

# **Advice for claiming Disability Living Allowance for a child**

## **Before you begin**

You can claim DLA without a diagnosis. Decisions are made based upon the amount of care the child needs beyond what is considered normal for a child of similar age. When completing your application this should be your focus – highlighting the difficulties your child has that are different from typical children. It's the way you describe and phrase your comments that counts, not the diagnosis.

It is advisable to request the form by phone. This way your claim will begin on the date the form was issued (you have six weeks to complete and return it). If you request the paper form, the claim will begin on the date it is received by the Department of Work and Pensions.

If your child's presentation is complicated, you might find it helpful to start preparing your answers before requesting the form from DWP, so that you are under less pressure to complete it in the time available. You can find out the questions by downloading the printable form here:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/423884/dla1a-child-interactive.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/423884/dla1a-child-interactive.pdf)

However, the DWP are usually flexible if a parent needs additional time, and if requested may grant an extra two weeks. If you need more time, phone to ask.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for children - GOV.UK  
<https://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children/how-to-claim>

It is possible to fill the forms in online but the site is known to crash and your work may be lost.

## **The form - DLA1**

Download a copy of Cerebra's DLA guide:  
<http://w3.cerebra.org.uk/help-and-information/guides-for-parents/dla-guide/>

This will guide you step by step through the questions and explain how best to answer them to give the best chance of a successful claim.

Bear in mind, you'll be so used to managing your child's difficulties that they will feel normal to you, but in comparison with typical children you are undoubtedly doing far more for him than is usual for a child of his age. The Cerebra guide helps you to notice that and phrase answers accordingly.

Also download a copy of the DWP Assessor's guide to Child DLA claims:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/483193/a-z-child-medical-conditions.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/483193/a-z-child-medical-conditions.pdf) and find your child's condition from the list.

This will help you to see what points the DWP Assessors are looking for when considering your claim. You can use this to write your responses in a way that meets their requirements.

Opinions vary as to how long Assessors have to consider each claim. Some suggestions claim as little as fifteen minutes per form. It can help to focus their decision if you respond to each question with a bullet list of key difficulties and the steps you take to support them, then below give a fuller account with more detail.

Type your application in Word or similar, using the same headings as appear on the form, with page references as applicable. You may find that the spaces on the paper form do not give enough room for the answer you want to give – typing will give you all the space you need. It also enables you to edit as many times as you wish, and when it's done you will have a saved copy for your records.

If you do type your responses separately, write across the front of the form Refer To Attached.

Don't try to do it all in one sitting. The forms are notoriously difficult on an emotional level as your aim is to describe your child's difficulties in a scenario that reflects the way they would function if unsupported – this can be upsetting and exhausting. Try to set aside some time each day to work on it so that it's less challenging. If you've ordered the pack by phone you will be under less pressure to get it completed as long as you return it by the due date (at time of writing, six weeks from the request by phone). Remember you can request a further two weeks in some circumstances, eg holiday or other situation that has prevented you from completing within the required timescale.

Make frequent references to the level of care not being age-appropriate for peers. This is what DWP assessors are looking for. If you have older children without autism, refer to the differences you've found between them and the child you're claiming for.

For the parts about times and duration, say 'around the clock' if you need to be on call most of the day. People are often tripped up on this part. For duration, say 'as long as it takes - could be hours' or similar. Remember you are demonstrating the amount of **care, supervision and attention** your child needs, so it's not just physical support, but even the extra supervision while eating, or when you're at the park, making sure he doesn't do anything dangerous, etc.

Try to do it in a relaxed setting. Have a pot of tea and biscuits, or wine and chocolate – whatever is your tittle of choice to help you focus. Eliminate distractions if you can.

### **Statement from someone who knows the child**

This doesn't have to be a professional contact. It is a useful section to include a report from anyone who may be able to contribute additional evidence to support your claim. I knew someone who had a letter from the man who ran the corner shop, saying she was often in the store using a walking stick and sometimes had to ask for a chair to sit down (she has ME/CFS). DWP accepted it. Sometimes it's worth thinking outside the box.

This section can be photocopied and filled in by as many people you want to, if you think it will help your claim, eg:

- Support worker
- Volunteer/befriender
- TA/LSA at school
- Sports instructor
- SEN activity leader
- Friends or neighbours

**Parent tip:**

“As you work, have a sheet of paper alongside you on which to write all the wonderful things about your child that make you proud of them. This will help to balance out the negative feelings that may arise from writing about your child’s disability. You won’t send this sheet to DWP with your application form – it is just for you to remind yourself that your child is still a person to be valued rather than simply a list of symptoms.”

