

TIPS FOR CLAIMING DLA

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers.



Tips for claiming Disability Living Allowance

It typically costs three times more to raise a disabled child. Claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA) can help cover some of the additional expense you might incur from things like higher heating bills, extra childcare and transport costs, and endless laundry. But many of you tell us it's hard to know how to make a strong case. This fact sheet offers lots of tips that can help you with claiming DLA. We also produce a companion fact sheet called *What is DLA?* that you can download from our website (see below).

To apply for DLA, call the DLA helpline: **0800 121 4600** and ask for a form. This will be date stamped and, as long as you return it within six weeks, a successful claim will be back-dated to that date. If your child is almost 16 or over 16, you will need to claim PIP instead of DLA. The following fact sheets on our website can help you: *What is PIP*; *Tips for Claiming PIP*; *PIP Face-to-Face Assessments*; and *Reconsiderations and Appeals*.

Prepare well

Gather evidence that supports what you say to send with the form: medical reports, assessments, advice and EHC Plans are all useful. Be wary of school reports, they are written to be shared with your child and so are usually very positive. If your child doesn't have an EHC Plan, their SEN Support plans should reflect their challenges at school. If you have mislaid any reports, ask advice givers to send more copies. If your child is overdue any sort of reassessment, chase this up!

Keep a diary (particularly a sleep diary) for a week or two before you claim. Show it to your child's GP or teacher and include it with your claim. Have you asked your GP for help to manage your tiredness or your child's disturbed nights? Does your child fall asleep or become irritable at school in the afternoons? Can their teacher link this to reports of poor sleeping in a home school book? It helps if others are able to say you report broken nights.

Make it a top priority. Awards are worth a lot and DLA is a passport benefit to other allowances, premiums, and sources of financial help.

It's hard to tackle alone, so 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.

Enlist professionals

Get a supporting statement from a professional who really knows your child well. Remember that this person may have only seen your child in a clinic or school setting. Make sure this professional isn't guessing how things are at home. Ask them to read what you have written, or give them a summary of the main points you need stressed.

Check that all professionals whose details you plan to include know you are claiming; they may well be contacted. Often GPs get by-passed as your child is referred on to specialist consultants, but they are likely to be contacted now so it may be worth making an appointment with your doctor to put them in the picture.





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Ask professionals who are contributing to complete the form 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.

How to complete the form

Read through all the paperwork you have gathered about your child. This will jog your memory about why they do certain things and help you remember examples.

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 or use the extra pages at the back. Or attach what you want to say as handwritten notes or a typed document.

Label any extra pages with your child's name, date of birth and reference number at the top of each page in case they come adrift.

Describe what happens at the dinner table, in the bath, at bedtime, out shopping, on public transport and so on. Say exactly what help or supervision you give and say what would happen if your child didn't get the help they needed. Include anecdotes that illustrate the problems.

Don't underestimate the help your child needs: it's easy to forget what other children of the same age as your child can do for themselves so make comparisons between younger siblings or friends and your disabled child.

Write about the bad days even if it feels very personal and hard to share. If you gloss over difficult times, your child's behaviour can be almost guaranteed to deteriorate the day after you post the claim and you'll wish you had been more open.

Don't forget that glasses and hearing aids are equipment too. How often are they lost, mislaid, need adjusting, repairing or cleaning?

Don't worry about repetition: common threads running through your claim are important.

Write little and often: It can feel more manageable if you just aim to fill in a few pages a day.

Afterwards

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.

Send it Special Delivery, to be sure your claim arrives safely.

If you disagree with the decision, act quickly. Don't give up if your claim is refused. The DWP doesn't always get it right, but timescales are short, so act quickly if you want a recent decision to be looked at again. Over 50 per cent decisions are overturned, so ask for the decision to be reviewed. If it is still refused you can go to appeal.





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DLA Reviews

Review or renewal packs are sent out six months before a current award ends. This gives you plenty of time to gather evidence to support your claim.

Get your review pack back in good time. The DWP takes at least 8 weeks to make a decision so make sure you're not without money while your claim is assessed.

Work just as hard on the review as you did on the original claim. The DWP don't just rubber stamp reviews even for severely disabled children.

Ask about

- **Blue Badge** – if your child gets the higher rate mobility component of DLA, or they are severely sight-impaired they will be entitled to a 'Blue Badge', which allows the holder to park in disabled bays and disregard some parking restrictions. To find out more contact: **01243 777653**, email: **blue.badges@westsussex.gov.uk** or go to: **www.westsussex.gov.uk**. You can also apply for an on-street disabled parking bay outside your home through the above website.
- **Citizen's Advice Bureau** – can help with benefits claims, including DLA. There are offices across the county. Tel: **0344 477 1171** or go to: **www.advicewestsussex.org.uk**.
- **Motability** – if you get the Higher Rate mobility component of DLA, you may be able to use this to lease a car or scooter via the Motability scheme. Call: **0300 456 4566** or visit: **www.motability.co.uk**.
- **Social care** – your child's social worker may be able to help you to fill out the DLA form. Call the MASH, tel: **01403 229 900**, email: **MASH@westsussex.gov.uk**. If you don't have a social worker, your health visitor (via your GP surgery) may also be able to help you.
- **West Sussex County Council's Benefit Advisor** – information and support for people applying for DLA for their children. Tel: **0330 222 2569 / 07850 240874** or email: **robert.hayes@westsussex.gov.uk**.

Further information and useful links

- **Making Sense of it All** – Reaching Families' handbook for parent carers of children and young people with SEND in West Sussex provide essential information on money matters, including claiming DLA, as well as leisure activities, social care, health, employment and much more. Go to: **www.reachingfamilies.org.uk**.
- **Fact Sheets** – for further information see the Amaze/Reaching Families' fact sheet *What is DLA?* (if your child is soon turning 16 or is over 16, you will find a number of sheets on the site to help you with a PIP claim) For more, go to: **www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/factsheets.html**.
- **Cerebra** – produces a guide to DLA, which you can download from their website: **www.cerebra.org.uk**, by searching for 'DLA'. Although it has been written for children with neurological conditions such as autism, much of the advice will also help parent carers of children with other conditions to understand the DLA form and to fill it out.
- **Disability Living Allowance (DLA)** – go to: **www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children** for an overview or call the DLA Benefits helpline on: **0800 121 4600**.
- **West Sussex Local Offer** – go to **https://westsussex.local-offer.org**.

