

Helper's guide to Services and support

Beginner handout

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About this guide

This document gives helpers practical suggestions and tips on how to hold a session with individuals or groups of beginners. The guide covers the three 'Services and support' hand-outs:

6.1 Finding out about benefits

6.2 Finding and using public services

6.3 Disability and the Internet

The three hand-outs in the 'Services and support' topic help a beginner to find out about and claim benefits, access local information and online services from their local authority and central government, adapt their software and hardware to make using the Internet easier, and find online help and support for a disability.

Remember to review each hand-out, involve beginners and use the **Introduction for helpers** and the suggestions below to plan and deliver sessions that are appropriate to the needs and abilities of your group or individual.

Please note that all of the web links referred to throughout the Beginner guides can be found in the Useful Links section at the end of the guides. Check that you have access to these links before your session

Remember to use the glossary.

6.1 Finding out about benefits

This session may take 45 minutes to complete but everyone learns at a different speed.


Where can I find information about benefits?

Remember to include local online sources, such as the voluntary sector and local authority. Discuss what beginners might like to find out about or select some topics you know will be relevant. Work through some links together before beginners search for more on their own. You may need to clarify what an NI number looks like (two letters, three pairs of numbers then one letter). Suggest where an NI number might be found, eg on a payslip or tax letter.

What information do I need to find out if I qualify?

Talk through the list on the web link and emphasise that beginners need to provide full and accurate information, both to ensure that the level of benefit is correct and to avoid fraud. Help beginners print information, such as the list of what they need, to take home. Discuss where they might find each one and how they might request copies of items they have lost.

How can I find out what benefits I'm entitled to?

 **Safety warning: don't let beginners complete this using real information until they get home.**

Use the version of the 'benefits adviser' that does not require detailed information and advise beginners to return to it once they have found what they need using the list from above. Work through the adviser using made-up yet realistic information (perhaps relevant to the group), discussing each question as you go along.

6.2 Finding and using public services

This session may take 45 minutes to complete but everyone learns at a different speed.


How can I use the Internet to find out about local services?

Have local examples ready in case beginners have trouble searching. This can include your local authority website as well as those for local bus services etc. or community/voluntary support services specific to the group of beginners in the session (eg retired, unemployed). Ask beginners what they would like to find out. Work through some as a demonstration before getting beginners to search.

What services can I use online?

Again, use local examples and ask what beginners would like to find and do – but also add your own suggestions to widen their concept of what's possible. Demonstrate one of the Directgov searches and help beginners identify what information or paperwork they would need for their online application.

How can I pay for services online?

 **Safety warning: don't let beginners do this until they get home.**

Link to Beginner's guide 8.2 and discuss making safe online payments (eg look for 'https' and close the browser when finished if using a public or shared computer). Again help beginners identify any paperwork they would need to complete their online payment without problems. Show them where they can get telephone help, for example from your local authority or TV Licensing.

Discussion points

- How can I contact my councillor?
- How can I comment on council plans?

6.3 Disability and the Internet

This session may take 45 minutes to complete but everyone learns at a different speed.

How can I make using software easier?

Adapt your delivery to the needs of the group. Demonstrate some or all of the options before letting beginners find how to change their settings (you may need to check if this requires administrator privileges on your computers). Ask what operating system beginners use (eg older versions of Windows) and help them find the right Microsoft guidance for their version.

What hardware can help me use my computer?

Adapt to the needs of the group. Link to any source of local support and funding for assistive technology, especially if this can allow beginners to try out products before buying.

How can I find out about support and my rights online?

Link to locally relevant websites or those specific to the needs of the beginners in your group. Link to applying for benefits (guide 6.1) and demonstrate the Directgov web link. Help beginners find online forums for people with their disability or needs.

Discussion points

- Who can help me set up my computer so I can use it?
- What local help is there for equipment and funds?
- How can I socialise online if I can't get out and about easily?

