

## Factsheet

# Disability benefits: How to claim Attendance Allowance

Attendance Allowance is extra money if you are over State Pension age and need help with your care needs. You can apply for it whatever your income or savings are.

This factsheet explains who can get Attendance Allowance and how to apply.



Call free on 0800 319 6789  
Visit [independentage.org](https://independentage.org)

## About Independent Age

No one should face financial hardship in later life.

Independent Age is the national charity focused on improving the lives of older people facing financial hardship. We offer free impartial advice and information on what matters most: money, housing and care.

We financially support local community organisations across the UK through our grants programme. We campaign for change for older people struggling with their finances.

You can call us on freephone **0800 319 6789** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.30pm) or email [helpline@independentage.org](mailto:helpline@independentage.org) to speak to one of our advisers.

To donate or help support our work, please visit [independentage.org/support-us](https://independentage.org/support-us).

In this factsheet, you'll find references to our other free publications. You can order them by calling **0800 319 6789** or by visiting [independentage.org/publications](https://independentage.org/publications).

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# 1. What is Attendance Allowance?

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Attendance Allowance is a disability benefit. You can qualify for Attendance Allowance if you:

- have reached State Pension age
- have a long-term health condition or illness, or a disability – you don't need to have a diagnosis from a doctor
- have needed frequent support or supervision for at least six months, even if you don't currently get that support.

Pension Age Disability Payment has replaced Attendance Allowance in Scotland. See our [Pension Age Disability Payment](#) guide for more information.



## Good to know

There are special rules if you've been told you have less than 12 months to live (or you can't be reasonably expected to live longer than 12 months). See [chapter 8](#) for more information about applying for Attendance Allowance if you have a terminal (life-limiting) illness.

Attendance Allowance isn't just for people with a physical disability or illness. It can also support people with:

- mental health conditions
- learning difficulties
- cognitive impairments such as dementia
- sensory conditions such as sight or hearing loss.

Your support needs could include help with daily living tasks such as:

- getting dressed or undressed
- washing
- getting into or out of the bath or shower
- eating and drinking
- taking medication or having treatment
- going to the toilet or managing incontinence
- getting into or out of bed
- communicating to people what you need or making yourself understood.

Supervision means that you need someone around to prevent injury or danger to yourself. You may also need regular supervision because you could cause harm to others around you – for example, if you:

- get confused or wander
- have seizures or falls
- forget to turn off appliances.

## 2. Who can claim Attendance Allowance?

To claim Attendance Allowance, you must:

- have reached State Pension age. You can check this by using the calculator on [gov.uk/state-pension-age](https://gov.uk/state-pension-age)
- have needed frequent help with personal care or supervision from someone else for six months before the date of your claim. Frequent help could be several times a day or repeated help at night, or both. It doesn't matter whether or not you actually receive this help or supervision – it is the need for help that's important.

It also doesn't matter if you have a diagnosis or not – just that you need help.



### Remember

If you have been told by a healthcare professional that you may have less than 12 months to live, you can claim straightaway (see [chapter 8](#)). Special rules may also apply for some people on renal dialysis.

Contact our Helpline for advice ([0800 319 6789](tel:08003196789), [advice@independentage.org](mailto:advice@independentage.org)).

You can't get Attendance Allowance if you already get Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment (PIP). If you qualify for PIP, you should claim that rather than wait to claim Attendance Allowance. These benefits look at your mobility needs as well as your care needs, so you may qualify for more money with them than you would with Attendance Allowance. You must claim PIP before you reach State Pension age.

For more information, see our factsheet [Managing your disability benefits over State Pension age](#).

### 3. How much is Attendance Allowance worth?

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Attendance Allowance is paid at two different weekly rates. How much you receive depends on the level of care or supervision you need.

#### **Lower rate**

This is £73.90 per week if you need frequent care or supervision during the day or night.

#### **Higher rate**

This is £110.40 per week if you need care or supervision during the day and night, or if you have a terminal illness.

This benefit isn't means-tested, so it doesn't matter what income or savings you have. It's tax free and is not based on National Insurance contributions. Attendance Allowance is paid by the Department for Work and Pensions. It won't affect your State Pension and it won't reduce any other income you receive.



