

**Getting it
right**

**Living together?
On benefit?
Let us know.**

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The law is changing

The law is changing later this year – from 5 December 2005, as a same-sex couple, you will be able to gain legal recognition for your relationship. You do this by forming a civil partnership, a new legal relationship for two people of the same sex.

If you decide to form a civil partnership your benefits could be affected.

If you don't form a civil partnership, but live together as a couple, this could also affect your benefits.

If you and your same-sex partner are living together as a couple, you must contact the office dealing with your benefit.

This leaflet gives general guidance only and should not be treated as a complete statement of the law.

How could these changes

**affect my
benefits?**

Where can I

find out

more?

How could these changes affect my benefits?

Income Related Benefits

By income related benefits we mean:

Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (income based), Pension Credit or Housing Benefit.

From 5 December 2005, the rules about claiming these benefits change:

- if you are a civil partner, you and your partner must claim as a couple
- if you are receiving any of these benefits when you form your civil partnership, you will have to claim as a couple
- if you live as a couple with someone even if you are not civil partners, you will have to claim as a couple

If any of these apply to you, you must tell the office that deals with your benefit as soon as you can.

State Pensions

From 5 December 2005, civil partners will have most of the same state pension rights that apply to husbands and widowers. For further information you should contact the office that deals with your pension.

Bereavement Benefits

From 5 December 2005, if you are in receipt of Bereavement Benefit and you form a civil partnership, or are living together as a couple with a same-sex partner, you need to contact the office that is dealing with your benefit.

Widows Benefit

From 5 December 2005, if you are in receipt of Widows Benefit and you form a civil partnership, or are living together as a couple with a same-sex partner, you need to contact the office that is dealing with your benefit.

Other Benefits

From 5 December 2005, if you receive benefits such as Incapacity Benefit, Carers Allowance, Maternity Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance and Unemployability Supplement, and an adult dependency increase is payable for a spouse, you may be able to get extra for your civil partner.

Ask about this at the office that deals with your claim.

Child Support

From 5 December 2005, civil partners who are parents will be treated in the same way as married partners for Child Support. Also, parents who are living with a same-sex partner even when they have not formed a civil partnership will be treated in the same way as parents who live together with an opposite-sex partner, but are not married to each other. Depending on your circumstances, this could affect the amount of maintenance paid for your child. For further information you should contact the Child Support Agency.

Where can I find out more?

Useful Contacts

There is more information about civil partnership on the website for the Department for Trade and Industry, Office of Law Reform Northern Ireland - www.olrni.gov.uk

Other websites:

www.dsdni.gov.uk Department for Social Development - for general benefit information

www.adviceguide.org.uk Citizens Advice Bureau website - for online advice and to find your local bureau, or look in your phonebook under 'C'.

Telephone Numbers

Benefit Enquiry Line

0800 220674

If you have hearing or speech difficulties, textphone 0800 243787

Child Support Agency

0845 713 9896 (for existing scheme cases)

0845 608 0022 (for new scheme cases)

0845 713 9704 (Northern Ireland minicom)

The Pension Service

0808 100 6165

If you have hearing or speech difficulties,

textphone 0808 100 1165

Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO)

2-6 Union Street

Belfast BT1 2JF

07788 570 007

www.coso.org.uk

The Department for Social Development is committed to providing services which embrace diversity and which promote equality of opportunity. As an employer we are also committed to equality and valuing diversity within our workforce. Our goal is to ensure that these commitments, reinforced by our values, are embedded in our day-to-day working practices with all our customers, colleagues and partners.

This information has been produced in conjunction with Citizens Advice, Coalition on Sexual Orientation and the Department for Social Development and its businesses: Child Support Agency, Social Security Agency and The Pension Service.