Applying for DLA

Guidance, tips and useful information for when applying for Disability Living Allowance

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Better Start Southend
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early years alliance

COMMUNITY FUND

Introduction

DLA stands for Disability Living Allowance, a UK benefit for individuals who have significant disabilities and need help with mobility or care costs. It's a tax-free benefit that helps cover the extra expenses associated with managing a disability, specifically for those under 16 years of age.

Here is the link to the claim form:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-living-allowance-for-children-claim-form

Parent/carers often ask:

- The form is so long where do I start?
- Is my child eligible for DLA?
- I don’t have a diagnosis so am I still entitled to apply for DLA?

Top tips and ideas

- Call DLA and request the form to be posted out to you. The form will then be date stamped the day they send it and you have 6 weeks to complete the form – if successful the money will be backdated to the date the form was sent out.
- Do not try to fill the form out in one go – do small chunks at a time.
- It is easy to forget all the 'extra' things we have to do for our child. Try writing a diary for a couple of days with everything you are doing and how long it is taking, this will help when completing the form.
- Another way to look at it, is to think if you were going away for the weekend write down all the things you would have to tell the childminder to do that your child would need which is above the average child of their age.
- DLA usually requires that you re apply every few years, dependant on your child's needs. This requires you to complete the entire form from scratch, this is to mainly capture any changes. We recommend you take photos of each page of the form once completed before you send it off so you can refer back to it when you need to re-apply in the future.
- It is VERY IMPORTANT to inform Universal Credit if DLA is awarded so your UC claim can have additional elements added on.
- Carers Allowance: You might qualify for Carers Allowance if you spend more than 35 hours a week looking after your child and your child gets middle or high-rate DLA (click here for information on what middle and high-rate is: https://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children/rates
- You may also be able to get carers credit if you receive certain benefits.
- When you complete the DLA form, we recommend that you print off the form online while waiting for the one in the post to come through. This way you can have a look at the questions, make any notes to remind you of the things you need to think about further (I often suggest post it notes for this).
- Also, where possible, complete Question 57 which is for 'any other information' on a laptop or computer and keep it. This way when the renewal arrives you can change the details as needed rather than starting again from the beginning. The information could also be used if you want to explain the child's challenges for an EHCP or applying for other funding.

Top tips and ideas (continued)

- Whilst waiting for the postal form, it is also useful to start to gather any supporting letters, appointment letters and diagnosis letters – make sure to take a photocopy for you to keep though, as the originals are not sent back to you.
- Also advise you to take photographs on mobiles or photocopies at the local library of the form. This way you have a starting point of the information they wrote on the form (aside from question 57) at renewal.
- Finally, send via recorded delivery in time to arrive before the deadline date if asked for a date stamped paper form.

Useful sources of information and support

Cerebra guide to completing the DLA forms
www.cerebra.org.uk/download/disability-living-allowance-dla-guide/

Mobility element information
www.contact.org.uk/about-contact/news-and-views/how-to-claim-dla-higher-rate-mobility-your-top-questions-answered/

Citizen's Advice guidance
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/sick-or-disabled-people-and-carers/disability-living-allowance/help-with-your-dla-claim/how-to-claim-dla/

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) Helpline
0800 121 4600

ABSS SEND Family Resources

This Tip Sheet has been compiled as part of the A Better Start Southend (ABSS) Legacy, with the support of local partners and families – for other useful resources visit the ABSS website using the link below.

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Visit the ABSS Family Resources Page
www.abetterstartsouthend.co.uk/family-resources

Legal context

It’s very common for a parent to think they won’t be able to get Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for their child when they can.

DLA is **not** means tested, so it doesn't matter how much you earn or how much savings you have.

DLA is **not** just for children who are physically disabled. It can be given for a wide range of medical conditions including behavioural as well as learning disabilities and developmental delay.

You can get DLA if at least one of the following applies to your child:

- they need a lot more care, attention or supervision than a child of the same age.
- they have difficulty walking or getting around outdoors in unfamiliar places, compared to a child of the same age.

Your child must have had the condition for at least 3 months, and you must expect it to last for 6 months more at least.

You **don’t** need a formal diagnosis from a doctor to apply, but this can usually help. If your child is under 3, you won't be eligible for the 'mobility component' of DLA.

Jargon Buster

Here are some terms or abbreviations you might come across:

DLA – Disability Living Allowance

EHCNA – Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment
The process used to determine if a child or young person needs an Education, Health and Care plan, which outlines their specific needs and the support they require.

EHCP – An Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP)
A legal document which describes a child or young person's aged up to 25 special educational needs, the support they need, and the outcomes they would like to achieve.

The special educational provision described in an EHC plan must be provided by the child or young person's local authority. This means an EHC plan can give a child or young person extra educational support. It can also give parents and young people more choice about which school or other setting the child or young person can attend.

SENDIASS - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Services
Provide free, impartial advice on matters relating to SEND, and can support children, young people and their families on a range of issues including: school exclusions; EHC Needs Assessments; supporting conversations with a school or local authority; applying for DLA; representation at SEND tribunals.
www.sendiasssouthend.co.uk/

City Family

City Family is a local organisation that takes the good practice from A Better Start Southend (ABSS) and weaves it into their support services for local families. They connect parents and carers to support, services, and community networks, making family life a little easier. Whether you need advice, activities, or access to more specialist support, they can help you. Whatever your journey, you're not alone.

If you have any questions or concerns around family services in Southend, or need support, please contact City Family's Information and Guidance Service where their Navigators will be able to help you.

- **Call:** 01702 844188
- **WhatsApp/Live Chat:** 07507 242398
- **Email:** yfsouthend@cityfamily.org.uk
- **or visit** www.cityfamily.org.uk

You can also visit City Family's Service Map to explore services available to families across the city of Southend. www.cityfamily.org.uk/search/

Visit City Family's website for more information
www.cityfamily.org

A Better Start Southend

A Better Start Southend (ABSS) was at the heart of early years support for families in Southend from 2015 until March 2025.

ABSS delivered services that helped families:

- improve how they communicate with their little ones
- build social and emotional skills
- live healthier lives

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As part of the legacy from ABSS, local partner organisations and parents worked closely with ABSS to assemble a range of resource packs for families and for practitioners who support families. This Information Sheet forms part of those resources.

Learn more about the ABSS Family Resource Packs
www.abetterstartsouthend.co.uk/family-resources