**Parent tip:**

“I find diary keeping helpful for things like this. It gives you something to refer to which can demonstrate how much more care your DC needs compared with their peers. For example, even though my son is 9, I still have to take him to the bathroom and help him wash, in the morning. If he tries to dispense his own toothpaste, he ends up wearing it because he doesn't have the coordination or concentration to hold the toothbrush, squeeze a small amount of toothpaste onto the toothbrush, then put the tub down without tipping the paste off the brush - plus, he has impulse control problems, so sometimes squeezing the whole tube out is irresistible to him. Then, left to his own devices, he would clean about 4 teeth for 3 seconds then consider the job done. That's just one task out of many for the day which most 9 years olds can manage themselves, reasonably competently.”

**Parent tip:**

“I have always sent in samples of the support tools we use at home, eg social stories, visual timetables, picture prompts etc to demonstrate that these things are necessary - and in your accompanying letter don't forget to state that 'these strategies are not usual for someone of X's age and clearly demonstrate that he needs more support than his peers' or similar. That's what they're looking for - evidence that your child is not keeping pace with others of the same age and needs additional support, so your job is to provide what they need to confirm it.”

**Parent tip:**

“Claiming for a three year old needs a bit more thought than claiming for an older child. This is because to get DLA the

child needs to have 'care needs that are significantly higher than that of typically developing children.' 3 year olds are typically quite tricky, so you have to be able to show that your 3 year old needs care and attention well above that level (which, if at 3 they have received an ASD dx, you can guarantee that they do, to be honest).

So, for everything you write, imagine that the person reading the form has no idea about children at all, let alone ones with ASD.

For example, speech and language:

- Write down what difficulties your child has
- Write down what you have to do to help your child
- Write down (in detail) what happens if you don't
- Make sure you spell out how extreme a reaction may be
- Write down how this differs in most 3 year olds."

**Parent tip:**

"I kept a diary for a week before I filled it in, noting the care I had to give him, things I just normally took for granted - cleaning up around the toilet each time he used it, each thing he 'broke' as he took it to bits for an experiment, each club I took him and had to stay with him when other parents left their child etc etc. It was easy then to say how many minutes it took me each day."

You can get help from support agencies if you don't feel confident about filling in the forms yourself. CAB are very helpful if your application is straightforward as realistically their strength is their knowledge about the administration of DLA and they perhaps aren't sufficiently qualified to phrase specific conditions to fit the form's requirement. In practice, only you, the parent, can know precisely what your child's care needs are on a day to day basis. It can be better to get a key worker from a disability organisation to help if that's what you need.

In Gateshead, Crossroads Carers are known to be helpful with DLA claims.

<http://www.ourgateshead.org/gateshead-crossroads-caring-carers>

**Before you send it off ...**

Enclose evidence to support your claim. This could be diagnostic reports from health care professionals involved with your child, current IEP from school (and statement/EHCP if they have one), supporting reports from child minders or activities your child attends (eg sports clubs, swimming lessons, social groups etc). This can speed up the decision making process as DWP won't have to contact NHS, school etc directly to ask for input if you've already given them what they need. Remember your aim is to demonstrate that your child needs are beyond what is usual for their age.

You could include photocopies of therapeutic tools you've been given by SALT, OT etc to demonstrate the support you provide, or those that you've made yourself, eg visual timetables etc.

If you don't yet have professional reports but are in the system awaiting diagnosis, say so on the form or in your covering letter. This can add weight to your application. You could include appointment letters to show that your child is known to these services and receiving their input.

**NOTE:** If your claim is refused and you need to ask for Reconsideration (the step before formal Appeal), DWP may refuse to do so unless there is new evidence to consider. For this reason it is worth withholding some documents so that they can be submitted at Reconsideration, if this is necessary.

Write a covering letter which lists all the items you are sending:

- The claim form DLA1A
- Your typed answers
- Supporting evidence
- Any additional documents

Photocopy everything so that you have a copy to refer to if you need it.

Send it recorded or registered post. It is worth phoning DWP a few days later to check they have received it, for peace of mind.

If you need to have contact with DWP whilst your application is being considered, try to keep it in writing if possible or keep a record of contact if you speak on the phone.

### **When your claim is approved...**

Make a diary entry of when your claim is due for review. Your award letter may be open ended with regard to dates or a specific date might be stated. Plan to begin drafting your review claim three months before your award expires, then you will be less rushed to get it completed, write a better submission and be more likely to have it approved.

It can be useful to refer back to the saved copy of your last claim and edit it to fit current circumstances. Your child's needs will have changed and it's important that your review application reflects this. Planning ahead will also give you the opportunity to accumulate current reports where applicable.

Remember that receipt of DLA can open doors to other benefits and services:

- Carer's Allowance
- CEA Cinema card
- Some visitor attractions allow free admission for carers, also exit passes for theme parks
- Blue Badge (if in receipt of High Rate Mobility)

**NOTE:** Child DLA expires when the child turns 16 and they (or you, on their behalf) will have to make a claim for Personal Independence Payment (PIP). If this is relevant for your child, refer to When Your Child Turns 16 on the Gov.uk website for information about the change over process:

<https://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children/when-your-child-turns-16>

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