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Help for handicapped people

PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE WELSH OFFICE



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Help for handicapped people

What is available and where to apply

When the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act was before Parliament, the need for greater publicity for the help available to handicapped people was stressed. This booklet, therefore, describes as simply as possible the main benefits and services available in England and Wales to handicapped people, and explains where to go for further information or help. It does not attempt to describe the facilities in detail, because many are provided by local rather than national authorities and they vary from place to place. Some services are also provided by local voluntary organisations, often in partnership with local authorities or other statutory bodies. There are also many national voluntary bodies which assist handicapped people. If you want further information about these, the social services department of your local authority will tell you about them.

If you feel that you, or someone you are looking after, or someone you know, could benefit from any of the help described in this booklet, do not hesitate to ask for further information from the sources mentioned in the following pages. Where necessary, addresses can be obtained from post offices, telephone directories, public libraries or from your nearest Citizen's Advice Bureau, where some of the leaflets and relevant claim forms can be obtained together with help in completing them, and information about benefits.

Copies of this booklet are being distributed widely to reach as many handicapped people as possible. If you do not need this copy, please pass it on to someone else who might benefit from it.

Extra copies of this booklet can be obtained from any social security office or local authority social services department.

Financial help

If you are disabled and your earning power is reduced or cut off you will need enough income to support yourself and your family. Various kinds of cash benefits and allowances are paid by the Department of Health and Social Security. Application forms can be obtained from your local post office. If you cannot get there yourself, ask a relative or friend to call for you. If you require more information, the staff at your local social security office will be glad to give you any advice that you need. If necessary, someone from your local office will call to see you in your own home.

Sickness and invalidity benefits

Sickness benefit This is paid if you cannot work because of illness or disablement, provided you have worked and paid National Insurance contributions. Your doctor or hospital will give you medical certificates which you should send at once to your local social security office. Extra allowances are paid if you have a wife or children to support.

Invalidity benefit This is made up of invalidity pension and invalidity allowance. *Invalidity pension* generally starts if you are still incapable of work when sickness benefit ends after 28 weeks of sickness. It is paid at the same rate as sickness benefit. You can get an extra allowance, called *invalidity allowance*, on top of invalidity pension if you would normally still have a substantial part of your working life ahead of you. If you have a wife or children who rely on you for their support, extra allowances are paid, and you will get more money for your children than you did when you were getting sickness benefit. Another advantage is that if your wife is working and you are drawing invalidity pension, she can earn more than the wife of a man who is drawing sickness benefit before the extra benefit paid for her is affected. When you reach retirement age (65 for men, 60 for women) you generally get retirement pension in place of invalidity pension. If you were getting the invalidity allowance when you reached retirement age, your retirement pension will be permanently increased by the same amount.

You do not need to make a separate claim for this benefit, but you should continue to send your medical certificates to the local social security office in the same way as for sickness benefit.

Further information is given in leaflets

NI 16 Sickness benefit

NI 16A Invalidity benefit

You can get them free from your local social security office.

Industrial injury and disablement benefits

Most people who have worked as an employee or apprentice after 4 July 1948, have been covered by the Industrial Injuries scheme while in employment. If you cannot work, or have become disabled as a result of an accident at work, or because of one of the prescribed industrial diseases which are caused directly by certain kinds of work, you can claim benefit. The two main benefits are injury benefit and disablement benefit.

Injury benefit This can be paid on the same conditions and instead of sickness benefit if you cannot work because of an industrial accident or disease within the 26 weeks immediately following the accident or development of the disease. If you are still unable to work after 26 weeks, you will then probably get disablement benefit as well as sickness benefit or invalidity benefit.

Disablement benefit This is a weekly pension, or a lump sum, depending on the degree of disablement caused by your accident or disease. It is paid if you are still disabled when your injury benefit stops, and it can be paid even if your disablement has not kept you away from work.

Higher rates of benefit can be paid if, for instance, you are unable to follow your usual occupation (or one of an equivalent standard), or you are unemployable, or you need hospital in-patient treatment, or constant attendance.

Pre 1948 cases For those whose disablement has resulted from employment *before* 5 July 1948, there are special schemes; (a) for supplementing weekly payments of workmen's compensation; and (b) for providing benefit for pneumoconiosis and certain other slowly-developing diseases.