#### **Remember**

If you're awarded Attendance Allowance, you can spend the money on whatever you need. You don't have to have care workers, relatives or neighbours caring for you – you can claim even if you live by yourself and receive no outside help.

Getting Attendance Allowance entitles you to a Disabled Person's Railcard, which gives money off train fares for you and someone travelling with you ([disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk](https://disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk)). It can also make it easier to get other support, such as a Blue Badge to help with parking. Contact our Helpline for more information (**0800 319 6789**), or read our factsheet [Help with getting around](#).

Getting Attendance Allowance also means that you may be entitled to an increase in any means-tested benefits or tax credits you're currently receiving. Or, it might mean that you now qualify for them for the first time. See [chapter 9](#) for more information.



## 4. Examples of who can claim Attendance Allowance

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### **Marek's story**

Marek, 69, lives on his own and becomes breathless very easily because of his COPD (a lung disease). He often needs help getting washed and dressed, and preparing his medication for the week. He can't go out without his care worker. Because Marek needs help during the day only, he would qualify for the lower rate of Attendance Allowance.

### **Joan and Carol's story**

Joan and Carol are sisters living together. They are both in their 80s and each receive Pension Credit. Joan has arthritis and often needs help during the day with tasks such as getting into and out of bed, washing, dressing and going to the toilet. In the past couple of years, Carol has become forgetful and may be developing dementia. She needs to be watched over on a daily basis because she sometimes wanders off and forgets to turn off appliances. Joan and Carol can both claim Attendance Allowance because they both need help with personal care.

Getting Attendance Allowance means they will receive a higher amount of Pension Credit. This is because a Severe Disability Addition is now included in the Pension Credit calculation.

They also have an underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance because they are looking after each other for more than 35 hours a week. This increases the amount of Pension Credit they get, because a Carer Addition is included in the Pension Credit calculation.

### **Mrs Beasley's story**

Mrs Beasley, 72, lives alone and had a heart attack several years ago. She has developed diabetes, become increasingly forgetful and has started to forget when she needs to take her heart medication. Sometimes she misses a tablet, and other times she takes too many. She needs to be reminded to eat and drink, and often gets confused and wanders, especially at night. Because Mrs Beasley needs repeated supervision at night and support at times throughout the day, she would qualify for the higher rate of Attendance Allowance.

### **Alan's story**

Alan, 84, has arthritis that has become increasingly difficult to manage. He takes medication, but he still has trouble getting out of bed in the morning, bathing and preparing meals for himself. He lives alone and does not have anyone caring for or supervising him.

Even though Alan doesn't receive help, he still qualifies for the lower rate of Attendance Allowance because he would benefit from help.

## 5. How to claim Attendance Allowance

You can claim Attendance Allowance by filling in form AA1 (see [chapter 6](#) for advice on form-filling). You can get this by calling the Attendance Allowance helpline on **0800 731 0122** or you can download a form at [gov.uk/attendance-allowance/how-to-claim](https://gov.uk/attendance-allowance/how-to-claim).

Send the completed form to Freepost DWP Attendance Allowance. This is a freepost address, meaning you do not need to write anything except the freepost address on the envelope. You do not need a postcode or a stamp.



### Good to know

You can ask for a form in other formats, such as braille, large print or CD, if you need to.

If you order a claim form over the phone, your claim can be awarded from the date of your call, instead of the date you return the completed form. You may receive payment more quickly if you call to order a form. If you order a form over the phone, you have six weeks from the date stamped on the form to complete and return it.

You can put in a claim before you've had care needs for six months, as long as your needs are expected to last at least six months. If you do this, the start date of your claim will be when you have reached six months of needing care or supervision. You should make this clear in your application form. There are different rules for people with a terminal illness - see chapter 8.

### Getting help to claim

If you're filling in the form yourself, our Helpline can help you over the phone – call **0800 319 6789** or email [helpline@independentage.org](mailto:helpline@independentage.org).

You can also call the Department for Work and Pensions' Attendance Allowance helpline on **0800 731 0122** (press option 3). In some rare circumstances, they can arrange for someone to come to your home to help you fill in the form.

