

BENEFITS

*This section covers the departments responsible for the payment and processing of benefits. For independent advice, see the sections on **ADVICE** and **LEGAL SERVICES**.*

A number of local organisations have a special user-friendly computer package called **BAMM** (Benefits Advice in Multimedia). You can use this in complete confidence to find out if you are getting all the money benefits to which you are entitled and how to claim them. You can complete claims forms for some benefits online or apply online for claim packs to be sent to you. If you are already being supported by a local agency, ask if they have BAMM there. It is available at the Advice Centre where Harlow Welfare Rights & Advice will be able to tell you which other local organisations also have BAMM.

Council Tax Benefit - Council Tax is a local tax set by District and County Councils to help pay for local services. If you need help with paying your Council Tax, call in at Contact Harlow (01279 446655) or the Advice Centre (01279 446622) for general advice and to collect the application form.

(01279) 446633 – for Harlow Council’s Benefits Team (specialist advice)
(01279) 446688 – if you have a query about Council Tax, as opposed to Council Tax Benefit

Education Benefits

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

An EMA is a weekly payment of £10, £20 or £30 a week depending on your household income. Your household income had to be under £30,810 in the 2006/7 tax year if you apply for an EMA for the 2007/8 academic year. It will not affect any other benefits your family might get. It’s paid on top of any other support provided by the government or any earnings from the student’s part-time job. It’s paid to young people who stay on in education at school or college after their GCSEs. It’s available during term time for any academic or vocational course (up to level 3) which involves at least 12 hours of guided learning per week. You may be able to get an EMA for two to three years, depending on the length of your course. You could also get bonuses depending on your rate of progress.

To find out more, ring the EMA Helpline on 0808 10 16219.

www.dfes.gov.uk/financialhelp/ema

www.direct.gov.uk/ema

Essex County Council’s Student and Pupil Financial Support Service can help with the following:-

- Free school meals
- Funding if you want to stay on at school after 16
- Grant aid, in exceptional circumstances, for uniforms
- School or college transport
- Student loans and tuition fees

PO Box 5827, County Hall, Chelmsford CM1 1LT

01245 245900 Fax: 01245 245939

0845 607 7577 ContactEssex

Email: student.support@essexcc.gov.uk

Website: www.essexcc.gov.uk/studentssupport

Grants for students

Harlow College's Learning Link team gives advice and information about government grants for students attending Harlow College.

Harlow College, Velizy Avenue, Town Centre, Harlow CM20 3LH
(01279) 868100

For advice on student grants for 6th Form and College students, see the entry for Education Maintenance Allowances.

For advice on grants and loans for people classed as Essex residents for Council Tax purposes who are intending to take a course leading to a degree or similar qualification, contact:

Student and Pupil Financial Support Service, PO Box 5287, County Hall, Chelmsford CM1 1LT

01245 245900 Fax: 01245 245939

Email: studentsupport@essexcc.gov.uk

Website: www.essexcc.gov.uk/studentsupport

National Union of Students (NUS)

The NUS represents the interests of students in further and higher education throughout the UK. The User Help sections on the NUS website can provide online support and answer general queries (including NUS cards, discount information and membership). The web pages are unable to provide advice on specific queries relating to education, welfare or finance. Contact your local students' union for these or NUS Head Office.

NUS, 2nd Floor, Centro 3, Mandela Street, London NW1 0DU

0871 221 8221 020 7561 6577 Textphone

Email: nusuk@nus.org.uk

Website: www.nusonline.co.uk

Housing Benefit - Housing Benefit is paid by local Councils to help people on a low income with their rent. You can apply for Housing Benefit whether you are a private tenant or Council tenant. If you need help with paying your rent, call in at Contact Harlow (01279 446655) or the Advice Centre (01279 446622) for general advice and to collect the application form. You can use the same form to claim Council Tax Benefit.

