

DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE FOR CHILDREN

A guide for Healthcare Professionals

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit paid to children who need help from another person with aspects of their care. This guide aims to help Healthcare professionals understand how they can assist parents/carers with their applications.

Diabetes UK has heard from an increasing number of parents of children with Type 1 diabetes, whose applications for DLA are being reduced or refused. This seems to be affecting children aged 11–12 years and above predominantly.

WHAT DO THE DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS (DWP) SAY?

The DWP has issued guidance for their assessors, summarising the perceived needs of children with Type 1 diabetes. You can view this on the following web pages:

www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist-guides/medical-conditions/childrens-medical-guides/diabetes/treatment

www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist-guides/medical-conditions/childrens-medical-guides/diabetes/how-long-will-needs-last

This guidance includes the following statements:

- A child having insulin injection treatment is likely to require attention with treatment until the 12th birthday. A child aged 11 and over when diagnosed is likely to be competent at managing their condition in 12 months. Children will be able to do injections themselves from diagnosis but will need prompting and supervision.
- A child who uses an insulin pump is likely to require attention until the 14th birthday. A teenager who starts using an insulin pump is likely to become competent at managing it in 12 months. Children may be able to do this themselves from diagnosis but will need prompting and supervision.
- Blood glucose monitoring. Children will be able to do this themselves from diagnosis but will need prompting and supervision.

The DWP accept that in some cases care needs may extend beyond those ages, but consider them to be exceptions and only likely in the following situations:

- Difficult to control diabetes.
- Any diagnosed behavioural/developmental condition.
- A small minority of children who may not comply with their treatment. Which should be confirmed in medical evidence.

If any of the information given in the above DWP guidance is not an accurate description of the child's circumstances, this must be made clear. If the child fits any of the 'exceptions', this must also be mentioned.

WHAT DO DIABETES UK SAY?

Diabetes UK does not feel that this guidance is a realistic reflection of the needs of children with Type 1 diabetes. We have raised this with the DWP, and asked that they review the guidance.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Supporting statements from healthcare professionals involved in the child's care can be a very helpful tool for parents to include with their child's DLA application. This can be provided on the application form in the appropriate place or included as additional evidence. Parents will often be able to get this information for an appeal tribunal. Whilst this support is important at tribunal, if this information is provided at the earliest opportunity – with the initial application and if necessary at the first stage of appeal, it may prevent the need to go to tribunal and the anxiety, time and cost of this.

As well as a general supporting statement confirming the child's diagnosis or treatment regime, it is important for the healthcare professional to comment on the care that the child needs from another person.

We appreciate that it can be hard for a healthcare professional to know exactly what needs a child may have at home or at school if you have not observed the child outside of clinic. However simply documenting what the parents/child have reported to you would be helpful.

It can help to explain why the child needs this additional care. In some cases this may be because of difficulty controlling the condition, or due to behavioural or medical challenges. It may be due to hypo unawareness, understanding of dose adjustment or carb counting.

However for some children it can simply be due to complexity of the condition and the many aspects to consider on a day to day basis – this should be made clear if it is the case.

FURTHER INFORMATION/SUPPORT

Diabetes UK: 0345 123 2399 Mon–Fri, 9am–7pm.

www.diabetes.org.uk

Diabetes UK guidance: 'Disability Living Allowance for Children – A guide for parents/carers'