



advice and support for older age

**Independent
Age**

Factsheet

Moving abroad

This factsheet explains how moving abroad could affect your pension and entitlement to benefits and health care, and what action you can take.

This factsheet is aimed at British nationals who have reached or are nearing retirement age.

Call FREE on **0800 319 6789** Visit **www.independentage.org**

Last reviewed: December 2016
Next review date: December 2017

About Independent Age

Whatever happens as we get older, we all want to remain independent and live life on our own terms. That's why, as well as offering regular friendly contact and a strong campaigning voice, Independent Age can provide you and your family with clear, free and impartial advice on the issues that matter: care and support, money and benefits, health and mobility.

A charity founded over 150 years ago,
we're independent so you can be.

The information in this factsheet applies to England only.

If you're in Wales, contact Age Cymru
(0800 022 3444, agecymru.org.uk)
for information and advice.

In Scotland, contact Age Scotland
(0800 12 44 222, agescotland.org.uk).

In Northern Ireland, contact Age NI
(0808 808 7575, ageni.org).

Contents

	1
1. Introduction	4
How will Brexit affect me?	4
2. Before you go	6
3. What happens to my pensions if I move abroad?	7
4. What happens to my benefits if I move abroad?	9
5. Benefits you may be able to claim abroad	11
Disability benefits	11
Carer's Allowance	11
Council Tax Reduction	12
Winter Fuel Payments	12
Bereavement benefits	12
6. Healthcare	14
7. Social care services	16
8. Housing	17
9. Useful contacts	18

1. Introduction

If you're thinking about moving abroad, it's important to know how your pension and any benefits you receive will be affected and how you will access healthcare and other services. This factsheet gives an overview of what you can expect.

What happens to your benefits and healthcare entitlement depends on whether or not you are moving to a country within the European Economic Area (EEA). The European Economic Area consists of the 28 member states of the EU listed below, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Swiss nationals are treated the same as EEA nationals.

The following are European Union countries:

Austria	Germany	Poland
Belgium	Greece	Portugal
Bulgaria	Hungary	Romania
Croatia	Ireland	Slovakia
Cyprus	Italy	Slovenia
Czech Republic	Latvia	Spain
Denmark	Lithuania	Sweden
Estonia	Luxembourg	UK
Finland	Malta	France
Netherlands		

The UK also has benefit and healthcare agreements with some countries outside of the EEA.

How will Brexit affect me?

The UK has voted to leave the EU which means that in the future some laws may change, but nobody knows yet what the full impact will be. If you are a UK citizen living in an EEA country, your rights haven't changed. Your situation may change in the future but that will depend on any negotiations

and agreements that take place. You will have time to take action before any changes come into effect.

2. Before you go

Moving to another country is a major undertaking so find out as much as possible about the country you're moving to, including healthcare, housing, and any local customs you should be aware of. You should also think ahead and plan how you will cope if you need more care in the future.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has produced some useful guides about living in particular countries, which include information about entry and residence requirements, health, benefits and finance. Visit gov.uk/government/collections/overseas-living-in-guides to read them.

Before you go, you need to tell:

- your council - especially if you receive benefits – and give them a forwarding address for post such as voting papers
- HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) – to make sure you pay the right amount of tax when you're abroad ([0300 200 3300](tel:03002003300))
- the International Pension Centre ([0191 218 7777](tel:01912187777)) if you're already receiving a State Pension or want to know how to claim it when you're abroad
- your GP and any NHS departments you're in contact with
- the offices that deal with any benefits you're receiving.

You'll also need to arrange insurance, including health insurance. If you get a UK State Pension and you're moving to an EEA country, you'll also need a certificate of entitlement to healthcare services, known as a form S1, which you can get from the International Pension Centre.

3. What happens to my pensions if I move abroad?

You can still get your State Pension if you move abroad, but in some countries it will be frozen at the rate it was first paid. You will only be entitled to an annual increase if you're moving to:

- the European Economic Area (EEA)
- Gibraltar or Switzerland
- a country with an agreement with the UK to give an annual increase, which includes Guernsey, Jersey, the USA, Turkey and Mauritius.

Contact the International Pension Centre ([0191 218 7777](tel:01912187777), gov.uk/international-pension-centre) to find out how your pension will be affected.

The International Pension Centre can advise the local Pension Service offices of your plans when necessary. Make sure you have your National Insurance number when you call.

If you're not yet claiming your State Pension

If you're living abroad before you start receiving your State Pension, contact the International Pension Centre ([+44 \(0\)191 218 7777](tel:+4401912187777)).

