are not treated as having an award of) a tax credit - ie, child tax credit (CTC) or working tax credit (WTC)

A 'child' is a person under the age of 16 or someone aged 16 or more but under 20 and who counts as a 'qualifying young person'.

A 'qualifying young person' refers to young persons in approved training, or non-advanced education at school or college for an average of over 12 hours per week, until the September following the person's 19th birthday.

If the above basic requirements are satisfied, an 'additional amount' will be included in the calculation of your pension credit claim.

What you will receive:

- Single Person £173.75 per week
- Couples £265.20 per week

The additional amount is £64.82 per week for a child (only / eldest child born before 6 April 2017) & £54.32 per week for any other children. This amount is increased by further amounts if the child has a disability - £29.52 per week (lower rate) or £92.12 per week (higher rate).

You can obtain further information about Pension Credit and Child Addition via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/what-youll-get>.

Only certain types of income count for Pension Credit and not all your income will be taken into account. Some income will be assumed from any savings above £10,000.

If you are receiving Guarantee Credit, you will get maximum Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. If you have a mortgage or home loan, you may be eligible for help towards your interest payments in the form of a loan.

Mixed aged couples

As a result of new benefit changes from the 15th May 2019, if you are part of a couple you will be expected to claim Universal Credit as a couple until you both reach Pension Credit age. However, if you are already getting Pension Credit before the 15th May 2019, you can continue receiving it even if your partner has not yet reached the Pension Credit qualifying age.

You can contact our advice service or go to gov.uk to find out whether you qualify for Pension Credit and how much you should get. You should apply for Pension Credit by phoning the national telephone claim line on **0800 99 1234**.

5. Guardian's Allowance

You may be able to get Guardian's Allowance if you are caring for a child because their parents have died.

Sometimes, you can get Guardian's Allowance if only one parent has died, for example, if:

- the other parent's whereabouts or paternity is unknown
- the parents were divorced or their civil partnership has been dissolved and the surviving parent isn't paying maintenance
- the surviving parent is in prison or is detained in hospital by a court order (sectioned).

Guardian's allowance is currently £17.90 per week. You may be able to receive up to three months back payments if you qualified for it during that period.

You can check if you are eligible for Guardian's Allowance and get an application form by phoning the Guardian's Allowance Helpline on 0300 322 9080 or from <https://www.gov.uk/guardians-allowance>.

6. Other sources of financial help

You may be entitled to other benefits, depending on your income and savings, or your other circumstances (for example if you are looking after a disabled child). If you are on a low income you might be able to receive free school meals or other financial help.

Financial support may also be available from the local authority. Depending on the legal arrangement, you may be able to receive a fostering allowance, Special Guardianship allowance or Residence/Child Arrangements Order allowance. If you are raising a child with no local authority involvement you may still be able to get some financial support under section 17 of the Children Act. However, this is a complicated area of law and practice is variable.

You may be able to apply for a grant from a charity to help you pay for items that your family needs. Contact our advice service for information about suitable charities or visit our website

<https://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/for-kinship-carers/advice-and-support/>

If the child you are looking after has a parent or parents living somewhere else in the UK, or working abroad for a UK-based employer, you may be able to receive child maintenance from them. Contact Child Maintenance Options for more information – visit: <https://www.gov.uk/making-child-maintenance-arrangement> or phone 0800 083 4375.

Q

I have thought about claiming these benefits, but I'm not sure if this extra income would reduce the amount of Pension Credit I receive?

A

Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Guardian's Allowance are ignored when calculating your entitlement to Pension Credit and to other means-tested benefits including Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit.

If you think that a benefits decision may be wrong, you can ask for it to be looked at again. If you are still unhappy with the decision, you may be able to appeal against it. Your decision letter will explain your options and time limits. You can contact us for advice if you are in this situation.

Please note: If you have come from abroad to live in the UK, you should check that your immigration status does not prevent you applying for benefits. If in any doubt, you should get advice from an immigration solicitor or your local Citizens Advice Bureau, as a claim can sometimes affect your right to remain in the UK.

Grandparents Plus advice service provides:

Independent advice and information on a wide range of other issues including employment, housing, education, disability parenting and legal options.

Open Mon – Fri 9.30am – 3.30pm. Translation service available.
Call 0300 123 7015 or email: advice@grandparentsplus.org.uk
www.grandparentsplus.org.uk

This factsheet is for information only and should not be taken as a full statement of the law.
Last updated April 2020.