Notes about

Attendance Allowance

IMPORTANT - The claim form we have sent you is a new form that we are testing to try and make it easier for people to fill in. Please read these notes first. They tell you what you need to know about filling in the form.

What is Attendance Allowance?

Attendance Allowance is a tax-free social security benefit for people aged 65 or over with an illness or a disability who need help with personal care.

Attendance Allowance is not affected by savings, and it is not usually affected by any other money you have coming in. It is usually ignored as income for working out Income Support and Jobseeker’s Allowance. If you start to get Attendance Allowance, it might increase other benefits you are getting. For example Income Support, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit.

Normally, you can only get Attendance Allowance if you have needed help for 6 months. You can still claim Attendance Allowance even if you do not actually get the help you need. You can claim even if you live alone.

If you are claiming Attendance Allowance and there is some one looking after you for 35 hours or more a week, they may be able to get Invalid Care Allowance. See form DS700 for more information which you can get from your social security office. If someone thinks they may qualify for Invalid Care Allowance they should not delay putting in their claim, even if your claim for Attendance Allowance has not been decided.

The questions in the claim form

• Answer all the questions that apply to you. And use the spaces to tell us in your own words as much as you can about the help you need. The more you can tell us, the easier it is for us to get a clear picture of the type of help you need.

Do not worry if you are not sure how to spell anything or have to cross something out. But please do not use any correction fluid.

Benefit you can get because of this claim can be paid more quickly if you answer all the questions that apply to you.

If you find it difficult to fill in the form, do not worry. One of our staff can help you. Help and advice on page 2 of these notes tells you what help you can get filling in the form. Or someone else can fill it in for you. Ask a relative, a friend, a carer or someone like this. But you must sign the form yourself if you can, even if someone else has filled it in for you.

• We know that illnesses or disabilities can affect people more on one day than another - they have good days and bad days. We know that your illness or disability may vary over a period of time or in different conditions. Please try to tell us as much as you can about how your illness or disability affects you, and how it varies. There are separate boxes for you to tell us about the different sort of help you might need.

We also know that help needed during the day and help needed during the night can be different.

If you are not sure if we need to know about something, tell us anyway.
• If there is not enough space on the form for everything you want to tell us, use a separate piece of paper and send it with the form. Make sure you put your name and National Insurance number on any extra pieces of paper you send us. If you do not know your National Insurance number, use your date of birth.

If you want help filling in the claim form or any part of it

• Ring the Benefit Enquiry Line for people with disabilities (BEL). The number is 0800 88 22 00.

The person you speak to may need to arrange for someone to phone you back. The person who calls you back is specially trained to help you fill in the form. They will have a copy of the claim form and they will go through it with you over the phone. Or they can fill in a claim form for you.

If they fill in the claim form for you, they will send it to you. You can then check, sign and send it back. They will send you an envelope. It will not need a stamp.

• If you cannot use the phone, we can send someone to visit you. Write to us at the address on the envelope that came with this claim form. If you have a visit, it may take us longer to deal with your claim.

• You may be able to get help from an organisation that specialises in helping people with your illness or disability. Phone them and ask if they can help you.

Help and advice

If you want general information about Attendance Allowance or any other benefits you may be able to claim

• Ring the Benefit Enquiry Line for people with disabilities (BEL). The number is 0800 88 22 00.

The person you speak to will be able to give you general advice about Attendance Allowance. And they can tell you about other organisations that may be able to help you.

People with speech or hearing problems using a textphone can dial 0800 24 33 55. If you do not have your own textphone system, they are available in some libraries and Citizens Advice Bureau.

• Get in touch with your social security office. You can find the phone number and address on the advert in the business numbers section of the phone book. Look under Benefits Agency.

• Get in touch with an advice centre like the Citizens Advice Bureau.
Help with personal care
The rate you can get depends on the amount of help or supervision you need, and on the sort of help or supervision you need. For example, you may need someone to keep an eye on you, or look after you while you are on dialysis. Or you may need help with things like washing, dressing, using the toilet, communicating with other people, or something like this. If you need someone to tell you, remind you or encourage you to do things, it depends on how much they need to do this.

There are 2 rates.

Lower rate
• if you have problems or need help during the day, or if you are liable to get into danger
• or if you have problems or need help during the night.

Higher rate
• if you have problems or need help both day and night.

There are fixed amounts of money for Attendance Allowance. You can find the current rates in leaflet GL23 Social security benefit rates. You can get this leaflet from any social security office.

Special Rules
Some people can get Attendance Allowance under the Special Rules. These rules are explained on the sheet called Notes about claiming under the Special Rules in this claim pack.

If you cannot sign the form yourself
If you cannot sign the form yourself, then the person who fills it in can sign it for you. But they must tell us why they are signing for you. There is a space on page 2 for this.

When to claim
Claim straight away. You are normally only entitled to Attendance Allowance when you have needed help for 6 months. But if you claim now, we can make sure that you get Attendance Allowance as soon as you are entitled to it.

About your National Insurance (NI) number
To link you with the right NI account and keep that account secure, we need proof of your identity and the right information from you. A NI number card on its own does not prove your identity. It is your responsibility to give us the right information to link you with the right account.

If you do not provide us with your NI number, there may be some delay in processing your application. If you do not have a NI number, or you have a temporary one beginning with the letters ZZ or TN, get in touch with your social security office, they will help you to apply for or trace a NI number. See Help and advice on page 2 of these notes.