(01279) 446633 – for Harlow Council's Benefits Team (specialist advice)

NHS Health Cost Benefits

Most NHS treatment is free although there can be charges for some things. The NHS leaflet "Help with health costs" tells you what you are entitled to get free and about help you might get with the cost of the following NHS charges and services if you are on a low income:

- Prescriptions for anything your doctor prescribes
- Dental treatment
- Sight tests
- Glasses and contact lenses
- Necessary costs of travel to receive NHS treatment under the care of a hospital consultant
- Wigs and fabric supports (spinal or abdominal support or surgical brassiere)

You can get this leaflet from the Advice Centre (01279 446622). Some pharmacies, Health Centres, NHS hospitals and opticians also stock it. You can access the leaflet and other useful information on the Department of Health website or get advice from the Patient

Services Helpline which will accept Typetalk and can connect you with a telephone interpreting service if English is not your first language.

If you want to claim help under the Low Income Scheme, pick up form HC1 at your local dentist, Health Centre, opticians or the Advice Centre. You can also get this form from the Helpline.

0845 850 1166 Patient Services Helpline
Website: www.dh.gov.uk

Prescription Prepayment Certificates (PPCs) help people who require large quantities of, or regular prescriptions, to reduce the cost if they are not entitled to free prescriptions on any other grounds. A PPC will help you if you regularly need more than one prescription per month. PPCs are available for 4 months or a year. You can apply for a PPC on-line or by post using form FP95 available from your local pharmacy or by phone.

0845 850 0030 PPC Helpline
Website: www.ppa.nhs.uk

Refunds of NHS charges - if you have already paid NHS charges, you might be able to get some or all of your money back. Claims must be made within 3 months of the date you paid the charge. For more information and to make a claim, ask for form HC5 and send it off with the receipt. You can get this form from your local JobcentrePlus Office (0800 055 66 88), your local hospital, some dentists and opticians and the Advice Centre. You can also get this form from the Patient Services Helpline.

0845 850 1166 Patient Services Helpline

If you are paying prescription charges and you think you might want to claim a refund, ask the pharmacist for an NHS receipt form (form FP57) when you pay the charge. You can only get this receipt at the time you pay the charge. The receipt contains advice on how you can claim the refund.

Welfare Benefits - Jobcentre Plus is part of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). It deals with benefits for people of working age. These include Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Maternity Payments, Carer's Allowance, Bereavement Benefits and the Social Fund. . The Social Fund includes community care grants, budgeting loans, crisis loans, sure start maternity grants and funeral payments. All enquiries and claims should be made to the Jobcentre Plus Freephone Number on 0800 055 6688

DWP JobcentrePlus, Beaufort House, Crown Gate, Harlow CM20 1NA
0800 055 6688
Open Monday to Thursday 9am to 4.30pm, Friday 10am to 5pm.

The DWP produces many helpful leaflets. Most are available from Harlow Jobcentre Plus or from Harlow Advice Centre (01279 446622).

There is an A-Z Guide to all DWP benefits and services on their website at www.dwp.gov.uk/contact/helplines.htm

There is a Benefit Enquiry Line (BEL) for people with disabilities and for their representatives and carers. It is open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 6.30pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm.

0800 88 22 00 Textphone: 0800 24 33 55

The Pension Service deals with benefits for older people. The Pension Service holds local surgeries in Harlow and home visits may be made. All enquiries should be made by telephone to the Pensions Agency on 0845 6060 265. There is a website at www.thepensionservice.gov.uk

The Veterans Agency (War Pensions) is part of the Ministry of Defence and provides benefits to veterans and their dependants for disablement caused or made worse by service in HM Armed Forces.

Veterans Agency, Norcross, Blackpool FY5 3WP

0800 169 2277 Textphone: 0800 169 34 58
Email: help@veteransagency.mod.uk
Website: www.veteransagency.mod.uk

The Child Support Agency (CSA) deals with child support maintenance. You can apply through Jobcentre Plus or telephone the CSA National Helpline with enquiries and requests for maintenance application forms. It is open weekdays from 8am to 8pm and Saturday 9am to 5pm.

08457 133 133
Email: csa-nel@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.csa.gov.uk

The Inland Revenue deals with Tax Credits and Child Benefit. You can call at the local Inland Revenue Enquiry Centre at Beaufort House, Crown Gate, Harlow CM20 1NB or contact:

Tax Credit Helpline on 0845 300 3900.
Child Benefit Helpline is 0845 302 1444.
Website: www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk