

HOSPITAL FARES FOR PATIENTS:

The hospital may refund your fares or part of your fares, if you produce proof of your entitlement to help with fares or other travel expenses for yourself and for someone who has to go with you if you cannot get to hospital on your own. You may get help if:

- You are receiving Income Support or Income Based Jobseekers Allowance; or
- Receiving the maximum award of Working Families Tax Credit or Disabled Persons Tax Credit, or the amount taken off the maximum is £72.20 per week or less; or
- You are covered by the low income scheme (HC1); or
- You are aged 16 or 17 and leaving the care of a Local Authority and are maintained either wholly or partly by a Local Authority; or
- You or a member of your family is an asylum seeker who gets support under the new support system.

HOSPITAL FARES FOR VISITORS:

If you are in receipt of Income Support or Income Based Jobseekers Allowance you may be able to get a Community Care Grant from the Social Fund to cover the costs of transport and over night accommodation if required.

WAR PENSIONERS

If you attend hospital for your war disablement you can get a wider range of expenses regardless of your income. Write to Veterans Agency, Norcross, Blackpool, FY5 3WP

LEAVING HOSPITAL

You need to inform you local Jobseeker Plus Office or your Department of Work and Pensions Offices and the Local Authority. If payment of benefit has stopped, you will normally need to complete a new claim form, except for Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance—these benefits are suspended, entitlement should start on notification that you have returned home.

BENEFITS & HOSPITAL

WILL YOU BE AFFECTED?

If you need further information, or just want confirmation of your position, why not ring our Benefit Information Line, which is open every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning between 10.30 am and 12.30 pm on Swansea (01792) 533533

This leaflet has been produced by the
Swansea Welfare Rights Unit
City and County of Swansea
Social Services Department

The last thing on your mind when you go in to hospital is your benefits and whether hospital admission will affect how much you get.

It is important to realise that hospital admissions and admissions to similar institutions may affect entitlement and can and does cause overpayments of benefit and other problems. For adults, benefit entitlement can be affected on admission at 2 weeks, 4 weeks, 6 weeks, 12 weeks (and 52 weeks). For children in hospital, benefits are affected after 12 weeks and 52 weeks.

WILL I BE AFFECTED?

Firstly any stay in hospital of 28 days or less will NOT affect benefit entitlement (except Jobseekers Allowance) **UNLESS** you have been in a hospital or similar institution within the previous 28 days. This is what is known as the “linking rules”. Admissions that are less than 29 days apart are linked together, and treated as one continuous spell, once the total amount of days reach 28, your benefit entitlement may be affected. To break the link, you have to spend a minimum of 29 days at home.

If you are a private patient paying the whole cost of your accommodation and non-medical services in hospital only Invalid Care Allowance is affected by your stay. All other benefits remain payable, subject to the usual conditions.

For most benefits you are not counted as an inpatient on the day you enter hospital, but you are on the day you leave. For Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance the day you enter and leave hospital are both treated as days at home.

ON ADMISSION

The onus is on you, the claimant (or appointee) to notify the relevant benefit offices of any change of circumstances. It is therefore important that you promptly inform the relevant offices who pay you benefit of the date you expect to be admitted to hospital and how long you are likely to stay there for. You should still report your actual

Single People:

The amount of non means tested benefit is reduced to £15.10 per week. If you get no other benefit except Income Support, your Income Support will be £15.10. You can be paid less than this if:

- An appointee is acting on your behalf because you are unable to act for yourself: *and*
- Your Income Support is being paid to the hospital, as the appointee, or at the request of your appointee; *and*
- The doctor treating you certifies that some or all of your Income Support cannot be used by you or on your behalf.

This rule could leave you without any Income Support but there is a test of reasonableness and the views of your relatives and hospital staff must be taken into account.

Couples:

If you are part of a couple and one of you has been in hospital continuously for 52 weeks you will both be treated as single claimants. This means that your partner can claim as a single claimant or as a lone parent which includes premiums and housing costs. They may qualify for a council tax discount. This can happen before 52 weeks, if it becomes clear that you or your partner would not be able to return home or would be in hospital for substantially longer than 52 weeks.

You will be able to decide how you want your non-means tested benefit (e.g. retirement pension, incapacity benefit or severe disablement allowance) to be paid after 52 weeks in hospital. You will be paid £15.10 for yourself and the rest of your benefit (less £30) will be paid to your dependant. If you don't agree to have the rest of your benefit paid over, you will lose it completely.

CHILDREN:

Providing that you keep visiting the child in hospital, you will continue to receive the £15.10 child dependant's allowance in your Income Support assessment. However, they will be excluded from any Housing Benefit Assessment.

12 WEEKS TO ONE YEAR IN HOSPITAL

Invalid Care Allowance which is paid to carers stops after the carer has been in hospital for 12 weeks, providing that they have not had any other breaks within the previous 26 weeks. (Invalid Care Allowance will stop if the person being cared for has been in hospital for more than 4 weeks). The carers' premium that is paid as part of any means tested benefit continues for a further 8 weeks.