If you want information, your local social security office will be glad to help you and will provide you with leaflets. They are:

- NI 5 Injury benefit leaflet
- NI 6 Disablement benefit leaflet
- NI 8 Special hardship allowance leaflet
- NI 7 Unemployability supplement leaflet
- NI 7 Constant attendance allowance leaflet
- NI 7 Exceptionally severe disablement allowance leaflet
- NI 4 Hospital treatment allowance leaflet

Attendance allowance

This is a tax-free allowance. A higher rate is available for adults and children over the age of two who are severely disabled either physically or mentally and have needed a lot of looking after both day and night for at least six months. A lower rate is becoming available in stages for those needing attendance either by day or at night. The first group—those born in the years 1908 to 1956—will be invited to claim from December 1972. Announcements will be made from time to time about other age groups. Leaflets are available at social security offices explaining the conditions for the allowance currently available.

Supplementary benefits

Supplementary benefits are paid to raise your weekly income to the level laid down by Parliament. They are related to any income you already have and to the amount you need. If you are under pension age (65 for a man, 60 for a woman), the benefit is supplementary allowance. If you are over pension age, it is supplementary pension.

You are entitled to supplementary benefit if:

you are aged 16 or over
and you are not in full-time work,
and your income is less than your requirements.

If you are disabled and self-employed, you may still be entitled to supplementary benefit if your disability means that you earn substantially less than other people who do the same sort of work.

How benefit is calculated The amount of benefit you get is the difference between your requirements and any income which you already have. Weekly requirements are calculated by adding together the amount laid down by Parliament for everyday living expenses, an allowance for rent and rates and, if you are over pension age, a further sum of 50p. (75p if you or your wife are aged 80 or over). A sum of 50p is also included in your requirements if you are under pension age but have been getting supplementary benefit for two years or more, and if you are not required to register for work. (These amounts are going up from October 1972). There is a special higher level of requirements for blind people.

There are rules for calculating income and savings for supplementary benefit purposes. For married couples the income and savings of both husband and wife are added together to work out their total weekly income.

Where to apply If you think you may be entitled to benefit, you can get a leaflet giving full details and containing a claim form from your local social security office or from any post office. When you have completed the claim form, send it to your local social security office in the addressed envelope available at the post office. The local social security office will have to ask you about your income so that they can work out your benefit. Any information you give is strictly confidential.

If you are entitled to supplementary benefit, you will be entitled to free prescriptions, dental treatment and glasses. (See pages 11 and 12).

An expectant mother and all children under school age in your family will be entitled to free welfare milk and vitamins. Your local social security office will provide free tokens.

If you want more information, your local social security office will be glad to help you.

Family income supplement

Family income supplement may be payable where the total family income amounts to less than the levels laid down by Parliament. Any one, including a single person, with at least one dependent child can claim if they are in full-time work and are normally so. In the case of a couple, the man must be in full-time work (full-time for this purpose means 30 hours or more a week). You can include all children under 16 who are normally living with you and those aged 16 or over who are still undergoing secondary education.

You can also claim if you are self-employed and your income falls below the prescribed levels.

The amount of benefit is half the difference between your total family income and the level of income prescribed for your size of family. There is an upper limit on the weekly amount payable. If you are entitled to family income supplement, you will also be automatically entitled to exemption from payment of prescription charges, you will also qualify for free dental treatment, dentures, glasses, wigs, fabric supports and elastic hosiery.

An expectant mother and all children under school age in your family will be entitled to free welfare milk and vitamins. Ask for free tokens when sending in your claim form. Any children at school will also be entitled to free school meals.

Leaflet FIS 1, giving further details and containing a claim form, is available in post offices and local social security offices.

War pensions

If your disablement results from war service, you will be entitled to a war pension. War service includes service in both world wars and covers civilian casualties in the 1939-45 war, and service in the armed forces since the end of that war. There is also a wide range of special allowances. Income tax is not payable on War disablement pensions.

War Pension This is a weekly pension which varies according to the degree of disablement and rank. Where disablement is assessed at less than twenty per cent, a lump sum is paid instead of a pension. A pension or lump sum is paid whether or not you are able to work, or have earnings.

Special Allowances Depending on your personal circumstances as a war pensioner, you may be eligible for one, or more, of these special allowances:

- Unemployability supplement
- Constant attendance allowance
- Exceptionally severe disablement allowance
- Education allowance for children
- Allowance for lowered standard of occupation
- Severe disablement occupational allowance
- Comforts allowance
- Age allowance

Allowance for war and tear of clothing
Treatment allowance.

If you want to find out more about war pensions, your local social security office will be able to help and will give you a leaflet with full details.

Welfare milk and vitamins

If you are receiving supplementary benefit or family income supplement, an expectant mother and all children under school age in your family will be entitled to free welfare milk and vitamins (see pages 8 and 9).

If you are not entitled to supplementary benefit or family income supplement, an expectant mother and all children under school age in your family may still be entitled to free welfare milk and vitamins if your income does not exceed a certain level.