Before you fill in the form, it will be useful to have the following information to hand, if you have it:

- your National Insurance number
- the name and address of your GP
- details of anyone else you've seen about your illnesses or disabilities in the past 12 months
- details of your medication, such as a recent prescription list
- your hospital record number, if you have one – this should be on your appointment card or any letters the hospital has sent you
- the dates and addresses of any hospitals or care homes you've been in.

If you struggle to manage your own affairs, you get confused or you have a terminal illness, someone else – a relative, carer or friend – can make a claim for you. There is a section on the claim form to fill in if someone else is claiming Attendance Allowance on your behalf. To do this, they need to:

- become a benefits appointee by calling the Attendance Allowance helpline (**0800 731 0122**, [gov.uk/disability-benefits-helpline](https://gov.uk/disability-benefits-helpline)), or
- be one of your attorneys, if you have set up a property and finance lasting power of attorney, or
- be appointed as a deputy by the Court of Protection, if you lack capacity to make decisions for yourself.

For more information about how to prepare for others to make decisions about your money or wellbeing, see our factsheet **Future planning: Managing my affairs**.



### Good to know

You must be living in Great Britain when you claim Attendance Allowance and this should be where you normally live. You should have lived in Great Britain for two years out of the past three. There are exceptions in certain cases – visit [gov.uk/attendance-allowance/eligibility](https://gov.uk/attendance-allowance/eligibility) for more information.

## 6. Filling in the claim form for Attendance Allowance

Your claim form is usually the main information the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) use to work out whether you qualify for Attendance Allowance. This means it's important to give as much detail about your difficulties as possible, to provide a clear picture of the problems you have. Try to provide additional information describing your difficulties in the box at the end of each question that applies to you.

### Example question

Is there anything else you want to tell us about the difficulty you have or the help you need getting in or out of bed?

For example, you may go back to bed during the day or stay in bed all day.

☐ No **Go to question 30**

☐ Yes

Tell us about this.



### Example answer

I'm very stiff in the mornings and I'm often in pain. I need someone to help me get off the bed and on to my feet. Sometimes I feel dizzy when I stand up and I need my husband to help me put on my socks and slippers because I've got arthritis in my hands. I get depressed because of my arthritis and need a lot of encouragement to get out of bed.

If you have difficulties with any of the following activities, you may be able to claim Attendance Allowance:

- getting dressed or undressed
- getting into or out of the bath or shower
- washing, shaving, brushing your teeth or looking after your appearance
- eating or drinking
- going to or using the toilet, or dealing with incontinence
- taking medication or receiving medical treatment
- moving around your home, standing or using stairs
- sitting down, getting out of a chair or transferring to a wheelchair
- getting into or out of bed, or turning over in bed
- communicating with other people
- taking part in hobbies, or social and leisure activities

or if, for example:

- you are unsteady on your feet, or have falls or stumble
- you cannot see or hear very well
- you get confused or suffer from anxiety
- you have difficulty concentrating or motivating yourself
- you are prone to seizures or dizzy spells
- you find it difficult to control your behaviour
- you forget to take your medication or take too much
- you cannot be left alone
- you forget to turn off appliances or lock doors.

These should be described in detail on the claim form.

If you have a visual impairment, you might talk about needing help to read post, choose appropriate clothing, or be guided and warned of dangers. If you have severe hearing problems, you could explain, for example, needing help to communicate with others, such as using British Sign Language or special equipment.

## Tips for filling in your form

- Keep in mind that a medical diagnosis alone will not entitle you to Attendance Allowance (unless you have a terminal illness – see [chapter 8](#)). If you have a medical condition or diagnosis, you should give its medical name (if you know it). But, most importantly, you should explain how this affects your day-to-day life and what personal tasks you have difficulties with.
- Don't assume that the decision maker at the DWP knows how your medical condition affects you. You know your situation best.
- Answer all the questions if you can. Give lots of description and detail about your personal care needs, even if you think it may seem trivial or embarrassing. It will make a big difference to your claim.
- It's okay to repeat yourself if the information is relevant to more than one question.
- Do not mention the help you need with household tasks, such as cleaning your home, shopping, cooking or gardening, unless your difficulty is linked to your disability. For example, if you need help to read labels and get around safely when shopping because you're visually impaired, you could include this. Otherwise, these tasks will not be considered and may distract from your personal care needs, which do need to be considered.
- Include the time it takes you to carry out specific tasks and how much help you need with them, even if there is no one to help you. Tasks can be things like shaving, doing up your shirt buttons or tying your shoelaces.
- Include any severe discomfort, pain or breathlessness you experience.



