

Completing The DLA Form

Horsham Matters Resource Guide Version 2 | September 2026

The Disability Living Allowance (DLA) application process for children can be lengthy and detailed. It's important to take your time when completing the form and work through it, section by section, rather than trying to do it all at once. Many parents naturally downplay the support they provide because it feels normal, but it's important not to minimise your child's difficulties. This form is about your child at their most typical level of need, so be honest and detailed when describing their challenges.

Before You Start

- Read through the whole form first so you understand what information is being asked.
- Gather any supporting reports (school, medical, therapy, etc.).
- Keep a copy of the completed form for your records.
- Consider keeping a short diary for a week to help evidence your answers.

Answering the Question

Each question often has several sub-questions underneath.

Important advice: Read all of the sub-questions before answering the main question.

Sometimes you might initially think the answer is "No", but after reading the sub-questions you may realise one of them applies, meaning the answer should actually be "Yes." Take your time and make sure your answer reflects the full picture.

Provide Additional Information

As you answer each question, write your additional information at the same time so nothing is missed. Often the additional information does not fit in the space provided on the form. We recommend typing your responses in a Word document or writing them on separate sheets of paper. These can then be sent with the claim form when you submit it. We recommend noting the question number alongside any additional information so it's clear which part of the form your details relate to.

For every question, and sub-question you answer, explain:

- What difficulty your child has with the activity or task
- What support you provide
- You can include and support they need but may not necessarily be getting
- Why that support is required
- How long providing this support takes

Providing Examples Will Strengthen Your Claim

Instead of:

“My child struggles with dressing.”

An example would be:

“My child cannot dress independently due to hyper sensory to clothing and avoids getting dressed. I need to physically prompt and assist with every item of clothing. I use distraction techniques with their toys to help support them. This takes 20-30 minutes each morning, compared to 5-10 minutes for another child of the same age. This support is required to get them ready for the day”

Specific examples show the level of need clearly. Do not assume the decision maker understands your child's condition, even if it seems obvious. This additional information helps the assessor to understand your child's additional needs. This information accounts for a large part of the claim and can strongly affect the outcome.

Majority of Days

On Question 42 (page 15) of the DLA form, you are asked whether your child's needs are present for “the majority of days” or whether they “change from day to day.”

If your child experiences difficulties on more than three and half days each week, this would be considered the majority of days. In this case, you simply need to tick the appropriate box, and you do not need to provide further details for this question.

However, if your child's needs fluctuate. For example, they vary from one day to the next, or they have periods of increased needs for several weeks followed by weeks with fewer or no additional needs. It is important to clearly explain this in this section of the form. Be specific about how often these changes happen, how long they last, and what level of support is required during those times.

Key Points

- The majority of the days means 50% or more.
- If your child has good days and bad days, focus on what happens most often.
- If difficulties occur more than half the week, describe those difficulties.

If your child's needs fluctuate, clearly explain:

- What changes
- How often the changes happen
- How long the fluctuations last
- What support is needed during each phase

Support and Time

When the claim form asks how long something takes, particularly within the sub-questions, think carefully about how long you are actually providing support, not how long you believe the task should take. For example, brushing teeth might typically take five minutes for a child of the same age. However, for your child, it may take much longer because you need to provide encouragement, repeated prompting, hands-on assistance, or supervision to ensure it is done properly and safely.

It's important to record the full amount of time you are involved in supporting the task, including prompting, supervising, and reassuring, not just the time spent physically completing it. Be accurate and realistic about how long that support lasts.

Information from Someone Who Knows the Child

On question 38, page 11, you will be asked "Is there anyone else who knows the child and can tell us about their difficulties?"

Ideally, this should be completed by a professional who knows your child well, such as:

- The SENCO
- Class teacher
- Support worker
- Therapist
- Alternatively, a close family friend or relative who regularly cares for your child

Whoever completes this section should focus on your child's difficulties and clearly describe the support they need. They should provide real examples of these needs and avoid writing about how challenging they personally find the child. The emphasis should always be on what the child struggles with and the help the child requires.

Daytime and Nighttime Care Needs

DLA assesses daytime and nighttime needs differently, based on the time of day. It's important to understand how this distinction works when completing the form:

- Daytime needs are measured from when the household starts their day until the household goes to bed.
 - Ø Typically, this is considered between 7:00 am and 11:00 pm.
 - Ø Activities such as putting your child to bed in the evening are counted as daytime needs, even though it could occur at night
- Nighttime needs are measured during actual sleeping hours, when the whole household is in bed.
 - Ø Typically, this is between 11:00 pm and 7:00 am.

Understanding the distinction between daytime and night time needs helps you accurately record the type and timing of support your child requires. To provide clear evidence of night time needs, it is good practice to keep a sleep diary for at least one week.

The sleep diary should include:

- What time your child wakes during the night
- What support they need while awake
- What time they resettle back to sleep

Nighttime care needs are measured by:

- How frequently your child wakes during the night
- How long they require assistance each time

Remember: DLA is about the extra care, supervision, and mobility needs your child has compared to another child of the same age. The clearer and more detailed your explanations are, the easier it is for the decision maker to understand the level of support your child requires.

If you need help or further guidance with completing a claim for DLA, speak with a member of our support team at Horsham Matters for a referral to an advisor.

Call or WhatsApp: 0300 124 0204

Email: support@horshammatters.org.uk

Helpful Links

- Horsham Matters – Support: <https://www.horsham-matters.org.uk/get-help-now/>
- DLA - Easy to read guide: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/easy-read-disability-living-allowance-dla-for-children>
- DLA - GOV UK Web page: <https://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children>
- Horsham Springboard: <https://www.springboardsupport.org/>
- Contact: <https://contact.org.uk/help-for-families/information-advice-services/>
- Family Fund Grant: <https://www.familyfund.org.uk/support/discover-more/support-for-families-with-disabled-children-family-fund/>
- Benefits calculator: <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>
- DWP Challenge a decision: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/challenge-a-decision-made-by-the-department-for-work-and-pensions-dwp>
- Horsham District Council (HDC), Council Tax Support: <https://www.horsham.gov.uk/council-tax-and-benefits/council-tax/council-tax-support-discounts-and-exemptions>
- HDC – Apply for a Blue Badge: <https://www.horsham.gov.uk/parking/disabled-parking/apply-for-a-blue-badge>
- WSCC Disabled person's bus or railcard information and application form: https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/lizc4bq2/encts_disabled_application_form.pdf
- WSCC Household Support: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-community/household-support-fund/>
- Carers Support West Sussex: <https://www.carerssupport.org.uk/>
- Prevention Assessment Team: <https://www.sussexcommunity.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/services/prevention-assessment-team>