Leaflet W 11, obtainable at post offices, local social security offices and child health clinics, describes who is entitled and includes a claim form.

If there are three or more children under school age in your family, or an expectant mother and two such children, all except the first two will be entitled to free welfare milk regardless of your income. Handicapped children aged 5-16 not attending an educational establishment are also entitled to free welfare milk.

Expectant mothers should apply on form FW 8, obtainable from their doctor, midwife or health visitor. In other cases, application should be made on form FW 9, obtainable from your local social security office.

Family doctor and hospital services

The medical needs of handicapped people are generally met by the National Health Service, which includes the family doctor, hospital, maternity and other medical services. They are outlined below. If you need further information, you should get in touch with your family doctor or the National Health Service Executive Council in your area. You can get the address of the Council at your post office or from the telephone directory.

Your family doctor

You should go to him when you want advice about your health. He will make sure that you receive proper treatment, and give you expert help and advice about the health services described in this booklet. He will also advise you where to enquire about the social services. In an emergency, any doctor in the National Health Service can be asked for treatment.

A leaflet, (NHS 2) 'Your Guide to the National Health Service' is obtainable from your local social security office or Executive Council.

National Health Service charges

Charges are made for National Health Service prescriptions, dental treatment and glasses; and for drugs, dentures, elastic hosiery, wigs and fabric supports supplied by hospital out-patient departments. But many people do not have to pay the charges and others may be entitled to substantial help on income grounds, particularly with the higher charges.

Prescription charges The following people do not have to pay prescription charges:

People aged 65 and over

Children under 15

Exemption certificates are available to people:

who suffer from certain conditions, these include a continuing physical disability which prevents them from leaving home except with someone else's help;

or are war pensioners and the prescription is for the accepted disablement;

or are getting supplementary benefit or family income supplement—(in this case the exemption certificate also covers dependants);

or are expectant mothers or a mother with a child under one year of age.

If you are not in any of these groups, you can still claim exemption, or refund of charges, if your income is not much above supplementary benefit level. If you are not exempt and have to pay for frequent prescriptions, it is cheaper to

buy a prepayment 'Season Ticket' certificate to cover all charges for 6 or 12 months. If you want more information about prescription charge exemptions, refunds or prepayment certificates, you can get the following leaflets and form from post offices or local social security offices:

- Leaflet EC 91 General information on exemptions and refunds
- Leaflet PC 11 Free prescriptions or refund of charges on grounds of income
- Form EC 95 Details of prepayment certificates.

Charges for dental treatment or glasses Your dentist or optician will explain which groups are entitled to free dental treatment or glasses. Anyone who is receiving supplementary benefit or family income supplement, is automatically entitled to an additional payment to meet the cost of dental treatment or glasses. (As far as glasses are concerned, however, help cannot exceed the cost of the cheapest frame in the National Health Service range plus the appropriate charge for standard lenses).

People who are receiving free welfare milk and vitamins or who hold an exemption certificate from prescription charges, both on income grounds, will similarly be entitled to help. You can also be assisted if your income after paying your rent and rates is less than £1.50 (this figure applied in July 1972) above supplementary benefit level. But above this level, you may still be eligible for help with part of the charges, especially if they are high. If you want help on income grounds with the charges for NHS dental treatment or glasses ask your dentist or optician for a claim form. If you need help with charges for dentures supplied by a hospital out-patient department, the hospital will advise you.

Charges to hospital out-patients for drugs and elastic hosiery and for wigs and fabric supports Out-patients must pay the same prescription charges for drugs and elastic hosiery supplied by hospitals as those supplied by chemists and doctors, and can claim the same exemptions. There are different charges and exemptions for wigs and fabric supports. People and their dependants receiving supplementary benefit or family income supplement, war pensioners for their accepted disablements and children under 16 or attending school full-time are automatically exempt from the charges. Similarly, people receiving free welfare milk and vitamins or who hold an exemption certificate from prescription charges, both on income grounds, can obtain automatic help. In addition, anyone whose income is less than £1.50 (this figure applied in July 1972) above supplementary benefit level can obtain help with the charges, and even above this level a person may be eligible for help with part of the charges. If you need help with charges for

Hospital services

wigs or fabric supports, the hospital will advise you.

If your family doctor thinks you need hospital treatment, he will send you to a hospital consultant. If he thinks it advisable, he can ask for a hospital consultant to visit you in your home.

Hospital services are free, and do not depend upon the payment of any contribution. They include treatment as an in-patient, out-patient or day-patient. In-patient services include longer term treatment and the care of handicapped people who are in need of constant nursing attention. Also admissions can often be arranged for short periods to give relief to relatives of handicapped people.

