

Tips for claiming disability living allowance (DLA)



You should expect services to offer support and advice about benefits. Receiving the correct benefits is your right, so don't feel embarrassed about claiming. See Factsheet 9a for a summary of other potential support and benefits.

- TIP!** It's best to get the forms from the DLA Help line on 0845 712 3456 as it will be date stamped. As long as you return the completed pack within six weeks, your claim will be considered from that date.
- TIP!** Give it a high priority. Awards are worth a lot and DLA is a passport benefit to other allowances, premiums and sources of financial help. It can feel more manageable if you have a target to fill in a few pages a day.
- TIP!** It's hard to tackle alone, so ask the Citizens Advice Bureau or a social worker to help. If an expert adviser isn't available, ask a friend to help. Other parents who have children with similar problems can be a great source of information about what to say and what not to say.
- TIP!** Look at all the most recent advice and reports you have about your child. They can often help you understand the underlying reasons why your child appears clumsy or not to listen.
- TIP!** Don't worry too much about spelling or writing in complete sentences.
- TIP!** Tick the small boxes on every page but don't bother filling in pages that aren't relevant. When there is plenty to say, fill up the big boxes. If you run out of space, write in the margins or add extra sheets.
- TIP!** Don't underestimate the help your child needs. It's easy to forget what other children at this age can do for themselves. Make it clear if your child needs substantially more help than a non-disabled child the same age.
- TIP!** Describe what happens at the dinner table, in the bath, at bedtime, out shopping, on public transport and so on, however painful or ridiculous it feels to share. It's important to write down what you do to help.
- TIP!** Include incidents that illustrate the problems, times when your child has misread a situation or been misunderstood, the muddle or frustration when your child hasn't had help, or unsupervised disasters.
- TIP!** Don't forget that glasses and hearing aids are equipment too. How often are they lost, mislaid, need adjusting, repairing or cleaning?
- TIP!** Write about the bad days. You can almost be sure that things will get worse the day you post the claim and you'll wish that you had been more open.

- TIP!** **It can be hard to get supporting advice for nights, so keep a diary for a week or two.** Show it to your child's GP or teacher and include it with your claim. It helps if others are able to say that you report broken nights.
- TIP!** **Don't worry about repetition. Common threads running through your claim are important.** Read it back. Don't be surprised if you feel shocked or saddened. Keep going, and check if there's anything you've missed.
- TIP!** **Check that all professionals whose details you include know you are claiming;** they may well be contacted. Often GPs get by-passed as your child is referred on to specialist consultants, so it may be worth making an appointment with your doctor to put them in the picture.
- TIP!** **Get a supporting statement from a professional who knows your child really well.** Remember that this person may have only seen your child in a clinic or school setting. **Make sure they aren't having to guess about how things are at home.** Ask them to read what you have written, or give them a short version of the main points you need stressed. **Ask for it back by a particular date, drop it off and pick it up yourself.** Don't trust the post, just now this is your only copy and you've invested a lot of time on it.
- TIP!** **Send supplementary evidence that supports what you say.** Medical reports, assessments, advices and statements of special educational needs are all useful.
- TIP!** **Keep a photocopy of your claim,** you will need to refer to it if you want a decision looked at again or when the claim is reviewed.
- TIP!** **Don't give up if your claim is refused.** Over 50% of decisions are overturned if you ask for the decision to be reviewed or go to appeal.
- TIP!** **For more help and advice contact the DLA Help Line: 0845 712 3456.**
- TIP!** **The Benefits Enquiry Line: 0800 88 22 00 can organise an interpreter** and an adviser to make claims over the phone. The form is completed in English, so you'll need to find an interpreter before you can check and sign it.
- TIP!** **Disability Alliance run a Rights Advice Line: 020 7247 8763 and publish *Don't Miss Out*** a clear and easy to use guide to benefits and services which includes case studies and calculations. And see Factsheet 9a for a quick summary of potential entitlements.
- TIP!** **Many disability specific organisations have fact sheets** and some have local support workers to help tackle the forms. **Contact a Family** can give advice via their freephone helpline: 0808 808 3555 or www.cafamily.org.uk
- TIP!** **Your health visitor or social worker should signpost** you to local sources of support and some may offer to fill in forms with you.



This factsheet was written by aMAZE
and the Audit Commission



aMAZE Brighton and Hove
Charity No: 1078094