- Ask for help to fill in the application form if you need it. Some people find that, because they have lived so long with their health problem, they've developed ways to manage and they overlook or underestimate their difficulties. It can be useful to have someone else's view. Call our Helpline on **0800 319 6789**.
- It may be helpful to keep a diary of what problems you have and the help you need over the course of a week. You might find you forget about difficulties with tasks you don't do every day – for example:

## Monday

Help I needed	How many times during the day?	How many times at night?	Notes
I needed help to get to the toilet	5	2	
I needed help to use the shower	1	1	In the morning and at night after wetting the bed
I needed help to get into bed	1	1	
I needed help to put on my socks and shoes			Couldn't put on my shoes, even when sitting
I needed help to get out of my chair			
I needed help to cut up my food			
I needed help to take my medication			

- Remember that the decision maker is interested in what you can't do, not what you can do. If you struggle to do things, find them painful or they take you a long time, you should make this clear on the form.
- Explain what happens when you do not receive the care you need, especially if this has left you at risk of falls or injury, or struggling to manage.
- Some days you may be able to do more for yourself than other days, but it's important not to fill in the form as if it was one of your best days. Give details of the help you need on an average day (that is, most of the time). You can use the box at the end of the question to explain how your needs change and how bad it can be.
- If you have adaptations or equipment that help you with your daily life – for example, a hoist, rails in your bathroom, a walking frame or special cutlery – give details and explain any help that you need to use them. Make sure to mention if any of these adaptations don't suit your needs, and why.
- If there are things you avoid doing because they are difficult for you, put this on the form – for example, if it's difficult bending and reaching to put on and take off socks, even while sitting down.
- Give examples of your difficulties, such as when you've fallen or hurt yourself. It can be useful to include supporting letters from your carer, GP or consultant.
- You can attach supporting information as evidence, such as your care plan or prescription lists.



### Remember

It's important to provide your GP's contact details and permission to contact them, or it may delay your claim.

Keep a copy of the form and any supporting documents that you send with it. You might need to refer to it again later if you have to renew your claim or make a new one, or if you want to appeal.

## 7. What happens after you apply?

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Usually your form is all that's required, but occasionally you may need a face-to-face assessment. Your GP or anyone else who has helped you with your condition might be asked for more details.

If this is a new claim, you should receive confirmation that your application has been received within three weeks. The letter should also say how long it will take to get a decision.

If you've been awarded Attendance Allowance, you'll be told the rate that you qualify for. You may be awarded it indefinitely or for a set period of time. It's usually paid in arrears, at the end of every four weeks.

### Renewing your claim

If your Attendance Allowance is awarded for a fixed period, you should get a renewal form from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about four months before it's due to end. If you don't receive one, call the Attendance Allowance helpline on **0800 731 0122**.

The renewal form is the same as the original claim form, so it's a good idea to keep a copy of the original to help you fill it in.



#### Good to know

Make sure you send your renewal form to the DWP by the deadline provided – if it's late, your payments could stop.

You might also have to renew your claim if Attendance Allowance is awarded for an indefinite period. This just means that there is no fixed date to review it.

## If you want to challenge a decision

If the DWP turn down your claim or award a lower rate than you expected, it may be worth challenging the decision. For more information, see our factsheet [What to do if you disagree with a benefits decision](#), or call our Helpline to speak to an adviser (**0800 319 6789**).

## 8. If you have a terminal illness

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There are special rules to speed up applications for people with progressive diseases who aren't expected to live more than 12 months. These claims are usually dealt with within three weeks, without the need for a medical examination. You don't need to satisfy the rule of needing care and supervision for six months before applying.

If you live longer than 12 months, your Attendance Allowance will continue but your claim may be reviewed after three years. You won't have to repay anything.

You'll need to fill in some parts of the Attendance Allowance claim form but you do not have to answer all the questions. Make sure you tick the box that says you're claiming under the special rules.

