

**“An essential piece of kit...”**  
Community Care Magazine

Now in its 13th edition - and even bigger again - 300 plus pages of user - friendly information, tips, tactics, sample forms etc. aimed at people with mental health problems and those who help with benefits applications.

Written by: Tom Messere - last year’s joint author, freelance trainer and part time welfare rights adviser updating and adapting the work of the late Judy Stenger originator and guiding spirit of the Big Book. The book still contains much of her warmth wit and wisdom based on her 13 year’s experience with a local Mind Income Project

### NEW/ UPDATED FOR 2013/14:

- Personal Independence Payment - new full chapter and example forms
- Universal Credit - new full chapter
- Council Tax Support
- ESA revised example forms , updates and the new descriptors
- Welfare reform - new chapter summarising all the changes
- The Work Programme - who has to do what and when and surviving as a Jobseeker
- Carers and Welfare reform
- Social Fund reform - replacing Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans
- Contents (all revised and updated): Barriers to Benefit, Steps to Maximum Entitlement, Welfare Reform The Sickness Route to Benefits (including example ESA50 form/ support letters), Benefits for Carers, Means Tested Benefits in working age, Pension Credit, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, Social Fund reform, Universal Credit, DLA and AA (including example supporting letters), A Guide to Mental Health Diagnoses/ Symptoms in a Disability Benefits context, Personal Independence Payment (including example forms) Options for Work, Permitted Work Rules, Benefits in Hospital, Challenging Decisions, Rates Charts

### FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS EDITIONS:

“An essential piece of kit for all community mental health teams, community psychiatric nurses, approved social workers and voluntary groups as well as general benefit advisers... If you have a mental health problem and are trying to cope with the benefit system or if you’re a professional wanting to give good solid advice there’s no better guide that you can buy...”  
Community Care Magazine

“Your book has brought positive results to so many of my clients and it has always been a joy to work from. Its humour, readability and understandability makes it the best of ways of finding accurate information and gives hope to people... wading through the tangle of the Benefit system.”  
support worker

“The book puts into words my own experiences, feelings and thoughts...”  
service user

“Your work has been massively important for service users”  
support worker

“This substantial but tremendously accessible handbook could well be one of the most useful guides around ...”  
Health and Care.com

“The DLA form took half the time and was more detailed than it would have been”  
social worker

“The forms practically write themselves”  
housing support worker

“Made me re-assess how I approached the form - I was awarded a higher rate of DLA...”  
service user

“Absolutely superb - extremely impressive”  
Director - Local Mind Association

“These books have been a goldmine for my Community Support Team and Housing Support Staff”  
team leader

“I have been a benefits adviser for almost 15 years & bought this book with some doubt, concerned that I might be paying for 'rehashed information'. I just wanted to say how delighted I am, I never thought I would take a benefits book to bed... but I could not put it down. You explained dry legislation and complex rules in a personal and engaging manner, there were even a few laugh out loud moments! Your explanations are clear and lucid, your examples very appropriate & your diagrams summarise information in an approachable and accessible way...”  
benefits adviser

“I have recently acquired the book which is actually an amazing document. I cannot praise it enough...”  
service user and advocate

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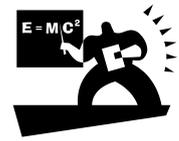
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# TRAINING



**You've read the book, now see it live...**

If you can organise a venue and gather up to 16 people there, we have courses; we will travel...

