

Christian Workers – Finance for Living Series

a guide to  
**maternity allowance**  
incorporating employment and  
**support allowance**

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## general position

For women who are not eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) (see separate briefing paper) then Maternity Allowance (MA) is the next port of call. It can apply to women who are or who have been either employed or self-employed and serves the same purpose as SMP to enable women to take paid time off work before and after they have a baby.

The amount of MA that can be claimed is based upon a calculation of income. Because there are certain anomalies concerning the way that a Christian worker's income can be calculated we would recommend that you read our briefing paper [a guide to the UK benefits system](#) as a general introduction before starting this paper.

## health warning

This paper was written in July 2012, during the 2012/13 tax year. The rules described and the various percentages or monetary values all relate to that period. Should significant time have elapsed between then and now, we would strongly advise you to visit [www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits) to ensure that there has been no significant changes to the legislation that would impact onto your situation.



## basic rules

MA is a weekly payment made by the Government, on the basis that certain criteria are met. Women in a variety of different situations may be able to claim including:

- those employed but who do not meet the criteria for claiming SMP
- those registered as self-employed and are paying class 2 NIC or hold a Small Earnings Exception Certificate
- those who have recently been employed or self employed<sup>1</sup>

SMP and MA are mutually exclusive and so cannot both be claimed at the same time. Therefore anyone qualifying for SMP will automatically be ineligible for MA. MA can be claimed for a maximum of 39 weeks.

## how is it calculated?

Maternity Allowance is paid at a flat rate of the lower of £135.45 per week or 90% of your average gross weekly earnings, whichever is the smaller. Understanding what constitutes earnings for Christian workers, particularly those who are self-employed, is therefore essential. As a very broad rule of thumb, income that is subject to income tax is likely to count as gross earnings for the purpose of MA. A more detailed approach to determining income can be found in our briefing paper [a guide to the UK benefits system](#), with additional information available at the websites listed on the following page.

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<sup>1</sup> You must have been employed or self employed for at least 26 weeks within your test period (66 weeks up to the date when the baby is due) and you must have earned at least £30 per week averaged over any 13 week stretch of the test period. See what constitutes earnings in [a guide to the UK benefits system](#).

## when is it paid?

MA will be paid for a maximum of 39 weeks directly into either a bank or building society account. Payments can start no earlier than the 11<sup>th</sup> week before your baby is due and no later than the day after your baby is due.



## how to claim?

You are able to apply for MA at any time after you have been pregnant for 26 weeks. An application (form MA1) must be submitted to Jobcentre Plus. These forms can be picked up from a local Jobcentre Plus, ordered over the phone, or downloaded from the website. You will also be required to submit proof of pregnancy, normally using form MATB1 (available from your doctor or midwife) and, where employed but ineligible for SMP, form SMP1 as provided by your employer.

## employment and support allowance (ESA)

In the event that you are unable to claim either SMP or MA, you may qualify for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). However, ESA is not a benefit at all related to being pregnant, but rather covers situations where you may have either an illness or a disability that constricts your ability to work or to return to work.

All unsuccessful claims for MA will automatically be considered for ESA, so there is no need to make a separate claim (see separate paper for more details regarding the workings of ESA).

## further information

Further information can be found at [www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits) and [www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist-guides/technical-guidance/ni17a-a-guide-to-maternity](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist-guides/technical-guidance/ni17a-a-guide-to-maternity)

The Finance for Living series of papers forms part of Stewardship's resources for Christian Workers. With contributions from a panel of advisors each of whom has significant experience within the area of mission, the series draws on their expertise to offer biblical teaching and practical guidance on issues affecting those living on personal financial support. The papers are available to download from the Stewardship website see <http://www.stewardship.org.uk/resources/finance-for-living>

This paper has been written by Alan Hough and edited by Stewardship. Alan has a background in corporate finance, compliance and risk alongside church leadership and trusteeship.

If you have any questions or comments arising from the material presented here, you can contact us at [education@stewardship.org.uk](mailto:education@stewardship.org.uk) or by telephone on 0208 502 8585.