

Information on New Deal for Lone Parents and other support available when returning to work

The New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP)

The New Deal for Lone Parents provides assistance for any lone parent who wishes to move from welfare into employment. A specialist adviser helps put together a personal action plan for returning to employment or education. Participation in the New Deal is voluntary and any lone parent with a child under 16 years can apply to take part.

The specialist adviser can give co-ordinated information on local childcare, employment and educational opportunities and will help work out the financial implications of returning to work or study.

The adviser can also arrange and pay for training to improve job prospects or update skills and pay for childcare (with a registered provider) required during training. Childcare and travel costs can be paid for lone parents attending job interviews. Working Tax Credit claims can be fast-tracked.

NDLP can pay for registered childcare in the first year of working less than 16 hours per week while on Income Support. An extra £15 per week can be paid for up to one year for lone parents who take up work-related training.

Personal Adviser Meetings

All lone parents in receipt of Income Support will be required to attend Personal Adviser Meetings and complete an action plan. Lone parents **must attend and take part** in the interview. **There is no requirement for you to seek work, only to attend the meeting.** Unless you make a new or repeat claim and your youngest child is 12 or over, then you are not eligible for Income Support and will have to claim Jobseeker's Allowance.

Lone parents will need to attend an interview every 3 months once their youngest child has reached 11 years old.

Pre Employment Support

A range of new measures (from April 2008)

will be available to help lone parents move from benefits into work:

- **Options and Choices Events** - Lone parents whose youngest child is approaching 11 or is 11 and over will be invited to group sessions that will help them prepare to return to work, develop their skills and understand how the local labour market works. **This will apply to parents of younger children from 2009 and 2010.**
- **Job Interview Guarantee** - Jobcentre Plus will aim, where possible, to guarantee lone parents who are willing and able to work, a job interview with an employer.
- **Work focussed Pre-employment Training** - An opportunity to attend courses on literacy and numeracy as well as other skills required by employers.
- **Quarterly Work Focussed Interview** - From October 2008 quarterly work focussed interviews will be introduced for lone parents in the last year before their child reaches the age where they may lose eligibility to Income Support. From April 2008 additional 6 monthly work focussed interviews for lone parents with a child aged 0 - 4 will be introduced.

Adviser Discretionary Fund

A grant of up to £100 is available at the New Deal Lone Parents Adviser's discretion to assist lone parents back into employment. More money may be available (up to £300 in total) if the NDLP Adviser feels it appropriate. Grants can be given for costs such as driving lessons, up-front childcare payments or work clothes.

In-Work Emergency Discretionary Fund

This is designed to provide in-work financial help to overcome unexpected financial barriers which otherwise may make it difficult for the lone parent to remain in employment. The Personal Adviser will determine the severity of the circumstances but these could include: a sudden childcare emergency, a minor domestic crisis, a disruption of travel

April 2008

All factsheets are available free to lone parents.

Ring 0808 801 0323 for copies or see www.opfs.org.uk

arrangements, the essential emergency repair of a motor vehicle or payments to reduce hardship if Working Tax Credit is not in payment.

The limit is £300 but, in exceptional circumstances a one off payment above this amount might be given - in this situation a business case would have to be made by the Lone Parent Adviser.

NB: Both of the above funds will only be awarded if the adviser deems it appropriate. They are not generally advertised by Jobcentre Plus but be sure to check with your NDLP adviser to see if you are eligible.

In-Work Credit

Lone parents who have been on Income Support for one year or more will receive a £40 In-Work Credit per week on top of other income. This is payable for up to 52 weeks, once you work 16 hours per week or more.

Work Trial

Lone parents can take part in a Work Trial for up to six weeks to enable an employer to assess the lone parent before offering permanent work. The lone parent is able to walk away from the trial at any stage if they are not comfortable with the arrangements put in place.

Help with moving into self-employment

Lone parents can receive additional help with moving into self-employment through the New Deal for Lone Parents. To qualify they usually have to have been in receipt of Income Support for over 18 months. A training course will be provided followed

by a 6 month "training for work" period where individuals can remain on Income Support and receive help with childcare costs.

Other information, help and support for lone parents starting work

You may be entitled to a range of benefits if you are returning to employment after a certain period of time. These benefits can be very helpful in tiding you over until your first payslip.

