

# **Guide to Disability Living Allowance Visually Impairment**

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# What is the Disability Living Allowance?

The Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is an entitlement that does not depend on your savings or income, or that of your partner (if applicable). It will not reduce any other entitlements you may be in receipt of and will only increase your income, if awarded.

## Do I qualify for Disability living allowance?

The rules for Disability Living Allowance can seem complex as entitlement to the allowance can involve the consideration of the amount and frequency of help required, the risks faced which might require supervision, and the degree of difficulty or help required when walking outside. The following lists may help though by giving examples of the kinds of needs or difficulties which could count towards qualifying for the allowance:

### Personal care needs

If you:

- need help with, for example, washing yourself, dressing, getting to or using the toilet, getting into or out of bed, moving about indoors, help with medical treatment, help at mealtimes or something similar
- need someone there to keep an eye on you, do you have fits, dizzy spells, blackouts, have falls or stumbles, or have problems communicating
- need someone with you when you go out during the day and / or evening
- have difficulty concentrating, need someone to remind or motivate you to do things, feel panicky or anxious if you try to do things or have other difficulties due to your mental health
- need help preparing or cooking a main meal for yourself due to your difficulties
- have problems when you are in bed, turning over, settling, or staying in bed, being propped up, getting into position to sleep, getting the bedclothes back on if they fall off
- have a child (under 16) who has care needs that are substantially in excess of what is usual in children of the same age (this could be because they need more frequent help or they take longer to attend to)

Then you may qualify for one of the care components of the allowance.

## Mobility needs

If you:

- Have physical problems when walking out of doors (this could include: experiencing pain after walking only a short distance, getting short of breath, needing to keep stopping to rest, needing someone to support you, or having a problem with your balance).
- Need someone with you when walking out of doors in unfamiliar places (this help could be needed to guide you or make sure you are safe. You may, for example, need help to cross the road or avoid obstacles, help to find your way around or help to cope with the effects of panic or anxiety).

Then you may qualify for one of the mobility components of the allowance.

## Completing DLA claim forms - some tips

1. Take your time.
2. Give full and detailed answers – add additional pages where necessary.
3. Don't underestimate your needs.
4. Assessment of DLA is based on the amount of help that you need not the amount of help that you actually get.
5. Focus on frequency – state when help is needed with an activity at repeated times, eg checking your appearance.
6. If you use special equipment, or have a guide dog, explain the limitations of these.
7. Mention any special circumstances such as other disabilities or long term health conditions.
8. Explain the help needed with social and leisure activities.
9. Help with domestic tasks such as shopping or cleaning cannot normally be taken into account.

## Checklist for claim forms

This checklist gives examples of the kind of things to think about, relating to sight loss, when completing the claim pack. Remember these are examples – you should give plenty of information about your personal circumstances and the help you need.

## Washing, bathing and looking after your appearance

Do you need help:

- to find and identify different bottles and items in the bathroom?
- to get into or out of the bath?
- with shaving or putting on make-up?
- with washing, drying or styling your hair?
- to safely cut finger and toe nails?

Do you need someone to act as a mirror to tell you:

- whether your clothes are clean and tidy?
- whether your hair and general appearance is well groomed?
- check whether socks and shoes are matching pairs?

## Getting dressed or undressed

Do you need:

- someone to help you find and choose clean, colour co-ordinated clothes, that are appropriate for the weather?
- help with fastenings, shoelaces, buttons, etc?
- someone to tell you if a piece of clothing is on inside out or that you are wearing odd socks or mismatched footwear?
- someone to check that clothes are clean and presentable, and that buttons and fastenings are in order?

## At mealtimes

Do you need someone to:

- describe the food on your plate and tell you where each item is?
- cut up certain foods and to remove bones or gristle?
- tell you if there is any food left on your plate?
- help you to find items on the table, eg condiments, drinks?
- help you to read menus or select food in restaurants?

## Help with medical treatment

Do you need help:

- to find, identify and sort out your tablets?
- to measure and pour medicine?
- to read essential information, including information about safety and side effects?
- to manage a condition, such as diabetes, eg testing blood sugar, monitoring and recording results or having insulin injections?

## Help with your toilet needs

Do you need:

- someone to guide you to the toilet safely?
- help to find the toilet and the wash basin in unfamiliar places?
- help to adjust or check your clothing after using the toilet?

## Getting around indoors

Do you need help:

- to move around in your own or other people's homes, and other places such as your workplace, college, clinics, restaurants etc?
- to get upstairs or downstairs safely?
- to avoid bumping into furniture, doors or other obstacles?
- to cope with changes in the environment?
- to get to the toilet safely at night?

## Getting around outside

Include details of the help you need with any journeys you make.

Try to list as many examples as possible of when you need help outdoors. The help you need with **seeing** such as reading timetables, finding train platforms, finding a taxi rank or getting on the right bus may count.

Do you need help:

- to cross roads?
- to check road signs or to read street names?
- to avoid getting lost or getting into danger in unfamiliar areas?
- to avoid obstacles eg lampposts, potholes, other pedestrians?
- to cope with kerbs, steps and stairs?
- do you need extra help at night, in poor light or in bright lights?
- to identify people in the street?

## Accidents, falls and stumbles

Describe any accidents or falls you have had. State where you fell, any injuries and if you needed help afterwards, eg to get first aid? Mention if you stumble on obstacles or hazards indoors or outside, eg uneven paving.

## Communication and reading

Do you need help:

- with reading and replying to your personal mail?
- with signing cheques and letters?
- with reading instructions for household items or medication?
- with reading newspapers and magazines?
- with reading street names, bus numbers and timetables?
- with reading items at work, eg reports, memos, letters, instructions?
- with reading in connection with your studies or hobbies?
- with identifying people, eg in the street, in social situations, callers to your home?

## Social or leisure activities

Include activities that you would like to be able to do, even if you can't do them because you don't get the help you need.

Examples of activities could be:

- visiting friends and family
- going out for exercise or for fresh air
- playing bingo, board games or cards
- going to pubs, restaurants or theatres
- watching television and needing someone to describe or explain what is happening during a programme or film
- identifying tapes or compact discs
- sports, going to a gym, jogging, swimming
- going to a place of worship and following the service
- doing voluntary or community work
- reading for leisure, crossword puzzles etc
- gardening as a hobby

You will need to explain the help that you need. This may include:

- help to locate and use items to pursue a hobby
- help to read notices, instructions, and other information
- help with handling money and buying tickets, drinks, etc
- having surroundings described to you and being told who is present
- being guided inside and outside when carrying out activities
- help with using public transport
- finding the gents or ladies toilet in unfamiliar places

## Cooking (applies to DLA lowest rate care component only)

Do you need help:

- to read cooking instructions, recipes and “use by” dates?
- to locate and identify items of food, ingredients and utensils?
- to peel or chop vegetables or cut meat?
- to check that vegetables are properly washed?
- to check how much liquid is in pan, eg boiling water, hot fats?
- to cope with hot pans, frying food and straining boiled food?
- to use the cooker and other kitchen equipment such as knives?
- to check whether food is properly cooked?
- to make hot drinks and avoid spilling hot liquids?