



INFORMATION SHEET

BENEFITS FOR FAMILIES WITH A VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILD

When claiming Disability Living allowance, one of the things we have found to be very important, is to obtain help when filling in the form. The forms can be quite complicated and daunting. If you have any difficulty please contact the Family Support Service of the National Blind Children's Society, who will be happy to advise and help. Those who have experience in claiming, know that in reality, it is not as easy as just filling in a form, below are a few pointers regarding filling in the Disability Living Allowance Form:

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

The main benefit for children with disabilities is Disability Living Allowance or DLA, which is usually paid every four weeks, DLA is a non-means tested benefit and can be received regardless of your financial circumstances. DLA is made up of two parts, based on care and mobility, either or both can be claimed.

Care: If your child requires a lot of looking after or help with personal care due to a physical (including visual impairment) or mental disability, your child should qualify for the care component of DLA. The care component can be paid at three different rates and commences when your child is aged 3 months.

Mobility: The lowest age limit to claim is five years and your child needs to meet the criteria of requiring help to get around. If your child can walk, but may need someone else to supervise him/her, your child may qualify for the lower rate of the mobility component. For children who cannot walk or have severe difficulties in getting round, or have severe mental impairment, they may qualify for the higher rate of the mobility component, which can be claimed from the age of three years.

1. Always put the worst scenario, the worst day, the worst night, the most difficult times.
2. Make sure you put how many minutes a day are needed to help your child.
3. Describe in detail to help needed for feeding and your child's level of mobility.
4. Specify the tasks needed to be done to help your child and make it clear how much time is spent caring. The form should not be about sleep, but about **you** getting up at 2.00 am.
5. State the obvious, what are accepted everyday things to you, may not be so obvious to others, unless plainly laid out in the form.
6. Do not write on the form what you want or need to purchase with the DLA, the allowance is about the **extra care your child needs**, compared to a child of the same age, who does not have a visual impairment.
7. Do not put "age appropriate", you need to spell out that your child cannot and may never be able, to do things as well as friends, school mates, peer group. You need to explain that your child, requires far more care than a child without a disability of the same age.
8. A supporting letter from a professional, who knows your child, would strengthen your application, an Ophthalmologist would be great, alternatively, ask any professionals involved with your child to write a separate statement to include with your application.
9. Everything must go on the form, including medication. All services, such as speech therapy, physiotherapy, support from the Visual Impairment Services etc.
10. Do not place emphasis on the other children you are caring for. Do not mention that you have to take them out. **Purely focus on the child you are claiming for.**
11. Do not mention that you go out to work or that the child's care prevents you from going to work.

Carer's Allowance

If your child receives the care component of DLA based on the middle or higher rates, you may be entitled to Carers Allowance. However, you will be required to spend more than 35 hours a week caring for your child during the day or night.

You do not have to live with the person you are caring for, but the care hour's criteria are required. If you care and go to work, there is an earning limit per week and you must not be in full time education, which is classed as over 21 hours per week.

If you are receiving Income Support and claim Carers Allowance you may also qualify for Carers Premium. If you qualify this will not automatically be given to you. So make sure you claim, however, the amount of Carers Allowance will be deducted from your Income Support, but it is worth claiming for both benefits.

Contact your local Benefits Office and ask for a Disability Living Allowance Claim For (DLA 1). If your child is under the age of 16 years, you require a DLA 1 Child Form. If you request the form from the Benefits Office the DLA benefit will be backdated to the time that you requested the form, the form will also have a date stamp on the front page giving you a deadline date by which to submit the form. If you use a form from any other source, you can only claim from the day the completed form reaches the Benefits Office.

Disclaimer: Information sheets have been produced to provide advice and information for the parents of visually impaired children. Changes may occur in theories and legislation, however, the information sheets have been produced in good faith, as a general guidance tool. If you have any questions with regard to issues raised by the information sheet, please contact the National Blind Children's Society, National Family Support and Information Manager.