This is intended to alleviate some of the financial hardship faced while waiting to be paid. To qualify, lone parents must have been on IS or JSA for 26 weeks prior to starting work.

Job Grant

Lone parents starting work of 16 hours or more per week receive a £250 Job Grant. This is intended to alleviate some of the financial hardship faced while waiting to be paid. To qualify, lone parents must have been on IS or JSA for 26 weeks prior to starting work.

Extended Support

Lone parents who receive the Job Grant will automatically receive an extra four weeks Housing/Council Tax Benefits. This will be extended to 6 weeks, but the start date is yet to be announced. Lone parents with mortgages who move into work could be eligible for 4 weeks IS Mortgage Interest run-on. If a parent returns to benefit within a year they will still be entitled to help with mortgage costs.

Local Help

Glasgow:- The 'Employment Zone' programmes offer support for lone parents wanting to return to work and offer an alternative to NDLP. Ask at your local Jobcentre Plus for more details.

Abolition of Prescription Charges

From April 2008 prescription charges will be reduced to £5, with further phased reductions towards a total abolition of the charges in 2011.

For single prescriptions, the costs will be:
April 2008, down from £6.85 to £5
April 2009, down to £4
April 2010, down to £3
April 2011, free

Pre-paid Prescription Certificates (PPCs), are for people who need a regular supply

of medication and these PPCs are available for either a 4 or 12 month period and cover all prescriptions needed within that period.

4 Month PPCs:

April 2008, down from £35.85 to £17
April 2009, down to £13
April 2010, down to £10
April 2011, free

12 Month PPCs:

April 2008, down from £98.70 to £48
April 2009, down to £38
April 2010, down to £28
April 2011, free

Tax

Lone parents are now only entitled to the basic personal allowance of £5435.

Parental Leave

Any parent or adoptive parent is entitled to take 13 weeks of unpaid parental leave. It can be taken after one year's continuous service up until the child's 5th birthday or 18 if the child has a disability. There are no qualifying periods with an individual employer but a parent must have worked for at least one year since 15th December 1998. You must give your employer 21 days notice, although the employer does have the right to postpone the leave if business needs make it necessary. The maximum leave that can be taken in one year is four weeks.

Paternity Leave

Any biological father, married to the mother or who is the partner of the mother, is entitled to two weeks paid paternity leave.

This is in addition to the 13 weeks parental leave (unpaid). The regulations further stipulate that anyone who has responsibility for a child is entitled so it could reasonably be argued that a separated or divorced father was also entitled to parental leave. If a father experiences difficulties, he should seek legal advice.

Paternity leave is available to any employee who has continuous service with the same employer for at least 26 weeks by the 15th week before the expected week of confinement.

By 2010 there will be additional paternity leave and pay giving employed fathers the right to up to 26 weeks off work with pay to care for their child in its first year, if the mother has returned to work and has not used her full entitlement to paid maternity leave.

Time off for dependants

All employees are eligible for a reasonable period of unpaid time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependant and to not be dismissed or victimised for it. The following situations would qualify for time off:

- If a dependant falls ill or has been involved in an accident or assaulted.
- When a partner is having a baby.
- To make longer term care arrangements for a dependant who is ill or injured.
- To deal with unexpected disruption or breakdown of care arrangements.
- To deal with an incident involving a child during school hours (a fight or suspension from school). There is no set limit to the amount of time off that can be taken but in most cases this will be one or two days at most. Employees need to inform their employer as soon as possible about their absence, the reason for it and how long they expect to be off work.

Working Families (helpline number 0800 01 0313) can give advice on unpaid and paid time off for children's medical emergencies and other issues that come with having a disabled child. Many parents cannot afford to take the Parental or Emergency leave they are entitled to because it is unpaid and Working Families can tell you how much you might lose.

Flexible working hours

Any employee with 26 weeks service who is a carer will be eligible to ask their employer for flexible working which could include job share, shift working, compressed hours, variation in hours and flexitime.

An employee may request flexible working by applying in writing to the employer. The employer must arrange a meeting to consider the request within 28 days.

If the request is refused, the employer must give a good reason. The employee has the right to appeal.