



DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE APPLICATION/ RENEWAL ADVICE

Before filling out the application/renewal form

We strongly recommend visiting and reading the Down Syndrome Association's (DSA) advice page. It is kept up-to-date and contains important links and dates, as well as advice for different age groups.

[Click here to find this page \(takes you to the DSA website\).](#)

The DSA also operates a helpline. You can contact the DSA Helpline's Benefits Adviser:

- Monday & Thursday 10am-4pm, Tues & Weds 10am-12.30pm
- Telephone: 0800 640 8434
- Email info@downs-syndrome.org.uk

Key dates

Key dates for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) forms in 2026 depend on whether you are starting a new claim or renewing an existing award.

Preparing yourself to make a claim/renewal

- **1 Month before submitting your forms:** ensure that you have reached out to key medical, therapy and education specialists who you want to submit supporting reports. Ensure that they reports/letters focus on the challenges and needs, rather than celebrating successes.

New DLA claims

- **Day 1 (Request Date):** Call the DLA helpline (**0800 121 4600**) to request a form. This date is stamped on the form and acts as your "claim date".
- **6-week deadline:** You have **6 weeks** from the date you called to return the completed form. If successful, your payments will be backdated to the Day 1 request date.
- **Late submission:** If the form is received after the 6-week deadline, payments will usually only be paid from the date the DWP receives the form, losing several weeks of backdated money.

DLA renewals

- **20 weeks before expiry:** The DWP typically sends a renewal pack about **20 weeks** before your current award is due to end.
- **4-week return target:** Some guidance suggests returning the renewal form within **4 weeks** of receipt to ensure there is no gap in payments, though you must return it before the current award officially ends.
- **6-month warning:** If your child is turning 16, you should receive a renewal/invitation form roughly **6 months** before their 16th birthday to transition to Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

Post-decision dates

- **1 month (mandatory reconsideration):** If you disagree with the decision, you must request a "mandatory reconsideration" within **1 calendar month** of the date on your decision letter.

- **12-16 weeks (processing time):** The DWP aims to make a decision within this timeframe, though complex cases (such as those involving Down syndrome or additional sensory needs) can take longer.

Key tips for the forms

- **Focus on "bad days":** Describe the person's needs on their most difficult days to ensure the assessor understands the full extent of support required. Avoid terms like "normal days," as this may suggest no help is needed then.
- **Keep a diary:** Maintain a detailed log for at least 1 week before completing the form. Note every instance of help, prompting, or supervision provided, including how long each task takes.
- **Use specific examples:** Instead of general statements like "they need help dressing," provide detailed anecdotes: "My child cannot find the armholes in their shirt without physical guidance and takes 15 minutes to complete the task".
- **Detail "physical" care:** For Down syndrome, highlight needs like toileting, eating & drinking (swallowing, choking, staying on task, food seeking/avoiding), sleeping, dressing, medication, wiping eyes, blowing noses, cleaning glasses).
- **Detail "non-physical" care:** For Down syndrome, highlight needs like verbal prompting, development/progression related needs like supporting concentration or constant encouragement, supervision to prevent danger, which are often just as significant as physical help.

Evidence and support

- **Supporting evidence:** Attach copies of medical reports, speech and language assessments, or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. Do not send original documents.
- **Professional statement (Question 38):** Ask a teacher, GP, or specialist who knows the person well to complete this section. Ensure their statement focuses on **needs and challenges** rather than achievements.
- **Seek advice:** Contact specialist organisations for help:
 - [Down's Syndrome Association](#) provides specific benefit guidance.

- [Contact](#) offers a comprehensive guide and a free helpline (0808 808 3555).
- [Citizens Advice](#) can assist with form completion.

Important deadlines to remember

- **Claim date:** Call the DLA helpline (0800 121 4600) to start your claim; you then have **6 weeks** to return the form for payments to be backdated to that call date.
- **Challenging a decision:** you have **1 month e.g. 30 days** from date of decision to challenge a decision.
- **Keep copies:** Always keep a copy of the completed form and all evidence for your own records.
- **Keep records:** Also keep records of all calls, letters, emails with the names of the people you spoke to.

More Information on detailing Physical Care

When describing physical help for a child with Down syndrome on a 2026 Disability Living Allowance (DLA) form, focus on how their **low muscle tone (hypotonia)** and **hypermobility** make every day physical tasks more demanding compared to a typical child of the same age.

Daily physical care needs

- **Dressing and undressing:** Detail if their "floppiness" or poor balance means they cannot stand while dressing. Instead of saying "they need help," write: "I have to physically support their trunk to prevent them from falling while I guide their limbs into sleeves and trousers".
- **Eating and drinking:** Focus on motor skills and safety. Explain if they have difficulty chewing or swallowing, requiring you to cut food into very small pieces to prevent **choking**. Mention if you must physically guide a spoon or if they need specialized equipment like lidded cups to prevent spills due to poor grip.
- **Personal hygiene:** Describe the physical effort of bathing. For example, explain if they need to be lifted in and out of the bath or if you have to physically hold them steady while washing their hair to prevent them from slipping.
- **Toileting:** Mention physical challenges like constipation, which is common in Down syndrome, and the extra time and help needed for wiping or managing clothing after a bowel movement.

Mobility and movement

- **Walking and distance:** Describe their "manner of walking" (e.g., shuffling or walking on tiptoes) and how this leads to rapid **fatigue** or pain. If they often stumble or refuse to walk because they are physically exhausted after a short distance, document this clearly.
- **Stairs and transitions:** Detail if they need their hand held or a stair gate because of instability on stairs or a poor sense of physical danger.
- **Specialist equipment:** List any physical aids you use, such as specialized boots, splints, or supportive seating (e.g., high-backed chairs or wedges) to help them sit upright.

More information on detailing “non-physical” care

When describing physical help for a child with Down syndrome on a 2026 Disability Living Allowance (DLA) form, use specific, real-life examples rather than general statements.

- **Break tasks down:** Explain if you must break every instruction into one-word or one-step commands (e.g., "Put on socks," then "Put on shoes") because they cannot process multiple instructions at once.
- **Constant prompting:** Describe how often you must verbally or physically redirect them back to a task (e.g., eating or dressing) because they get distracted by noises, lights, or internal thoughts.
- **Visual and sensory aids:** Mention any extra help you provide using visual schedules, timers, or sensory breaks that a child without Down syndrome would not need to stay focused.
- **Safety and supervision:** If poor concentration leads to danger—such as wandering off in a shop or not noticing a hot stove—describe this as a need for **continual supervision** to prevent "substantial danger".
- **Motivation and encouragement:** Detail the "intensive" emotional support required, such as constant reassurance or physical presence, to prevent them from becoming frustrated or "giving up" on a task.
- **Address communication & sensory needs:** Mention if they need extra time to understand instructions or have hearing/vision issues (e.g., glue ear/glasses) that require extra explanation of the world around them.
- **Nighttime care:** If your child regularly wakes you at night, describe how often this happens, how long you are awake for and what you need to do to settle your child back to sleep.

Key Tips for Detail

- **The "same age" comparison:** Always contrast their needs with a typical child. For example: "While a typical 7-year-old can dress independently in 5 minutes, my child requires 20 minutes of physical assistance with every item of clothing".
- **Frequency and duration:** Specify how often you give help and exactly how long it takes. If you must wake them physically or help them change position in bed due to poor sleep patterns, include this as a night-time need.
- **Evidence:** Use reports from a **physiotherapist** or **occupational therapist** to confirm physical limitations like hypotonia.