

Claiming Disability Living Allowance for children

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is the main benefit for children with a condition or disability. Any ill or disabled child may qualify. It helps to meet the extra costs that you might have as a result of your child's disability. DLA is made up of two parts.

A care component

For children who need extra attention or supervision. This is paid at one of three different rates depending on how much extra care your child needs. It can be paid from age three months or from birth if a child is terminally ill.

When they consider whether your child qualifies, the DLA unit will compare your child's needs with those of a child of the same age who has no disabilities. If your child needs substantially more attention – either because the care they need is different, or takes longer, or is needed more frequently – then your child should qualify.

A mobility component

For children who need help with getting around. This is paid at one of two rates depending on the nature of the mobility problems.

The higher rate mobility component can be paid from age three years and is for those with severe walking difficulties, those who are deaf blind or severely visually impaired and some children with severe behavioural problems.

The lower rate mobility component is for children who need extra guidance or supervision out of doors and can be paid from age five.

Can I get both components?

Depending on their circumstances your child may qualify for one or both components. DLA is not means-tested so it does not matter what income or savings you have. Instead any decision to award DLA will be based solely on your child's condition and how this impacts on their need for help with personal care and/or getting around.

Do I need a diagnosis?

You can claim DLA even if your child does not have a diagnosis – it is sufficient that their need for extra care or supervision is caused by a physical or mental condition, even if that condition has not yet been formally diagnosed.

Is my child's condition severe enough to get DLA?

DLA is paid at different rates depending on how much extra help a child needs with their personal care, or getting around.

While a severely disabled child might get the highest rates of DLA, a child with less severe needs may still qualify for DLA at lower rates. For example, needing extra care during the night for as little as 20 minutes could mean your child qualifies for DLA.

If you are in any doubt as to whether your child will qualify for DLA or not, make a claim.

Extra help because your child gets DLA

Getting DLA can help you qualify for extra amounts of other means-tested benefits and tax credits. Depending on the rate of DLA awarded, it can also help you to qualify for other benefits, such as Carer's Allowance.

If you're getting Child Tax Credit and your child is awarded DLA (or if an existing DLA award is increased to the highest rate for personal care), make sure you tell the tax credits office within one month of getting this DLA decision. So long as you do this, any extra tax credits should be backdated in line with the DLA award.

Call our freephone helpline for detailed information about the extra help that may be available following the award of DLA to your child.

Need advice?

Call our freephone helpline
0808 808 3555
helpline@cafamily.org.uk
Open Monday to Friday, 9.30am–5pm



Special rules

If your child has a terminal illness and is not expected to live for more than six months, you can claim under a fast-track procedure known as the special rules, and DLA can be paid straight away.

There are also specific rules for some kidney patients who need renal dialysis. To qualify your child must have this treatment regularly for two or more sessions a week. Call our freephone helpline for more information about this.

Claiming DLA

There is a specific form that is used for claiming DLA for a child, called DLA1A Child. This form is different to the one used by adults aged 16 or above, so make sure you are given the right form to fill in.

When claiming it is very important to put as much information as you can about your child's needs. Any information provided by a professional involved with your child's care may also help.

It is also helpful to keep a diary of the past week giving an account of your child's difficulties, the help you gave and how long it took each time. You can send this in as evidence, and it can help the DLA decision-maker get a full picture of the help your child needs.

Order a claim form from the DLA Unit by calling 0345 712 3456, or for Northern Ireland call 0300 123 3356.

Get help with the form

The form can be off-putting to complete but it is important that you complete all the relevant sections. Our UK-wide freephone helpline can put you in touch with local help to complete the form. Call 0808 808 3555 to find out more.

If your child already gets DLA and they need more help

If your child already gets DLA but their circumstances have changed and they now need more help, it may be possible to get their award increased. You can contact the DLA office and ask them to look at your child's award again.

It is helpful to get evidence from any professionals involved in your child's care to back up your claim. If their needs have changed and you ask for their DLA to be looked at

again, there is a risk their award could go down rather than up, so it's always best to get help from a Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or local welfare rights service.

What if I'm turned down?

Don't be disheartened. If your child is refused DLA or awarded at a lower rate than you expected, it can be worth challenging the decision. To back up your challenge, you can send in additional information from professionals involved in your child's care. There are two possible stages to challenging a decision.

First, you can ask for the decision to be looked at again. This is known as a reconsideration request.

Then, you can appeal if you're not happy with the outcome of a reconsidered decision. Call our freephone helpline for more information about a reconsideration or appealing.

Future changes

The government is currently replacing DLA for 16-65 year olds with a new benefit called the Personal Independence Payment. However, DLA will continue to apply to children aged under 16. We have more information in our guide *Personal Independence Payment and other benefits at 16*. Call our freephone helpline on 0808 808 3555 for a free copy and to find out more.

Further information on DLA

Read our full guide for parents about *Claiming Disability Living Allowance for children*, with hints and tips for filling in the form, available from our helpline.

Further information for children with learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders

There are some specific rules which allow some children with learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders to qualify for the high rate mobility component. For further information download our free parent guide *Disability living allowance – claiming the higher rate mobility component for children with learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders*. Or you can call our freephone helpline on 0808 808 3555 for a free copy of any of our guides.

Got a question about the changes?
Call the Contact a Family freephone
helpline: 0808 808 3555
helpline@cafamily.org.uk
www.cafamily.org.uk

