



Challenging the stigma around benefits take up

As part of our [Counting the Costs campaign](#), Contact a Family wants to make sure families aren't missing out on millions of pounds of extra income because they don't claim [Disability Living Allowance \(DLA\)](#). Our Counting the Costs research shows that 1 in 5 families are currently not claiming DLA because they feel uneasy claiming benefits for their disabled child. We are concerned that the negative narrative about benefit claimants from some politicians and some sections of the media is putting some families off financial support that their child is entitled to.

Our Counting the Costs campaign finds:

- 70% say stigma of claiming disability benefits for their children has increased in the last two years
- 62% don't tell people that they claim benefits for their disabled child
- 11% received verbal insults from friends/family members because they claim benefits for their disabled child.

Keeley Burriss, from Chichester whose 6-year-old son Finlay, was deprived of oxygen at birth and has a severe learning disability, said: *"I don't know if it's my perception, but I feel like everyone assumes you are abusing the system. I don't tell people that I claim Disability Living Allowance for Finley and Carer's Allowance for me. But sometimes it is unavoidable and then I feel like I have to justify why we get financial support, explaining his needs and the fact that I can't work as much as I would like because he can't go to school full time and he has so many appointments. It's tiring and disheartening."*

"I do outreach for a local Sure Start centre and meet many families whose children have a disability or additional need and aren't claiming Disability Living Allowance. They are uneasy about going on benefits because of the negative attitudes that are out there. They put it off for a year or two struggling without it."

In addition, last year we ran a project with the Family Fund to identify low income families with disabled children who were not claiming any financial support, and work with them to help them get what they were entitled to. The families helped by the project increased their income by an average of £7,873 a year by claiming what they were entitled to for their child. When we asked why they had not claimed, the main reason given was to do with misconception of who is eligible, but almost one in five said they did not claim because they felt uneasy about it. The current rhetoric about benefits claimants being scroungers, is making genuine claimants feel ashamed and in some cases putting them off claiming. This is despite the significant extra costs they face and the difficulty of working and caring for their child.

Counting the Costs campaign wants families to seek advice from Contact a Family helpline on 0808 808 3555. Thousands already have so don't miss out!

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