If you attend hospital as an out-patient or day-patient and, due to disablement, cannot use public transport, or it is not available, you should enquire at the hospital about any special transport arrangements that can be made.

If you are able to use public transport and are receiving supplementary benefit or family income supplement, you can have your fares to and from hospital refunded on production of your order book or family income supplement exemption certificate when you attend for treatment. If you are not receiving either of these benefits, you may still be entitled to help with your fares if, because of your low income, you are unable to meet the cost yourself. The hospital or local social security office will advise you how to claim.

Rehabilitation

While you are in hospital the staff will help you toward becoming as independent as possible in the activities of daily living. This is achieved by medical and nursing care, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and such specialised help as speech therapy. These may be continued on an out-patient basis after you have been discharged. Social workers will help you with personal or family problems and when you leave hospital will put you in touch with any of the services described in this booklet which you need, and which are available in your home area. The Department of Employment will also be able to help you with any employment problems you may have.

Local authority social and health services

Through their social services departments and health departments, local authorities provide a wide range of services for people who are physically or mentally handicapped or who are mentally ill. Some services are provided in the home, such as health visiting, home nursing, home helps, or meals on wheels. Examples of services provided outside the home include day care including day nurseries, day centres of various kinds and recreational facilities. Residential services are also provided which may be needed either for short periods at times of special difficulty or on a permanent basis. There are, for example, hostels or homes for the physically or mentally ill, or handicapped or elderly. Details of all these and other services are given in the following pages, together with guidance on where to apply for help. It is likely that, as a first step, someone from the social services or health departments will discuss with you how this might best be given, where appropriate they will put you in touch with one of the many voluntary organisations which work closely with local authority services.

Help from social workers

Social workers give personal help to the individual and his family when difficulties arise through illness or disability. They will also advise you how best use can be made of the statutory and voluntary services in your area.

They will, for example, be ready to help you if you or your family are suffering from the strains and stresses of physical or mental illness or handicap; if you have difficulties stemming from blindness or deafness; if you are the parent of a handicapped or disturbed child; or if you are elderly and have particular problems arising from illness or handicap.

If you would like the help of a social worker in any of these situations or in some other way, please do not hesitate to contact your local authority social services department. You can get the address at your post office or from the telephone directory.

Services available in the home

Health visiting Health visitors make regular visits to see children at home and give advice to parents. They also visit handicapped people who are suffering long term illness to assess their health needs. They can give you help and advice over health matters and help you to get nursing aids and equipment.

If you want further information, ask your local authority health department—you can get the address at your post office or from the telephone directory or ask your family doctor.

Home nursing If you need home nursing services because of handicap or chronic sickness, the local health authority can provide a nurse. She will advise you how to obtain and use any equipment which will make life easier. If you want

further information, ask your local health department, you can get the address at your post office or from the telephone directory or ask your family doctor.

Home help A home help may be provided to help with the main household tasks where this is necessary to relieve the domestic situation. A charge may be made according to your means, based on the hours of help given each week. For further information, contact your local social services department. You can get the address at your post office or from the telephone directory.

Meals on wheels A hot midday meal may be delivered to your home if you cannot get one for yourself. A small charge is generally made. In some areas meals are provided outside the home in lunch clubs or day centres. You can get details from your local social services department.

Laundry service Local authorities may provide a laundry service to help households where there is a handicapped person. The health department may supply incontinence pads. For further information, contact either your local health or social services department.

Voluntary help In most areas, the members of various organisations offer help to families or individuals in a general way or by doing specific jobs, such as lighting fires, collecting library books or pensions, or helping with shopping. Your local social services department will tell you all about the services in your area.

Accommodation **Residential homes** The aim of the social and health services is to enable people to remain in their own homes, living as independently as possible with help from relatives and others. If this is not possible, admission to a residential home may be needed either for a temporary period or as a permanent arrangement. Such homes are provided both by local authorities and by voluntary organisations. A charge is made for accommodation according to ability to pay. Your social services department will be able to help you with the arrangements, and give any further information required.

Council housing The local authority may be able to provide you with a council house to rent. If, in the local authority's view, it is necessary, the house can be adapted to help your disability or specially designed with your disability in mind. Some voluntary organisations known as housing associations also provide this type of housing.

If you want to find out about housing or housing associations in your area, get in touch with the housing department of your local authority.

Adaptation of private houses If you live at home, the local authority can carry out adaptations to your house to

Other kinds of help

make it easier for you to look after yourself, or for others to care for you. For example, an electric switch might be moved to a more convenient place, the height of a lavatory seat might be raised, or a handrail might be provided to make bathing easier. More basic adaptations could include the construction of a downstairs toilet or the installation of a different kind of heating. The adaptations which can be made in individual cases depend on what is needed for your help, and also what is structurally possible in your home. The local authority will usually be able to help you with the cost of adaptations carried out. For further information, contact your local social services department.

