

## Getting Benefits Advice

Dealing with benefits claims and appeals can be complex and time consuming. A little knowledge can be dangerous, and when it comes to obtaining benefits advice, this is definitely true! We believe it is very important to access benefits advice from a trained advisor who has access to the latest updates on changes to entitlements and legislation because things alter constantly.

Organisations such as Breakthrough can give you an overview of benefits, and point you in the right direction for specialist advice tailored to your current circumstances. Local libraries are also a useful source of information on providers and advice sessions.

This booklet gives details of advisor services in your area. Some of these organisations require you to make an appointment to access their services.

**Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB)** provide free, confidential and independent advice from nearly 3,400 locations across the country. Advice is available face-to-face and by telephone. Most bureaux offer home visits and some provide email advice. To locate your nearest CAB, visit [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk), or contact us on **0161 273 5412** for the details of your local bureau.

**Community Legal Advice** helpline gives free advice to people eligible for Legal Aid about benefits and tax credits, debt, education, employment and housing problems. Tel: **0845 345 4 345**. Minicom: 0845 609 6677 between 9am and 6.30pm, Monday to Friday. Website: [www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk](http://www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk).

**Local Welfare Rights Services** often provide drop-in benefits advice at venues around a borough or city as well as in a central office. Many also have dedicated workers for people from minority ethnic groups, members of the Deaf community; people affected by HIV / AIDS, people with mental health issues and other groups. They can usually only offer advice to people living within the borough they serve.

**1. Manchester Advice's Welfare Rights Service** is available to residents of Manchester and includes advice on benefits.

Telephone advice (voice and textphone): **0161 234 5678** (Mon to Fri 10am to 4pm)

Details of drop-ins and other services can be found online or by contacting us.

Website: [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/a\\_to\\_z/service/753/welfare\\_rights](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/a_to_z/service/753/welfare_rights)

Online advice in Manchester can also be found at: [www.advicekit.info](http://www.advicekit.info)

**2. Stockport Welfare Rights** advice is available by phone and at different local venues. Debt advice by appointment only. A home visiting service is available and also a dedicated advisor for people affected by cancer. Contact reception for details.

Tel: **0161 474 3093** (reception)  
Advice Line: **0161 474 3091** Monday-Friday 9am-1pm  
In-Patient Advisor: **0161 419 4288** (based at Stepping Hill Hospital)  
Email: [welfare.rights@stockport.gov.uk](mailto:welfare.rights@stockport.gov.uk)  
Address: 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Regal House, Duke Street, Stockport SK1 3DA

### **3. Salford Welfare Rights & Debt Advice Service**

Welfare Rights Advice Line: **0800 345 7375** (Mon to Fri 10am to 12noon)  
Debt Advice Line: **0800 345 7323** (Mon, Wed, and Fri 1pm to 4pm)  
Online referral: [www.salford.gov.uk/welfarerights](http://www.salford.gov.uk/welfarerights)

### **4. Tameside Welfare Rights Service**

Freephone Advice Line on **08000 74 99 85**, Mon, Wed and Thur 9.30am to 12.30pm  
See website for details of drop-ins and other services, or get in touch.  
Website: [www.tameside.gov.uk/welfare/new/welfare.htm](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/welfare/new/welfare.htm)

### **5. Trafford Welfare Rights**

The service is based at various locations throughout Trafford. Most interviews are by appointment only.

Benefits Advice Line: **0161 912 2735** (Mon to Thur 9.30am to 12.30pm).

Also call to arrange an appointment or find out about drop-in sessions.

Website: [www.trafford.gov.uk/AdviceAndBenefits/Benefits/WelfareRightsAdvice](http://www.trafford.gov.uk/AdviceAndBenefits/Benefits/WelfareRightsAdvice)

### **6. Oldham Welfare Rights Advice Service**

To access this service call 'Contact Oldham Call Centre' on **0161 770 6655**. (9 am to 12pm Mon to Fri). They provide representation at tribunals and assistance with appeals, but if someone wants assistance with an initial application they will be signposted to their local Citizen's Advice Bureau or Community Advice Centre.

