



Advice
and
Information
on
Disability

Richmond AID Factsheet

Attendance Allowance

Attendance Allowance, or AA, is the main disability benefit for the over 65's. It depends essentially on the effects of your disability and on the help you need as a consequence, not on other features of your life such as whether you live alone. At the same time it acts as a passport to many other benefits.

There are important differences between AA and Disability Living Allowance, or DLA, which is the comparable benefit for those under 65. AA shares the same rules as the middle and higher rate of DLA care component and is limited to these two levels.

There is no component to help with getting around outdoors once you reach 65. The only exception to this is if you were awarded the mobility component of DLA before you reached 65. In this case your award will continue indefinitely so long as your condition does not significantly improve. If you were in receipt of the lower rate of DLA mobility component before you reached 65 you will likewise continue to get it indefinitely, but you can never get this uprated to the higher rate after you are 65, however much your mobility deteriorates.

There is also no equivalent to the lower rate in DLA care component but, as with the mobility component, if you had an award before your 65th birthday, this will continue indefinitely so long as you meet the conditions for it. You can apply for more help if your condition worsens and you need more care, but the new award will be assessed as AA.

AA:

- is not means tested, is tax-free and is paid on top of almost all benefits
- It does not depend on your income, savings or National Insurance contributions
- It does not matter whether you are in work, off sick, unemployed or self-employed, nor if you are living alone or as part of a family
- It does not depend on how much you spend on disability expenses and you can spend the cash on anything you like

- It can be for hearing or visual impairment, mental health problems or learning disabilities as well as for physical disabilities
- It is available whether or not you actually have someone helping you

For current rates for AA, please contact us at Richmond AID or call the free phone DWP Benefits Enquiry Line on 0800 88 22 00. You can find more information on the web here

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/index.htm>. They are increased each April.

How do you qualify?

- You have to satisfy the Government's "disability tests", which are summarised below.
- You have to have been disabled for six months
- You must satisfy the residence conditions and not be subject to immigration control (these rules are complicated and if you think they might apply to you, do seek advice)
- If you are terminally ill you can claim AA immediately without having to wait 6 months and the application will be fast-tracked and should be paid within 8 days. You will be awarded the higher rate and only have to complete a limited portion of the claim form. You will need to send a special form with your claim called DS1500 which your doctor will provide and which will confirm your condition.

The disability test

Lower Rate: this is for those needing frequent help from another person with personal care (at least three or four times during the day or night). If that care is not available to you, you can still qualify if you need it. It is recognised that many older people do not get as much help as they need to manage their day-to-day lives. The rules do not normally take into account domestic tasks such as cleaning or shopping. However, the rules are complicated so do seek advice as many people who would qualify fail to make a claim.

Higher Rate: this is for those needing frequent help during both day and night, or if you are terminally ill.

You may also qualify if you need someone to watch over you to prevent serious danger to you or to someone else, for example if you have frequent falls or suffer from dementia or do not realise when your condition is getting worse.

Awards are normally for an indefinite period, but the Department of Works and Pensions reserves the right to look at your award periodically. You should also ask them to look at your award again if your condition gets worse and you start to need help during both the day and the night.

Going into hospital

AA payments stop after four weeks in hospital and you should notify the AA Unit if you are spending time as an inpatient in hospital. Some hospitals will notify them automatically, but this does not always happen and if it comes to light later you could be asked to pay back all the money that was overpaid. On discharge if you contact the AA unit it will be re-started. It should also be noted that losing AA means losing the other benefits that depend on it.

You cannot make a new claim if you are in hospital. It can only be paid once you are discharged.

Residential care

Your claim may be affected if you are placed in accommodation that is “provided” – for example, in a local authority care home. The rules are complicated so you will need to seek further advice if you think this might apply to you.

Passport to other benefits

Getting AA means you automatically meet the disability requirements for some other benefits as follows, though each may have other conditions as well.

- Warm Front Grants
- No deduction from Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefits for non-dependants
- Carer’s Allowance for your carer if they meet the other rules for this benefit
- Additional Pension Credit for Severe Disability

- Discounted for Council Tax if coupled with severe mental impairment

Do you need help to make your claim?

If you live in LB Richmond upon Thames, our Benefits Advisers will be able to help you. For an appointment phone: 020 8831 6070 or 6080. They may be able to visit you at home if you are unable to get out.

For further information about other help phone: 020 8831 6070

For an application form please phone the Department of Work and Pensions Benefit Enquiry Line: 0800 88 22 00. You will be given 6 weeks in which to return your completed form.

If you need any further information you can contact Richmond AID on:

Advice Line: 020 8831 6070
E-mail: advice@richmondaid.org.uk
Website: www.richmondaid.org.uk
Address: Disability Action & Advice Centre, 4 Waldegrave Road,
Teddington, TW11 8HT