

# Claiming benefits for a disabled child: An introduction to Disability Living Allowance



## What is DLA?

- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit (money) the government pays for a disabled child who is under 16 years of age and who has care needs or who has difficulties moving around. It is paid because the government recognises that looking after a child with a disability creates all sorts of extra expenses. There is no restriction on what the benefit can be spent on.
- The child must have a long-term health condition, disability or developmental disorder which results in them needing a lot more attention, guidance or supervision than a typically developing child. They do not need to have a physical disability to get the benefit, nor do they need a diagnosis.
- DLA is based on the child, not on the family circumstances. It does not matter how much money the family earns, it is not a means-tested benefit, nor whether the family has paid national insurance contributions. Parents can both be in work or can be on other benefits (which won't be affected). It can be claimed by someone who is not the child's parent, but with whom the child is living.
- DLA does not affect tax credits, they would remain the same. It is ignored for the purposes of income tax.
- The child must have difficulties for three months before the application is made and the child must be expected to continue to have the same level of difficulties for the following six months.

## Who's eligible?

In order to receive DLA, a child must have difficulties that are the same as or more significant than the minimum conditions decided by the government (the eligibility criteria).

The eligibility criteria are split into two parts, Mobility and Care. A child can receive DLA for one or both parts.

## Mobility

This is split into lower and higher rates. The lower rate is payable from when a child is five. To qualify a child could have, for example, no sense of danger, no road sense, be impulsive or have communication difficulties. The higher rate is payable from age three. A child must be unable, for example, to walk, or be virtually unable to walk, or be 'severely mentally impaired' and have extreme behavioural difficulties.

## Care

This is split into three rates, low, middle and high, and has no age limit (apart from the child having had the condition for the previous three months before applying). To qualify for the lower rate, a child must need attention or supervision with things like eating, dressing, washing or using the toilet for part of the day. For the middle rate, the child needs looking after throughout either the day or night and for high rate the child needs looking after throughout both the day and the night.

- The amount the government pays (in 2020/21) is as follows:

### Mobility

Lower rate	£23.60
Higher rate	£62.25

### Care

Lower rate	£23.60
Medium rate	£59.70
Higher rate	£89.15

## How to apply for DLA

There is a detailed claim form which must be completed. It is available by calling the government's Disability Service Centre on 0800 121 4600 or from the local Jobs and Benefits Office (in Northern Ireland). Parents may find it helpful to get some support with filling in the guide as it quite detailed and long. Cerebra produces a step-by-step guide to claiming DLA which is designed to make completing the form as straight forward as possible, and is available [here](#).

Cerebra is the charity dedicated to helping families with children with brain conditions discover a better life together. We listen to them, we learn from them, we work with them. We carry out research, we design and innovate, we make and share. What we discover together makes everyone's life better. Join us on our journey, and who knows what we could find? To find out more about our services please click [here](#).

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