Your local housing department has powers to make improvement grants for works of improvement to a house. These works can include the provision of certain standard amenities such as indoor toilets and bathrooms.

Day centres Many local authorities run day centres where you can take part in activities like light industrial or contract work, for which a small payment is sometimes made. There are also opportunities for educational activities, recreation, social activities and handcrafts. Some centres cater for special groups, others for a wide range of handicapped and elderly people. There are opportunities if you want to join in with groups of people who have a similar handicap. Some centres are open throughout the week and at weekends, including evenings, and others are open only part of the time. Attendance at a day centre where there is industrial work can also form part of preparation for employment.

In some areas, transport is provided to and from the centres for those who need it.

If you would like to know about the day centres in your area, ask your local social services department.

Chiropody If you have trouble with your feet and need chiropody treatment, you may be able to get this at a local authority clinic or day centre. If you cannot easily leave your home, you may be treated at home. A small charge may be made for this service.

If you want further information, ask your local authority health department—you can get the address at your post office, or from the telephone directory, or ask your family doctor.

Day care for children under school age If you are handicapped and have a child under five, the local authority may be able to arrange for your child to be cared for at a nursery during the day. The local authority may also arrange for your child to attend a playgroup for a few hours during the day, or to be cared for by a registered child minder. If your child is handicapped there may be day nursery or play group provisions which can help to care for him and

help to develop his potential ability. This kind of help may also be available during holidays for children who attend school. (See page 24). A charge may be made according to your means.

For further information, contact your local social services department.

Travel concessions Concessionary fares on buses are available in some parts of the country. There are special concessions for blind people. (See page 20).

Details can be obtained from your local social services department, or your local bus company.

Holidays Some local authority social services departments may help you to take holidays if you are handicapped. Details of schemes may be obtained from your local social services department.

Recreation Various facilities for recreation may be available in your area, including outings, games, educational activities and social clubs. Details of what is available locally may be obtained from your social services department.

Telephones In cases of real need, help with telephones may be provided—but not the cost of calls.

For further information, contact the social services department.

Additional help for special groups of handicapped people

Hospitals, family doctors, local authorities and voluntary organisations offer a wide range of services. These help people who are mentally ill—those who suffer from disturbance in mental health that may respond to medical treatment and special care; or who are mentally handicapped—those whose mental powers have not developed beyond a certain level. If you think that any of the services would be of help to you, or someone you are looking after, you should get in touch with your family doctor, or the social services department of your local authority.

This section describes some of the help available. Various kinds of help described elsewhere in this booklet are also available. In particular a social worker from the social services department of the local authority will be ready to give you advice and help.

The mentally handicapped and mentally ill

Hospital treatment Your family doctor can refer you to a hospital if he thinks that you need treatment for mental illness. Some mentally handicapped people may also need the special care which is provided by hospital.

The hospital may admit you or arrange treatment and rehabilitation as a day-patient or out-patient. For in-patients visiting is encouraged, and, wherever possible, patients can go home at weekends.

Children in hospital may be taught there or go to school in the community. Older patients often undertake some kind of work or training.

Day care Local authority social services departments run day centres for mentally ill people who may need further help before they go back to work. The centres are informally organised, and often provide industrial work. Other activities are available depending on what will benefit the individual and there are social and recreational facilities.

Some centres are run by voluntary organisations in association with the local authority. For mentally handicapped people who have left school, there are adult training centres, where they can continue their education and start training for work. Some may be able to take up a job with an employer or in sheltered employment. Those who remain at a training centre are paid for their work, but earnings of more than a certain amount will reduce any supplementary benefit in payment.

Residential accommodation Mentally ill people often need help in finding a suitable place to live when they leave hospital. Mentally handicapped people may also need a

The visually handicapped

home. Social services departments have a special responsibility to provide suitable accommodation. This is done by providing homes or by making arrangements with voluntary organisations or private individuals.

These facilities may provide short term care in emergencies and may be used to enable the family looking after a mentally handicapped member to take a holiday. A charge is made for accommodation, but, in some cases local authorities can help with the cost.

If you are blind or partially sighted, there are special services to meet your needs, in addition to the other kinds of help described in this booklet.

The family doctor or local authority social services department can arrange for you to be examined, free of charge, by a consultant, who may prescribe aids needed in making the best use of a person's remaining sight. A person certified by the consultant as blind or partially sighted is eligible for registration by the local authority (see below). The social services department can arrange for social workers to visit blind people in their homes to help them or their families with problems, arising from blindness. Advice and help can be arranged for parents of blind children in conjunction with the health and education departments of the local authority and the Royal National Institute for the Blind. The social services department can also provide or help blind people to obtain social rehabilitation. This is designed to assist them in adjusting to blindness and in coping with every-day activities, including special mobility training to aid them in getting about alone.