CHILDREN:

You can continue to receive Child Benefit for a child in hospital providing that you are regularly spending money on the child's behalf (e.g. clothing, food, comics, etc). As Child Benefit remains in payment, child dependants additions remain in payment but are reduced to £15.10. Child related premiums continue in payment, including the disabled child premium, which remains payable despite the withdrawal of Disability Living Allowance, as long as the child or young person is still treated as a member of your family.

Awards of Disability Living Allowance care component and mobility component for a child under 16 are suspended after 12 weeks in hospital.

52 WEEKS IN HOSPITAL

Which benefits are affected?

The 'Applicable Amount' for Income Support is reduced. All other non means tested benefits are payable at a reduced rate. Entitlement to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit stops altogether.

Once you have been in hospital for 52 weeks continuously, you can no longer be treated as occupying your own home – so entitlement to housing benefit and council tax benefit ends. Your home is exempt from Council Tax if it is unoccupied and you are 'solely or mainly' a patient resident in a hospital. You must apply for exemption.

admission, or tell the relevant office if your admission has been postponed or cancelled. Do this in writing to avoid any under payment or overpayment of benefit.

BEWARE: Benefits could be affected on admission if the above linking rules apply.

AFTER 2 WEEKS

If you are in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance prior to admission, you can be treated as available and actively seeking work for up to two weeks. You are allowed two such periods within 52 weeks. If you cannot satisfy the conditions for Jobseekers Allowance, you should claim Incapacity Benefit or Income Support instead, and will in any case need to do this at the end of the first 2 weeks.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER 28 DAYS IN HOSPITAL?

Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance payments are suspended for adults who have been in hospital or a similar institution for more than 28 days. If you have a Motability agreement in force when you enter hospital, the mobility component continues to be paid to Motability for the full term of the agreement. Any balance that would otherwise be paid to you stops after 28 days. You cannot begin or renew a Motability agreement while you are in hospital. For these benefits only, you are not counted as an inpatient on the day you enter or on the day you leave hospital.

BEWARE: Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance could stop before this if the above linking rules apply to you.

What effect will this have?

- It may reduce the amount of or end entitlement to means tested benefits because certain premiums are dependent on an award of Disability Living Allowance/ Attendance Allowance.
- Any benefit payable that hinges on an award of these benefits, such as Invalid Care Allowance, which is paid to the carer, will also stop.

E.G. Someone who is in receipt of the higher rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance who lives alone and for whom no carer receives Invalid Care Allowance has included in their “applicable amount” for means tested benefits £42.24 ‘severe disability premium’. The applicable amount will be reduced by this amount when Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance are withdrawn. Other premiums go at a later stage.

This can knock people off Income Support altogether, as their other income may be more than their new reduced “applicable amount”. Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit can also stop or be reduced because of this, affecting rent and council tax liability.

AFTER 6 WEEKS IN HOSPITAL/SIMILAR INSTITUTION

Your Income Support entitlement will be reduced. The amounts differ depending on circumstance:

- If you are a single claimant your Income Support is reduced **to** £18.90 plus allowable housing costs, all premiums are withdrawn.
- If you are a lone parent, your personal allowance is reduced **to** £18.90, plus child dependant’s addition and any premiums relating to the children remain in payment. All other premiums are withdrawn. Housing costs continue.
- If only one of a couple is in hospital your personal allowance is cut **by** £15.10 and premiums continue in payment providing you still qualify for them and Housing costs continue.
- If both of a couple are in hospital, the personal allowance is cut **to** £37.80, any child dependants additions continue and any premiums relating to the children remain in payment. All other premiums are withdrawn. Housing costs continue.

The above figures are the maximum amount of Income Support you can be paid—other income will be assessed against these figures.

If your Income Support remains in payment, there will be **no** knock on effect on your housing benefit and council tax benefit.

If entitlement to Income Support is lost at anytime, entitlement to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit will stop, this does not necessarily mean that you won’t get any help but a **new claim** for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit must be made, otherwise an overpayment will occur.

If you were not in receipt of Income Support prior to your admission to hospital, but were receiving some help with your rent and council tax, your ‘applicable amount’ for housing benefit and council tax benefit will reduce to the figures as quoted above. You will find that you will have to pay more, because you will receive less help, however there is a discretionary fund to meet the shortfall—seek advice.

The following non-means tested benefits are also affected: Incapacity Benefit; Severe Disablement Allowance; Retirement Pension; Widow’s or Bereavement Benefits and unemployability supplement.

- A single person’s benefit will be cut **by** £28.70 (but you won’t be left with less than £15.10).
- If you have an adult or child dependant, your benefit is cut **by** £15.10.
- If your spouse enters hospital, your benefit will be reduced **by** £15.10 after 6 weeks, however,
- If you are in receipt of an adult dependant addition for someone other than your spouse (someone who you are not married to, but is caring for children you are responsible for), the benefit paid in respect of this person (the whole of the adult dependants addition) will usually stop as soon as **they** go into hospital.

This may mean that if you are not in receipt of any means tested benefits (Income Support, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit) before you enter hospital you may become entitled for the first time when your non means tested benefits are reduced at 6 weeks.

This six-week period is likely to be extended to 13 weeks in April 2003.