Disability Living Allowance Guide

If you’re the parent/carer of a disabled child, the Family Information Service can provide you with guidance to help you to fill out your Disability Living Allowance (DLA) form. We can help by talking through the form over the phone with you, send you out guides that you can read through and in some cases someone will help you to fill out the form.

The Family Information Service can be contacted on 08452 26 26 36 or email fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk

When you are sent your DLA form by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) guidance notes should also be included, if you haven’t got a copy of this you can get it from the DWP website www.dwp.gov.uk or call them on their DLA helpline 08457 712 3456.

For further help you can phone the DWP Benefit Enquiry Line (BEL) on 0800 88 22 00.

Disability Living Allowance Guides:

There are guides available to help you to fill out the form from Contact a Family. They have a general guide about filling in the form. They also have a guide for claiming the mobility component if your child has learning difficulties or Autistic Spectrum Disorders as there are some specific rules which allow some children with learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders to qualify for the high rate mobility component.

You can either phone their helpline 0808 808 3555 to order a copy, download it from their website www.cafamily.org.uk Contact a Family can also provide you with local help to complete the form.

Cerebra also have a DLA guide which you can get from their website, or call their helpline 0800 328 1159 / 01267 244 200. Cerebra work on behalf of a child under 16 years of age who has a neurological or neurodevelopmental condition. www.cerebra.org.uk

The Family Information Service can also print you copies of these guides and send them out to you. Contact the Family Information Service on 08452 26 26 36.

Things to remember:

- The form is long and time consuming but don’t be put off. Is there anyone in your family or amongst your friends who can help you with the form?

- Get all your information together – letters from professionals who have assessed your child, diagnosis letters, prescriptions etc.
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- Make sure you keep copies of EVERYTHING including the completed DLA FORM – this will be helpful when you come to renew your DLA application next time. Or sometimes the forms get lost, or you might need to challenge the decision of your DLA.

- Make sure that anything you send up to the DWP with your form - documents, letters or statements – which are supporting your claim accurately describe your child’s needs and support your claim.

- You will usually have a date when your form needs to be back which should be a ‘date stamp’ at the top of the form. You are usually given six weeks to complete the form and send it back.

- If you feel that there is not enough space for some of the questions to fully explain your child’s needs, attach additional sheets of paper. Make it clear what question you are answering and put your child’s name and date of birth of any additional pieces of paper.

- Make sure that you read through all of the questions thoroughly. Tick all of the boxes, even if the answer is ‘no’ and even if it doesn’t apply all the time.

- The forms are read through by a person – not a computer – be clear about the support and extra care your child needs, don’t assume that the person reading through your form will automatically understand your child’s disability and additional needs. Explain clearly and in detail what you need to do to help, support and care for your child.

- When you are filling out the form, use the terms ‘bad days’ and ‘better days’ to describe the changes in your child’s condition and needs. If you use terms like ‘good days’ or ‘normal days’ this can suggest that your child needs no extra help on these days.

Keeping a diary:
It can be really useful to keep a diary of your child’s needs for a week, to help you fill in the form. The diary can help you to remember how much extra help, support and care you give your child throughout the day and night. And what would happen if you didn’t carry out the bedtime routine or mealtimes in a certain way – would your child find the change really hard to cope with and get angry or stressed?

And always keep in mind – how much extra care, support, help, reassurance, supervision your child needs above and beyond ‘neurotypical/non-disabled’ children of the same age.

Think about your friends’ children and children in your son or daughter’s class – do they need this same level of care and support etc?

And what happens if you are out and about in a new place – how does your child cope with this? Does your child know how to ask for help if they get lost or are separated from you?
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The form:
The Contact a Family DLA guide has very useful information about filling each of the sections and what to cover for the different questions.

**Question 19:** You are asked to provide a statement from someone who knows your child, this could be a paid carer, relative or friend, health care professional, social worker or a teacher. Ideally, it should be written by a professional person who has regular involvement in your child’s care, e.g. a medical specialist but if your child’s needs are mainly to do with learning, ask their specialist teacher.

Make sure that you are happy with the statement and that it is supportive and not harmful to your claim. Give the person a copy the blank statement page to fill in; you can attach it to your claim.

If you’re unhappy with what they have written, you can ask them to change it, but if they won’t, you can ask another professional to write this part or just leave it blank. Don’t delay in sending your form back if you haven’t got this statement – you can always send it later.

**Question 53 – night time care:** Remember that ‘night-time’ is the time between when you go to bed until you get up and the rest of the house is in bed. If you stay up later than you want to because your child does not settle in bed, or if you get up very early, these times can also count as night-time.

**Your child’s mental health:** There are no specific questions in the form about your child’s mental health and how they feel about themselves. Many children with additional needs and disabilities know that they are ‘different’ from their friends and classmates.

Children with disabilities can feel frustrated, isolated and upset at times and can have low self-esteem and self-confidence. These can be described as mental health difficulties. This could apply if your child is withdrawn, anxious or depressed, behaves aggressively or gets angry and is uncooperative. They might act impulsively, have nightmares, or have difficulty coping with routine changes. It is important to give more details about this, there is space at question 65 ‘Extra Information’, or attach this as an additional sheet.

Say what the difficulties are that your child experiences and also what help you give to overcome or minimise their effects. You might include:
- providing encouragement, motivation and reassurance
- techniques to manage any difficult behaviour like taking ‘time out’
- monitoring your child’s mood
- helping them to plan their day and to help them to deal with their feelings.

**Checklist**

Once you’ve filled in the form make sure you have:
- ticked all the relevant boxes
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- filled in all the information and given as much information about your child’s needs as you can
- labelled any additional sheets with the question number, your child’s name and date of birth and reference number (if you know it)
- signed the declaration – number 66
- filled in the consent section – number 20
- listed all the documents you are sending and tell the DWP if you want them retuned – page 41

What happens next?

After you have sent your form and documents to the office dealing with your claim you should get a decision within 40 days. Decision makers aren’t medically qualified and will rely on medical information you supply with the claim, plus guidance on disability in children. If more evidence is needed, they may write to your GP or hospital consultant and your child may be asked to attend an assessment.

Alternative formats of this publication are available on request. These include other languages, large print, Easy Read, Braille and electronic formats. Please ring Family Information Service, 08452 26 26 36 or email fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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