

***Seeing Sense Guide
4 – Money Matters***

Customer Services Centre:

- **Care Direct and the
Disability Information Service**
- **Direct payments**



Benefits

- **Department of work and pensions**
- **Vat relief**
- **Free prescriptions**
- **Travel concessions**
- **Banking and bills**
- **Advocacy service**

www.devon.gov.uk/socialcare

May 2011

Care Direct – at My Devon Customer Service Centre

Tel. 0845 1551 007

Email:

csc.caredirect@devon.gov.uk

www.devon.gov.uk/socialcare

Care Direct is a free information and advice service for older people, vulnerable adults and their carers.

**If you need help with money and benefits, care and support, your home or keeping well you can call Care Direct between:
8 am and 8 pm Monday to Friday,
9 am and 1 pm Saturdays.**

Care Direct works together with Devon County Council, District Councils, NHS Agencies, the Voluntary Sector and the Department for Work and Pensions.

Disability Information Service

Tel. 0845 1551 005

Textphone: 0845 1551 020

SMS text: 07773 333 231

Fax: 0845 155 1003

www.devon.gov.uk/dis

The Disability Information Service is a service for disabled residents, their families and carers throughout Devon. The service is part of My Devon customer service centre. There are three advisors within the customer service centre, two are themselves disabled and so have first hand experience of some of the difficulties that disabled people face.

The service will provide information, help and support across a wide range of issues, agencies and services. Social Services, Care and Repair, Action for blind people and the Department for Work and Pensions are some of the agencies involved.

Direct Payments –

(for people who are 16 plus, please contact Care Direct)

Direct Payments is money given to you by Devon County Council Adult & Community Services, so you can buy the support that you need to live independently, rather than having support arranged by them.

You may get Direct Payments if you have a physical or sensory impairment, learning difficulties, mental health problems, a long-term illness, or need help because of the effects of growing older.

You can also receive Direct Payments if you are a carer who has been assessed as needing support in your own right or a parent of a disabled child – for services that support you in bringing up your child.

**For more information contact
Care Direct on 0845 1551 007**

Benefits and Allowances

Additional income tax allowance

All registered blind people are entitled to claim a special blind person's tax allowance. This means that an additional annual income of £1,980 can be received without being taxed.

Last year RNIB encouraged the development of a telephone service run by HM Revenue and Customs to enable people to sign up for the allowance over the phone. However, feedback from RNIB members indicated that there were teething problems with this service.

On the basis of this feedback it was decided to launch a designated telephone number for the allowance with a specially trained team of advisers:

Tel. 0845 366 7887

Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 8pm and on Saturday 8am to 4pm.

Department for Work and Pensions – Benefits Agency

Freephone 0800 882200

- **For advice on benefits for disabled people.**
- **For advice on benefits for carers.**
- **To request large print claim forms.**
- **Help from the Benefits Agency to complete benefit application forms over the phone.**

VAT Relief

If you buy aids or apparatus for people with a visual impairment from the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB), the Partially Sighted Society (PSS), Optima, IC or other suppliers, you may not have to pay VAT.

Television Licence concessions

People who are registered as blind can claim a 50% reduction in their TV licence fee.

Free prescriptions

If you do not get free prescriptions because of age or low income, you may qualify on the grounds of having a continuing physical disability preventing you from leaving home without another person. If your doctor thinks that you qualify, get form P11 'NHS Prescriptions – How to Get Them Free' from your Benefits Agency office, chemist or surgery and ask your doctor to sign Form B.

Disabled Person's Railcard

- Discount fares on most types of ticket for people registered as blind or partially sighted, and for any adult companion with whom they need to travel.
- Request the booklet and application form: 'Rail Travel for Disabled Passengers' from any railway station and some post offices.

Note: It is possible to obtain discounts without a Disabled Person's Rail Card. This is only on full fare tickets, and you have to travel with an escort, who will get the same discount. Present your registration card when buying your tickets.

- Railway companies will help people with a visual impairment with boarding and changing trains, but require 48 hours notice.

Free bus travel and concessions

Since April 2008 everyone who is resident in England and who is: over 60 or 'eligible disabled' has been entitled to a free annual bus pass giving free off-peak travel on local buses anywhere in England.

'Off-peak' is between 9.30am and 11pm Monday to Friday and all day at weekends and on public holidays.

Local authorities may offer further benefits to their residents, such as free travel outside off-peak times or reduced tram or rail travel. But these will apply only for travel in the local area, not elsewhere in England.

If you have questions about how to get your bus pass, you should contact your local pass provider.

Paying Bills

Large print, Braille and talking bills are available on request from many commercial services, for example:

BT Tel. 150

Call 150 to arrange for your telephone bill to be read to you over the phone before it is posted or to ask for your bill in large print or Braille.

South West Water Tel. 0800 169 1133

If you join South West Water's 'Register Of Customers' Needs', you will benefit from their water meter reading and bill reading services.

RNIB Welfare Rights and Community Care Advocacy Service

Tel. 0303 123 9999

**The lines are open from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm
Monday to Friday.**

Banking Services

- **Large print or Braille statements are available from many high street banks and building societies.**
- **Cheque book templates to make it easier to write your own cheques are also available from the larger banks. Ask for details.**

Ask your bank or building society about banking by telephone or internet to pay bills and check balances from home.

Action for Blind People (AFBP)

**14/16 Verney Road
London
SE16 3DZ**

Tel. 020 7635 4800 / 0303 123 9999

Contact either the RNIB or AFBP for independent and confidential advice on benefits or welfare rights for people with visual impairments.

Action for Blind People (local)

**Suite 1,
Ciltern House,
2 Sigford Road,
Exeter EX2 8NL
Tel. 01392 458060**

***Information for
visually impaired people***

Ref.93

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**Further copies from the
Sensory Team via Care Direct
at the My Devon
Customer Service Centre:**



**Tel: 0845 1551 007
SMS text: 0777 3333 231
Text Phone: 0845 155 1020
Fax: 0845 155 1003
Email: sensory@devon.gov.uk**

**This information is available in other formats such
as audio, and in languages other than English.**

**Comments or updates to this pack: Please contact
the Sensory Team via Care Direct, as above.**

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