### **7. Rochdale Council Advice Service**

The team consists of debt specialists, housing specialists and welfare rights specialists. Regular advice sessions for the public are held at various locations across the borough. There is also an advice line.

Advice Line: **01706 923 513** (10am-12noon and 1.30pm-3.30pm Monday to Friday)

Email: [advice.service@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:advice.service@rochdale.gov.uk)

Website: [www.rochdale.gov.uk/advice\\_and\\_benefits/benefits/welfare\\_rights\\_-\\_advice.aspx](http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/advice_and_benefits/benefits/welfare_rights_-_advice.aspx)

### 8. Wigan Independent Advice Centre

Offers advice and information to the public including casework in welfare benefits, advice and help with reviews and appeals. Outreach services are available.

Tel: **01942 324 851**

Fax: **01942 494 451**

(Opening hours vary: Monday 8.30am -12pm and 1pm - 5pm; Tuesday 11.15am - 12pm and 1pm – 4.30pm; Wednesday 8.30am – 12pm and 1pm – 4pm; Thursday 8.30am – 12pm and 1pm – 5pm; Friday 11.15am – 12pm and 1pm – 4pm)

Website:

[www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/AdviceBenefitsEmergencies/Advice/Legal/WiganIndependentAdviceCentre.htm](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/AdviceBenefitsEmergencies/Advice/Legal/WiganIndependentAdviceCentre.htm)

### 9. Bury Independent Advice Centre

Offers free welfare rights and debt advice and representation to Tribunal level to anyone in the borough. Ring for an appointment.

Tel: 0161 797 4326

Fax: 0161 764 8390

Email: [postmaster@buryadvice.plus.com](mailto:postmaster@buryadvice.plus.com)

### 10. Bolton Welfare Rights Service

Independent advice and information on rights and entitlement to benefits.

Advice Line: **01204 380 460** (10am to 12 noon, Mon to Fri)

Freepost 5115F Bolton BL1 1YZ

Website:

<http://www.bolton.gov.uk/website/pages/WelfareRightsAdvice.aspx?bid=650>

### Useful Resources and Websites

Disability Alliance are the publishers of the regularly updated *Disability Rights Handbook*. Their website includes information on social security benefits and tax credits for disabled people: [www.disabilityalliance.org](http://www.disabilityalliance.org)

Department for Work and Pensions A-Z gives information about welfare benefits: [www.dwp.gov.uk/lifeevent/benefits/atoz.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/lifeevent/benefits/atoz.asp)

Benefits Adviser is an interactive tool from Directgov to help you find out what benefits you may be entitled to. Contact us if you require assistance to use this: [www.direct.gov.uk/en/Di011/DoltOnline/DoltOnlineByCategory/DG\\_073267](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Di011/DoltOnline/DoltOnlineByCategory/DG_073267)

Adviceguide is the online advice service from the Citizen's Advice Bureau. It provides practical, up to date information on benefits, housing, employment and debt, consumer and legal issues: [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

Rightsnet is a welfare rights website for advice workers: [www.rightsnet.org.uk](http://www.rightsnet.org.uk)

Benefits and Work is an independent website containing lots of useful information & guides on applying for and keeping benefits. It is subscription based so you have to pay to access most parts of it. Clients of Breakthrough's Advocacy Centre can access the material through us:

[www.benefitsandwork.co.uk](http://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk)

Advicenow is an independent, not-for-profit website providing accurate, up-to-date information on rights and legal issues.

[www.advicenow.org.uk/topics](http://www.advicenow.org.uk/topics) > **Benefits**

**This booklet was produced by the Independent Employment Advocacy Centre at Breakthrough UK Ltd.**

**Voice: 0161 273 5412**

**Fax: 0161 274 4043**

**Minicom: 0161 273 5727**

**E-mail: [advocacy@breakthrough-uk.co.uk](mailto:advocacy@breakthrough-uk.co.uk)**

Please tell us about any access requirements when you get in touch.