Ask your doctor or consultant for form SR1. This provides information about your condition so your application can be processed under the special rules. You do not have to see the doctor or pay for this. You can send the SR1 form to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) yourself, or your GP or healthcare professional may send it.



### Good to know

You can send the SR1 form later if it's getting close to the six-week deadline (see [chapter 5](#)) to send the Attendance Allowance form. If you send the form first, you should include a letter explaining that you'll send the SR1 form at a later date.

You'll automatically be awarded the higher rate of Attendance Allowance from the date of your claim. Your benefit won't change even if you go into a hospice, as long as you've told the DWP that you have a terminal illness.

## Applying for someone else

If you're caring for someone who doesn't know their illness is terminal, you can apply for Attendance Allowance on their behalf. Make sure you tell them you've claimed, because the DWP may need to contact them to check their details. The decision will be sent to them and the money will be paid to them, not you, even if you've signed the form for them.

## 9. How Attendance Allowance affects your other benefits

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Attendance Allowance won't reduce your other benefits. In many cases, being awarded Attendance Allowance can mean you're entitled to a higher rate of benefits such as:

- Pension Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Reduction (sometimes called Council Tax Support).

It can also mean that you'll qualify for these benefits for the first time.

This is because getting Attendance Allowance can increase the minimum amount of money the government says you need to live on each week.

If you're awarded Attendance Allowance and you're already getting Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction, you should tell the Pension Service (**0800 731 0469**, [gov.uk/contact-pension-service](https://www.gov.uk/contact-pension-service)) and your local council's Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction office straightaway.



### To do

If you're awarded Attendance Allowance and do not already claim Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction, check whether you now qualify for these benefits. Contact our Helpline for advice (**0800 319 6789**, [helpline@independentage.org](mailto:helpline@independentage.org)) or try our online benefits calculator ([independentage.org/benefits-calculator](https://independentage.org/benefits-calculator)).

If you're claiming Universal Credit, the rules around some of the benefits mentioned in this factsheet will be different. Contact Citizens Advice:

- England – **0800 144 8848**
- Wales – **0800 702 2020**
- [citizensadvice.org.uk](https://citizensadvice.org.uk).

## Benefits for carers

If a friend or family member is caring for you and you're awarded Attendance Allowance, they may be entitled to claim Carer's Allowance. But it's important to note that if your carer gets a carer's benefit, it can affect both their benefits and yours. It's a good idea to get advice before they make a claim so you both understand how you may be affected. Contact our Helpline to speak to an adviser (**0800 319 6789**).

For more information, read our guide [Benefits for carers](#).

To get a claim form for Carer's Allowance, contact the Carer's Allowance Unit on **0800 731 0297**. You can also apply online at [gov.uk/carers-allowance/how-to-claim](https://gov.uk/carers-allowance/how-to-claim).



### Good to know

If you're awarded Attendance Allowance, it's a good idea to keep your award letter safe. You may need to provide a copy if you're applying for other support.



## 10. Summary

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- Attendance Allowance is a disability benefit. You can claim it if you have reached State Pension age, and need support in your daily life because of a long-term physical or mental health condition (see [chapters 1 and 2](#)).
- Attendance Allowance is paid at two different weekly rates. How much you receive depends on whether you need care and supervision during the day or night, or both (see [chapter 3](#)).
- To apply for Attendance Allowance, you need to fill in a form – there are lots of ways to get support with this (see [chapters 5 and 6](#)).
- Once you've sent off your claim form, you should get a letter within three weeks to confirm that your application has been received. The letter should also say when to expect your decision.
- Occasionally, you may need a face-to-face assessment. Your GP or anyone else who has helped you with your condition might be asked for more details (see [chapter 7](#)).
- There are special rules to speed up applications for people who have been told that they might have 12 months or less to live (see [chapter 8](#)).
- Attendance Allowance won't reduce your other benefits – in many cases, being awarded Attendance Allowance can mean you're entitled to a higher rate of benefits (see [chapter 9](#)).

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The sources used to create this publication are available on request. Contact us using the details below.

## Thank you

Independent Age would like to thank those who shared their experiences as this information was being developed, and those who reviewed the information for us.

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### Contact us

Call **0800 319 6789**

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