Once you're living abroad, you can contact the Future Pensions Centre ([+44 191 218 3600](tel:+441912183600)) for a State Pension statement and information about your National Insurance contributions as long as you're at least four months away from reaching your UK pension age.

For more information about State Pension rules, see our factsheet **The State Pension** (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

Tax

You may have to pay tax on your State Pension, either in the UK (if you're classed as a UK resident for tax purposes) or in the country where you live. The amount you pay will depend on your taxable income. Contact HMRC for advice ([0300 200 3300](tel:03002003300)).

War Pensions

You can usually continue receiving a War Pension no matter where you live. If you live abroad you'll receive the same amount of War Pension and the same general increases as war pensioners who live in the UK. Contact Veterans UK ([0808 1914 218](tel:08081914218), veterans-uk.info) if you plan to move abroad.

4. What happens to my benefits if I move abroad?

You may still be able to claim some benefits if you move abroad or if you're already living there. What you can get depends on where you're going and for how long.

As a general rule, you can't get means-tested benefits (related to your income, savings and other capital) when you move abroad. These include Pension Credit and Housing Benefit.

You can only receive these benefits for up to four weeks if you go abroad. You must plan to return within four weeks when you leave. You may be able to get them for longer in certain circumstances, for example if your return is delayed due to a death while you're away, or if you're going abroad for medical treatment. For more information, contact the relevant benefit office.

Visit the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) website for more details of benefits you can claim abroad:

dwp.gov.uk/international/social-security-agreements.

For more information, call Independent Age on **0800 319 6789**.

To do



You must tell the office that pays your benefit that you are going abroad, even if it is just temporarily. If you don't, you are committing benefit fraud.

If you're moving abroad permanently

Once you know which benefits you can still get, you need to decide whether to receive them into your UK bank, building society or Post Office account, or into the account of a nominated person who lives in the UK. You may also be able to

receive them into a bank account abroad, but you need to check with the office making the payments.

5. Benefits you may be able to claim abroad

Different benefits have different rules about whether you can claim them abroad and for how long. These rules apply to EEA countries and Switzerland, unless otherwise specified.

Disability benefits

You may be able to continue to receive Attendance Allowance (AA), the care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), or the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

Contact the relevant helpline before you go:

- AA helpline: [0345 605 6055](tel:03456056055)
- PIP helpline: [0345 850 3322](tel:03458503322)
- DLA helpline: [0345 712 3456](tel:03457123456)

You can also still receive Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit. Contact the office paying you before you move.

You may be able to make a new claim for AA and PIP in limited circumstances. Contact the Exportability Team to find out more ([01253 331 044](tel:01253331044), [gov.uk/exportability-team](https://www.gov.uk/exportability-team)).

Carer's Allowance

You may be able to keep getting Carer's Allowance, or make a new claim for it. Visit [gov.uk/claim-benefits-abroad/illness-injury-and-disability-benefits](https://www.gov.uk/claim-benefits-abroad/illness-injury-and-disability-benefits) or contact the Exportability Team to find out more ([01253 331 044](tel:01253331044), [gov.uk/exportability-team](https://www.gov.uk/exportability-team)).

Council Tax Reduction

Local councils can set their own rules about Council Tax Reduction, so contact your local council for more information or visit gov.uk/council-tax/working-out-your-council-tax.

Winter Fuel Payments

You may be able to keep getting payments depending on the average winter temperature of the country you're moving to. You can't get the payment if you move to France, Spain, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Greece, Malta or Portugal because the average winter temperature is higher than the warmest part of the UK.

If you haven't claimed a Winter Fuel Payment before, you can make a new claim from abroad once you reach the qualifying age. You must also have a link to the social security system, such as having lived or worked in the UK, or getting a State Pension or other benefits.

If you already get a Winter Fuel Payment, contact the Winter Fuel Payment Team at the International Pension Centre for advice ([0191 218 7777](tel:01912187777)).

Bereavement benefits

If you move to an EEA country, Switzerland or Gibraltar, you can still get Bereavement Allowance and Widowed Parent's Allowance but the amount you receive may not be uprated. You may also be able to claim them in certain other countries that have an agreement with the UK. You will only be entitled to the one-off lump sum Bereavement Payment in certain circumstances.

Contact the International Pension Centre ([+44 \(0\)191 218 7608](tel:+4401912187608) from abroad) to make a new claim or to let them know you're moving so they can arrange for you to keep getting your benefit.

Good to know

Bereavement benefits are being replaced by a Bereavement Support Payment. This is likely to happen from April 2017 and will affect new claimants. Contact us after this date for more information ([0800 319 6789](tel:08003196789), independentage.org).