Vocational rehabilitation, training facilities and specialist employment services are available; advice on these matters may be had through the blind persons resettlement officers of the Department of Employment, or through the social services department of the local authority or the RNIB. When necessary, the social services department can also assist in securing residential, convalescent and holiday accommodation, often in consultation with RNIB, which also maintains special homes for the deaf-blind. Help in learning to use Braille and Moon type is also available from the social services department. Instruction can also be given in handicrafts, either as a hobby or as a means of developing the sense of touch. Some or all of these activities may be provided in connection with centres or clubs for the handicapped, which may also offer recreation and special facilities for blind and partially sighted people. (See page 16).

Books in Braille or Moon may be obtained on free loan from the National Library for the Blind, 35 Great Smith Street, London SW1, and 5 St. John Street, Manchester. Students can use the Student's Braille and Tape Libraries of the Royal National Institute for the Blind, 224 Great Portland Street, London W1. Books and periodicals in

Braille and Moon type are published by the RNIB and in Braille by the Scottish Braille Press, Craigmiller Park, Edinburgh and are issued free or at subsidised prices. Books in large type are often available at your public library. The British Talking Book Service for the Blind, Nuffield Library, Mount Pleasant, Wembley, Middlesex, issues books on tape and provides machines for registered blind persons and those with defective reading vision, at a low rental which in many cases is met by the local authority. Application forms can be obtained from the British Talking Book Service for the Blind, or from your social services department. The British Wireless for the Blind Fund provides radios on permanent free loan to registered blind persons who should apply to their social services department. The Royal National Institute for the Blind also offers a wide range of special aids and appliances at reduced prices for blind people.

For registered blind people, there are a number of special concessions. Where an application for a concession is necessary, you may make one on your own behalf, or through a friend or relative. Alternatively, the local authority social services department can apply for you.

The concessions are:

Special income tax allowance

apply to your local Inspector of Taxes

Television licence at reduced cost

apply at the post office

Free postage on items sent as "Articles for the blind"

Travel concessions

apply to the social services department who will issue certificates for presentation to British Rail, London Transport, local bus undertakings and British European Airways (for internal flights). Some of these concessions are for specified purposes only and relate to the blind person's guide and not to the blind person himself

Special rates of supplementary benefit

dealt with by the Department of Health and Social Security

A registered blind person can vote by post in parliamentary or local elections, or have his ballot paper marked for him by a sighted person.

The deaf and hard of hearing

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, in addition to the other kinds of help described in this booklet, there are special services to meet your needs. A number of local authorities, or voluntary bodies providing services on their behalf, employ specially trained social workers who can communicate with deaf people and act as interpreters where necessary. You and your family can obtain advice and guidance if you need help.

If you have a deaf child, a visiting teacher of the deaf will

be able to help you to understand the nature of the disability and show you how you can help your child in developing speech and the use of language.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, special clubs are available where you can meet people socially and take part in recreational and cultural pastimes. Special religious services are held for severely disabled people. Lip-reading classes may be available at local clubs or provided by the education authority. If you wish to know more about the services available for deaf people, contact your local social services department.

Hearing aids NHS hearing aids are available on free loan. If you need advice and help, you should first see your family doctor who will, if necessary, send you to a special clinic in the local hospital for examination. If a hearing aid is recommended, you will be referred to a hearing aid centre, where the appliance will be fitted and supplied.

National Health Service aids are serviced, maintained and supplied with batteries without charge.

Replacements can be obtained from hearing aid centres by post, or collected by a relative or friend. Information about other kinds of help for deaf people can be found on page 20.

The physically handicapped

If you are physically handicapped there are special services to meet your needs in addition to the other kinds of help described in this booklet.

Surgical appliances and artificial limbs Items such as surgical footwear, callipers, fabric supports, cervical collars and wigs can be prescribed by your hospital consultant. There are charges for wigs, fabric supports and elastic hosiery supplied to hospital out-patients, with some exemptions. Help is also available on income grounds, see page 12.

Artificial limbs are issued and repaired free of charge to patients who have had a limb amputated or need an artificial aid for other reasons. You will be sent by a hospital surgeon to the nearest limb fitting centre. Training is given at the centre in the use of artificial limbs.

