



SELF HELP

# Employment and benefits: advice and support

**Hughes/antiphospholipid syndrome usually affects people of working age and while most people can lead relatively normal lives, others find it to be a debilitating condition.**

Its unpredictable nature can cause serious clotting events with long-term health implications such as strokes and heart attacks, while low-grade symptoms such as headache and migraines, memory loss, arthralgia (joint pain) and fatigue can, at times, make working life very challenging.

Where possible, it is best to try to remain in work – it is as important psychologically as it is financially – so try talking things over with your manager or colleagues to see if you could have more flexibility within your job, whether in the hours you do or the type of work. To assist with this, the government has set up the Access to Work scheme which aims to give you and your employer practical advice and support about any extra costs arising from your health needs.

Deciding whether to keep working is not an easy decision, and you will need to consider the implications on your physical and mental well-being as well as your finances. If you are unable to work due to sickness or disability there are a number of benefits you may be able to claim:

- Disability Living Allowance
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Statutory Sick Pay
- Attendance Allowance
- Working Tax Credits

This list is by no means exhaustive and focuses on the most common type of support. There are many other benefits which you may be entitled to, from disabled facilities grants to free cinema tickets – a comprehensive inventory with over 25 types of benefit listed can be found at the Disability Rights UK website: [www.disabilityalliance.org](http://www.disabilityalliance.org). The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) also operates a telephone helpline: the Benefit Enquiry Line which offers general advice and assistance for disabled people – Freephone 0800 88 22 00 while the website of DirectGov is also particularly helpful: <http://www.direct.gov.uk>.

You will have to apply for these benefits and the government guidelines are very stringent at the moment but, if you are unhappy with any aspects regarding your benefits, you are entitled to appeal against the decision. To do this you will need the leaflet GL24 If you think our decision was wrong – this is available from your local job centre or online with DirectGov. It is advisable to seek legal help from your local Citizen's Advice Bureau and ask your GP or specialists to provide medical advice focusing on the activities listed in your appeal. If the appeal goes to a hearing, an independent tribunal will hear your case and make a final decision.