

Benefits for families with children at school

Now that the children are back at school, the Royal Borough of Greenwich wants to make sure that local families are claiming all the help available to them.

There is a range of education and social security benefits which families may be able to claim depending on their circumstances.

Education Benefits include:

- **Free school meals** - your child can get free school meals if you receive certain benefits including Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Pension Credit or Child Tax Credit (CTC) only and your annual income is £16,190 or less.

Working couples: *changes to the Working Tax Credit (WTC) rules for couples in 2012 means that some families may have lost their WTC. If you have been affected by the changes, remember to check if you can now get free school meals. It is also worth contacting the Royal Borough's Welfare Rights Service for a benefit check – there may be other benefits you are missing out on, such as Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support.*

- **School Clothing Grants** – you can get help towards the cost of school clothing if you live in the borough and get one of the benefits listed above or CTC (at a rate higher than the basic family element) or Working Tax Credit. Grants are available when your child enters reception year or year 3 (£40), year 7 (£100) and year 9 (£70).

You may also be able to get help towards the cost of school trips and free school milk for your child.

If your child attends an Academy school, different arrangements apply for claiming free school meals and clothing grants – check with the school for details.

For more information about education benefits or to claim, contact your child's school or call the Royal Borough's Pupil Benefits Team on 020 8921 2570.

If your child is staying on at school or college after their GCSEs or is doing an approved training course, they may be able to get extra financial help. The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund helps young people facing financial hardship to stay in full or part-time education or unwaged training. It replaces the previous Education Maintenance Allowance (or EMA) scheme. Contact the school, college or training provider to claim or for more information. Alternatively go to the GOV.UK website – www.gov.uk and search for '16 to 19 bursary'.

Benefits and tax credits

There is a range of benefits and tax credits that families may be able to claim depending on their circumstances. For example, you may be able to get Child Tax Credit if you

have dependent children under 20 – CTC is for both working and non-working families. There is also Working Tax Credit (WTC) if you or your partner is in low paid work for at least 16 hours a week. Most couples must work at least 24 hours a week between them to qualify for WTC (with one person working at least 16 hours). You may also be able to get help towards the cost of childcare while you work depending on your circumstances.

You may be able to claim help towards your rent and council tax depending on your circumstances. Contact Greenwich Advice and Benefits Service to claim on 020 8921 4900 (or 18001 020 8921 4900 for textphone users) or go to www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk to download a form.

If you have a child under age 16 with additional support needs - you may be able to get Disability Living Allowance for them (or they may get Personal Independence Payment once they reach the age of 16). These benefits are paid on top of any other money or benefits you have coming in. Many families miss out on DLA and PIP and other linked benefits because they do not know they can claim. Ring the Welfare Rights Service helpline for more information – see below.

If you are starting work - it is important to get advice as many people miss out on extra help. Contact your local Jobcentre Plus office for details of what is currently available. Greenwich Local Labour and Business also provides information, advice and guidance about job opportunities to borough residents – ring 020 8921 2440 or email gllab-info@greenwich.gov.uk

If you live in the Royal Borough of Greenwich and would like to check if you are missing out on tax credits and benefits, call the Welfare Rights Service Helpline for a free benefits check on 020 8921 6375 (or 18001 020 921 6375 for textphone users). The Royal Borough website also includes information about benefits for families including an updated online leaflet, 'Benefits for children at school' – visit www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk. You can also contact the service using an online enquiry form.

Contact Greenwich Families Information and Outreach Service for free information, advice and guidance about services and activities for families with children aged 0-19 in Greenwich (to 25 for young people with disabilities). They can also advise you about childcare in the borough (including listings of registered childminder vacancies, daycare, extended school childcare and holiday playschemes). Ring them on 020 8921 6921, email fis@greenwich.gov.uk or visit www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/fis.