Aids to mobility If you have serious difficulty in walking a wheelchair or invalid carriage (in some cases a car) may be supplied by the Department of Health and Social Security (by the Welsh Office in Wales). For those who qualify for a motor vehicle but run their own car instead an annual allowance is available. Those with this allowance and certain other very seriously disabled persons who own a car which has been specially adapted for them may qualify for exemption from paying road tax. All enquiries should be made at your nearest Artificial Limb and Appliance Centre.

Appliances such as crutches, walking sticks and walking

frames can be supplied by hospitals when needed in connection with hospital treatment. The hospital consultant will advise you about this. Local authority health departments and social services departments may also provide, on loan, wheelchairs, walking frames, etc.

Car badge scheme Special orange car badges are issued by local authorities for display on vehicles driven by, or used for carrying, certain classes of disabled persons. The badges are used to identify the disabled so that they can receive help and concessions when parking their vehicles. The concessions apply only to places where parking is permitted. They include freedom from fees and time restrictions at parking meters. Badges are valid throughout England and Wales except for certain parts of Central London, where local schemes operate.

If you would like further details consult the traffic departments or social services department of your local authority.

Other aids and equipment There are many different types of aids and items of equipment available and it is impossible to describe all of them here. Some items are complex such as the "Possum" electronic equipment which enables very severely handicapped people to operate such things as radios, television, telephones or page-turners. Possum equipment is installed on the recommendation of a hospital consultant. Other items range from hoists or specially adapted kitchen and other household equipment to very simple things such as bath seats or long handled combs or special spoons and cups.

Certain aids and appliances may be supplied by your local health or social services departments. Health departments generally supply items needed in home nursing and care, while the social services departments provide personal and domestic aids of the types described above. Local education authorities and the Department of Employment may also supply aids for use in connection with education or employment. Voluntary bodies may also be able to help with a variety of aids.

If you want further information, contact the appropriate Department or voluntary body.

Voting arrangements If your handicap makes it difficult for you to vote at an election, you may be entitled to vote by post or proxy. If you want to know more about this anyone in your local authority will be able to tell you how to get in touch with the Electoral Registration Officer who can advise you.

If you are war disabled there are special arrangements for you in addition to services generally available to all handicapped people. The welfare of war pensioners is the concern of the War Pensioners' Welfare Service of the Department

of Health and Social Security.

Welfare officers at all war pensions offices will give help or advice on pension matters or any other difficulties which you cannot deal with yourself. They are always ready to visit you in your own home, and can be contacted through any local social security office. Welfare officers work closely with the disablement resettlement officers of the Department of Employment and other government departments and local authorities. They also keep in touch with the voluntary organisations which help disabled ex-servicemen and their dependants.

Hospital treatment Hospital treatment for war pensioners is normally provided at NHS hospitals and clinics. If you need out-patient or in-patient examination or treatment for your pensioned disablement you are entitled to priority, subject only to the needs of emergency and other urgent cases. It is therefore important to let both your family doctor and the hospital know that you are a war pensioner.

Some hospitals specialise in the treatment and rehabilitation of war pensioners. They are equipped to deal with cases of severe disablement, such as amputations, paraplegia—and tropical diseases. If your doctor thinks that treatment can be given at one of these hospitals, or if he has any difficulty in arranging for examination or treatment at an ordinary National Health Service hospital, an application should be made to your local social security office.

Short-stay residential care If you are a severely disabled war pensioner who lives at home and needs constant nursing care, arrangements can be made for you to stay temporarily in a home or hospital, to give you a change of environment. It would give your wife, or whoever looks after you a break.

Blind pensioners If you were blinded as a result of war service, St. Dunstan's accept complete responsibility for your rehabilitation, training, placing in employment and after-care. This applies to all men and women who were in the Armed Forces and Civil Defence Services.

Aids and appliances You can be supplied with artificial limbs, surgical footwear, invalid chairs, vehicles, and other appliances, if these are needed for your pensioned disablement.

If you have serious difficulty in walking, you may be considered for the provision of a car or an annual allowance for your own car if you already own one. If you qualify for a car, but cannot drive because of your condition, you may be provided with a car to be driven by a qualified driver who can be nominated by you.

You can get further help or information about the War Pensioners' Welfare Service or any of the provisions for the war disabled from your local social security office.

Handicapped children

If you have a handicapped child, your family doctor, school doctor, and the medical staff at the child health clinic or hospital, will advise you on medical care and treatment and on looking after your child's medical needs as he grows up.

The health department can send a health visitor to advise you on the physical and health care of your child and the social services department can arrange for a social worker to visit you to explain other services available to help you. The services are described in other sections of this booklet. Other services are the responsibility of the local education authority or the employment services, they are described on pages 26 and 27. The social services department will be able to advise you about the possibility of day care facilities for your child if he or she is below school age. These may include day nurseries, play groups and the services of child minders (see page 16). The social services department may also be able to offer advice and help with the problems which families encounter bringing up and caring for a handicapped child. The social services department works in close association with the medical and education services in trying to ensure that children and their families receive the support they need. The social services department can also help you to get in touch with voluntary bodies concerned with handicapped children, and through which you may be able to discuss difficulties and exchange ideas with parents facing similar problems.

Child health clinics All local health authorities provide child health clinics staffed by doctors and health visitors who will give you advice about the particular health needs of your child and about ways of encouraging his development. Examinations and screening tests may be carried out for this purpose. Some family doctors run similar clinics at health centres or their own surgeries with a health visitor in attendance. Where necessary they will put you in touch with various local services which may be able to help you.

A health visitor will visit your home if you write to or telephone the clinic or health department. Routine vaccinations and immunisations may be carried out at the clinic or by your family doctor. In the case of ordinary illnesses you should, of course, contact your family doctor in the usual way.

Children under school age

If you are the parent of a young handicapped child, you can be helped by your family doctor, health visitor, district nurse or social worker. If necessary, the health visitor will call regularly and the district nurse will provide care and treatment.

If your child is being treated in a hospital which is some distance from your home, you may have difficulty in travelling to visit him, or staying overnight near to the hospital, or finding someone to look after other members of your family while you are away. If you have this kind of problem, you

should talk to the hospital social worker.

If your child is being treated in hospital, and comes home for a holiday, you may need help with equipment, such as wheelchairs, or need regular visits by the district nurse. Your family doctor or health visitor will help you arrange this.

If you want advice about medical services for handicapped children, contact your doctor or health visitor. If you want advice about education for handicapped children see page 26.

Advice on heredity (Genetic counselling) You may be worried whether children born to you might also be handicapped. For some types of handicap special advisory centres—Genetic Counselling Centres—have been set up where the likely risk of a child being handicapped can be explained. Your family doctor can arrange for you to benefit from this advice if it is appropriate.

Education and employment

Education

There are special educational facilities for handicapped children. Your local education department will arrange a medical examination for any child over the age of two years who may be handicapped, and then suggest what kind of special educational treatment should be provided. If you think your child may be handicapped you should ask for an examination to be arranged. Your local child guidance clinic will give expert advice on learning and other problems.

Ordinary schools If your child is not severely handicapped, he may be able to attend an ordinary school or a special class attached to an ordinary school. There are often such classes for children who are partially sighted, or partially deaf, physically handicapped, delicate, maladjusted or slow-learning.

Special schools If your child is severely handicapped, education can be given in a special school which caters for his or her particular handicap. There are special schools for children who are completely blind or can see only with difficulty, children who are deaf or hard of hearing, delicate, severely physically handicapped, epileptic, mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed or who suffer from severe speech defects.

Some of the schools are residential, because the number of children suffering from a particular handicap in any one area is too small to enable day schools to be provided, or because some children benefit from education in a boarding school setting. If your child is in hospital for a long time, he may be taught there or go to school in the community.

Home tuition If your child is too handicapped to go to school, your education authority may be able to send a teacher to give lessons at home and show you how to help in the learning process.

Further education All education authorities provide further education for school leavers who want to take additional courses. They can usually provide special help—for example Braille writing machines or readers for blind students, or interpreters for deaf students. Some special schools for particular handicaps have arrangements with a nearby college to help handicapped students. A few education authorities run special courses for handicapped students. For example, Hereward College of Further Education in Coventry provides residential courses for physically handicapped young people from all over England and Wales. If you want further information, enquire at your local education department.

Employment

Many handicapped people are capable of doing a job but find themselves at a disadvantage when it comes to finding work which suits them. The Department of Employment has a special service for handicapped people. If you need help you should get in touch with the disablement resettlement officer (DRO) through your local employment exchange. He will be able to tell you what help is available and may suggest a course of industrial rehabilitation to test your need for training for a change of job. If you want to take a course, he will be able to tell you about allowances and other kinds of financial help.

If you are severely handicapped you will be invited to register as disabled and the DRO will explain the advantages of doing this. Registration is entirely voluntary but you should not hesitate to seek the DRO's help even if you do not wish to be registered.

If you are handicapped, under 18 and able to work, you should apply direct to the Youth Employment Service. The careers officer will be able to give you advice and he will try to find you a suitable job. Careers officers generally try to help young people shortly before they leave school.

If you want to know more about the special employment service, contact the disablement resettlement officer or blind person resettlement officer through your local employment exchange. You can get the address from your post office or from the telephone directory. If you are under 18 and have not yet seen the careers officer, enquire at the Careers Office. The address is in the telephone directory under "Youth Employment Service".



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