**Introductory courses:** aimed at those who help people with benefits - support workers, LMAs, CMHT staff etc.

## **Benefits and Mental Health**

The original course of the book! A two day course looking in depth at income maximisation tactics and strategies. Assumes no prior benefits knowledge. Includes: ESA, PIP, Carer's Allowance, Means tested entitlement and looking ahead to Universal Credit

## **Welfare Benefits Overview**

A one day general course for those new to the benefits system who want to gain the knowledge to signpost with confidence and understand income maximisation, with a nod to all the changes

## **Welfare Reform and Benefits Update**

Exactly what it says on the box. A run through all the recent and forthcoming changes, tailored to highlight changes affecting your particular client group and including more in-depth tactical tips on problem areas - e.g. ESA and a look at PIP and Universal Credit

## **Welfare Reform: Sickness and Disability Benefits**

Our former Sickness and Disability Benefits day updated - the impacts of migration to Employment and Support Allowance in it's latest guise and fast approaching switch from DLA to the new Personal Independence Payment. This course - suitable for advisers and non-specialists alike - looks at the background, impacts and practical ways to support clients through the changes

## **Employment and Support Allowance**

A one day course looking at the changing face of sickness route benefits - no prior benefits knowledge assumed - aimed at workers who might help with claim forms, supporting letters etc. No prior benefits knowledge assumed.

## **Benefits and Older People - 1 or 2 day option**

A one day look at income maximisation and entitlement in older age - including Pension Credit calculations and Attendance Allowance claims from both a mental and physical health perspective. Particularly popular with Housing Associations/ supported accommodation providers. No prior benefits knowledge assumed. A 2 day option brings in ESA and DLA for in the run up to retirement.

For detailed course outlines, specific requirements, costs, availability etc. please contact:  
[tommessere@gmail.com](mailto:tommessere@gmail.com)

Or visit [www.bigbookofbenefits.com](http://www.bigbookofbenefits.com) or  
see us on [facebook](https://www.facebook.com)

## **Personal Independence Payment**

A day course covering PIP in depth and exploring the challenges and opportunities it poses for advisers and support workers. Including PIP structure, timings and "invitation process", non-disability criteria - age limits, residence requirements, qualifying periods etc. disability criteria - activities and descriptors, the claims and assessment process, impact on other benefits, and what happens to existing DLA claimants - likely winners, losers and implications.

## **Universal Credit - 1 or 2 day option**

An in depth look at this ambitious project to simplify the system... including timetables, migration, elements, earnings disregards, calculations, conditionality, payments and appeals. A full overview in 1 day or a chance to cover a wider range of scenarios and get even more familiar with the sums over 2 days

Both PIP and UC courses can be adapted to the needs of either non specialist support workers or benefit advisers

**In-depth courses:** aimed at those who advise people on benefits entitlement - welfare rights workers, benefits advisers, CAB staff etc. More technical in content but retaining accessibility, a down to earth approach and sense of humour.

## **Mental health - working with people claiming sickness and disability benefits**

A one-day course looking at how common mental health diagnoses relate to PIP, DLA, AA and ESA claims, the barriers people face when accessing both benefits and advice and tactical approaches to income maximisation across the diagnostic spectrum.

## **ESA for Advisers**

The nitty-gritty detail of ESA plus tactical tips for helping people to negotiate it... Aimed at those who need to know the ins-and-outs of ESA/ perform better off calculation/ represent at Appeal. Assumes familiarity with the concept of ESA...

## **Making Welfare Rights Training Fun**

Aimed at people who offer welfare rights training to others... Protect the mental wellbeing of your course participants! What do they really need to know - and is it the same as you tell them? How to take the 'dry' out of information... Games, exercises and other ways of breaking up your 'chalk and talk' sessions. We won't guarantee to keep you awake, but if you do fall asleep, we'll try to make sure you do it with a smile on your face... Assumes a sense of humour...

## **Recent & forthcoming changes for advisers**

A detailed exploration of recent changes across the benefits system and their implications as well as looking at major changes ahead, including PIP and Universal Credit.

*"Made a frightening subject interesting and clearer - non jargonistic and thought provoking"*  
*"Informal.....full of humour... Delivery of essential information both verbal and through visual aids"*  
*"The best course I have been on in all the years I've been employed by..."*  
*"Informative, lively, very interesting and essential for my work with service users"*  
*"Superb course - very informative and relevant to client group"*