6. Healthcare

If you move abroad permanently, you will lose your entitlement to most NHS services in the UK – even if you are a UK citizen. This is because the UK has a residence-based healthcare system.

The healthcare you can expect abroad depends on where you're going. It may not cover all the costs or provide all the services you would get from the NHS.

Before you move

Find out about the healthcare system of the country where you plan to settle by visiting the NHS website:

[nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/movingabroad](https://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/movingabroad).

You should inform your GP so that you can be removed from the NHS register.

Private medical insurance

Wherever you're moving to, it's best to take out private medical insurance to pay for any costs not covered by the healthcare system of that country. This might include dental treatment, ambulance services, prescription charges or medical repatriation to the UK.

Getting emergency treatment if you're visiting a country

If you're visiting a country in the EEA for a short time, you can get emergency medical treatment with a free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). This entitles you to the same state healthcare as a resident of that country. Contact the NHS application service ([0300 330 1350](tel:03003301350)) for a form, or fill in the form online ([gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card](https://www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card)).

Once you've moved permanently to an EEA country, you won't be able to use your EHIC card there.

Getting healthcare abroad if you receive a State Pension

If you're getting a UK State Pension, you'll need to complete an S1 form. This will mean you can receive the same level of free or reduced cost healthcare as other pensioners in your adopted country.

Contact the International Pension Centre ([0191 218 7777](tel:01912187777)) to ask for the S1 form before you go. Register it as soon as possible with the relevant authorities in your new country. You will then be entitled to apply for a UK-issued EHIC so you can access state-funded medical treatment when you visit other EEA countries.

Getting healthcare abroad if you're of working age

If you're working abroad you need to join the healthcare system of that country and pay contributions to access the same healthcare as residents.

If you have retired before you're eligible to claim your UK State Pension, you won't have access to free or reduced-cost healthcare in the country you have moved to. Contact the Overseas Healthcare Team for advice ([0191 218 1999](tel:01912181999)). You will need private medical insurance if you move abroad before you receive your State Pension.

If you visit the UK

If you usually live in an EEA country and are visiting the UK, you should show your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC).

7. Social care services

Unlike healthcare, there are no agreements for receiving social care abroad. You should check what social care services you could expect to receive in your adopted country should you ever need care at home or in a care home.

State social care varies greatly and may not exist in some countries where families are still the main providers of support. Private care homes may be expensive, staff and residents may speak little English and the culture could be very different from what you are used to.

8. Housing

Before you commit to buying property abroad you might want to consider renting first to make sure you're happy with the area. If you decide to settle there, you should:

- research local laws on buying or renting
- get written confirmation of any financial transactions
- get independent legal advice
- use an independent translator or interpreter
- check local laws on inheritance tax if you are buying.

You can get more advice on buying property abroad from [gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-buying-property-abroad](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-buying-property-abroad).

If you live abroad and rent out a property in the UK, you may need to pay UK tax. Contact HMRC for advice ([0300 200 3300](tel:03002003300)).

9. Useful contacts

Pensions and benefits

Attendance Allowance (AA)	AA helpline: 0345 605 6055
Personal Independence Payment (PIP)	PIP helpline: 0345 850 3322
Disability Living Allowance (DLA)	DLA helpline: 0345 712 3456
Carer's Allowance	Carer's Allowance Unit 0345 608 4321
Exportability team (if you're moving permanently)	01253 331 044 gov.uk/exportability-team
State Pension	0191 218 7777 gov.uk/international-pension-centre
Pension Credit	Pension Service 0345 606 0265
Winter Fuel Payments	Winter Fuel Payment Team at the International Pension Centre 0191 218 7777
Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support	The benefit department of your local council gov.uk/find-local-council
Bereavement Benefits	0191 218 7777 gov.uk/international-pension-centre
Veterans UK	0808 1914 2 18 veterans-uk.info

Healthcare

NHS England	0300 311 2233
Overseas Healthcare Team at the DWP	0191 218 1999

Tax

HMRC	0300 200 3500 Outside UK +44 191 203 7010
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Additional information

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office produces a booklet called Going to Live Abroad (020 7008 1500, gov.uk/government/publications/going-to-live-abroad/)

The government has also produced lots of online information for people considering a move abroad:

- Benefits information gov.uk/claim-benefits-abroad
- Pensions information gov.uk/state-pension-if-you-retire-abroad
- Health information nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad

If you're unsure about anything that you have read in this factsheet and would like to talk to someone about it, ring our Helpline to arrange to speak to one of our expert advisers ([0800 319 6789](tel:08003196789)).

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