

Attendance Allowance



If you have a disability or illness and have reached State Pension age, you may be entitled to this benefit.

Please note that in the light of COVID-19, some recent changes have been introduced that this factsheet will not reflect. See our [A-Z index](#) for details.

This information covers England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

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What is Attendance Allowance?

Attendance Allowance is a benefit paid to people who have reached their State Pension age and have care needs, to help with the extra costs of long-term illness or disability. Attendance Allowance can be paid regardless of your income, savings or National Insurance contribution record and is a tax-free benefit.

If you are a carer who also has care needs, you can claim Attendance Allowance for yourself and this will not affect your Carer's Allowance. Getting Attendance Allowance does not reduce other benefits, it may even increase them.

If you have a carer then claiming Attendance Allowance may help them to qualify for certain benefits (such as Carer's Allowance). Attendance Allowance may also entitle you and/or your carer to further help with Council Tax.

There are no restrictions on how you can spend your Attendance Allowance, you do not have to spend it on paying for the care that you need. However, your council or trust can take Attendance Allowance into account when calculating how much you might need to pay for any care services you receive.

Attendance Allowance will not apply to you:

- if you are between 16 and under your State Pension age. You should claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP) instead
- if you have reached State Pension age, but who are already receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or PIP.

▶▶ **Note:** To check when you'll reach your State Pension age, visit [gov.uk/state-pension-age](https://www.gov.uk/state-pension-age)

Who can claim Attendance Allowance?

To qualify for Attendance Allowance you must meet all of the following criteria:

- be over your State Pension age
- need help looking after yourself because you have a disability or illness
- have had the disability or illness for at least six months (you can make your claim before the six months have passed, but you will not receive any payment until they have)
- have no immigration conditions attached to your stay in the UK subject to some exceptions (if you have immigration restrictions on your stay in the UK claiming benefits may affect your future right to remain in the UK, so seek specialist immigration advice before claiming – you can search for immigration specialists at find-legal-advice.justice.gov.uk (England, Scotland or Wales) or www.lawsoc-ni.org/solicitors (Northern Ireland))
- meet the residence and presence conditions.

▶▶ **Note:** If you are terminally ill there are simpler rules which make it easier to apply – see page 10 for details.

How much is Attendance Allowance worth?

There are two rates of Attendance Allowance:

Rate	Amount per week 2020/21
Higher	£89.15

Lower	£59.70
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You will be paid the **higher** rate of Attendance Allowance if you meet one of the following criteria:

- you satisfy both the daytime and night-time tests
- you are terminally ill (someone is classified as terminally ill if they are not expect to live longer than six months).

You will be paid the **lower** rate of Attendance Allowance if:

- you satisfy the daytime or night-time test

Specific rules apply for some kidney patients undergoing renal dialysis at least twice per week.

Do I satisfy the tests?

Attendance Allowance can be paid if you need help with your personal care or someone to check that you are okay. The term used for needing help with personal care is attention and the term used for needing someone to check on you is supervision – see pages 5-6 for more information.

▶▶ **Note:** What matters is that you need either attention or supervision, not whether you are currently getting all the help that you need. So remember to think about the help you need, not just the help that you currently get.

Daytime test

To satisfy the daytime test you need to show that you reasonably need either one of the following:

- frequent help with personal care throughout the day (ie about three times or more)
- someone to check on you continually (ie frequently or regularly) throughout the day to make sure you are safe.

Night-time test

To satisfy the night-time test you need to show that you reasonably need either one of the following:

- help with personal care at least twice a night, or once a night for at least 20 minutes
- someone to check on you at least twice a night, or once a night for at least 20 minutes, to make sure that you are safe.

▶▶ **Note:** If no-one is currently helping you with personal care, you may still be accepted as needing help if you have some difficulty coping.

If no-one is currently checking on you, you may still be accepted as needing supervision if you or another person may be placed in danger without it.

Attention – help with personal care

Personal care needs include help with things like:

- getting in and out of a chair
- bathing and washing
- dressing and undressing
- help with medication and treatment
- getting in and out of bed and sleeping
- communicating

- eating and drinking
- breathing
- using the toilet
- walking around indoors

The help must usually be given in your presence. Here are some examples of the help you may need:

- you have arthritis which makes movement difficult – you need somebody to help you with daily activities such as getting in and out of bed, washing and dressing, and getting in and out of chairs
- you are profoundly deaf and British Sign Language is your first language – you need an interpreter when communicating without sign language, to interpret spoken announcements, and perhaps also to interpret written English
- you have a mental health problem and you need prompting to look after yourself and to do things such as taking your medication, eating, washing and dressing
- you are visually impaired and need someone to assist in situations such as selecting clothes to wear, using cooking appliances safely and preparing food
- you have a learning disability and need help with activities including managing money, writing letters and looking after your health and your hygiene.

Supervision – needing someone to check on you

To qualify as needing supervision you must need someone to check on you regularly. The checks must be to avoid a ‘substantial danger’ to yourself or others due to your disability.

For example, you may need such checks if you have memory loss, are in danger of falling, have poor awareness of potential dangers, have serious behavioural problems, lose consciousness or have seizures.

Substantial danger may include situations such as falling, leaving the gas on, self-harm, violence towards others or a serious risk to your health should you be left unsupervised. The potentially dangerous situation does not have to happen frequently, but you must need frequent checks to reduce the chance of harm.

How to claim Attendance Allowance

England, Wales and Scotland

- contact the Attendance Allowance Helpline on **0800 731 0122** (textphone 0800 731 0317)
- visit [gov.uk/attendance-allowance](https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance) to download a claim form

Northern Ireland

- contact Disability and Carers Service on **0800 587 0912** (textphone: 0800 012 1574)
- visit nidirect.gov.uk/articles/attendance-allowance to download a claim form

If you ask for a claim form by phone, it should be stamped with the date of issue. This is the date from which the benefit will be paid if the claim is successful, providing you return the form within six weeks. If you are not able to complete the form by this date, please let them know and seek advice.

If you download the claim form or get one from a local advice agency, the claim will start from the date the completed form is received.

Read the form and the notes that go with it before you start to complete the form. You can attach pages to the application form if you think there is not enough space to explain the help that you need. Remember to add your name and national insurance number to the extra pages.

Completing the claim form

- The form is long and complex so take your time to complete it, and remember that you don't have to complete it all in one go.
- List all of the help you need before completing the claim form.
- Be honest with yourself about how long things take you and if you can do them safely.
- Ask your carer, if you have one, to list all the help they give you to make sure you don't miss anything out.
- Remember that what matters is whether you need the help, not whether you are already getting it.
- Think about the difficulties you have and what type of help you would need to make things easier.
- If you have equipment or adaptations that help you with your daily life explain any help that you need to use them, and any help you need from another person in addition to the equipment and adaptations.
- Keep a diary for a week or so if you are unsure about how much help you need.
- You do not have to need help every day – the test is 'most of the time' – if your needs vary from day to day, make a list of the help you need on each day of the week or month, depending on how much the pattern varies.
- Don't just think about what happens on good days – get an overall picture of the help you need.
- Explain any falls or accidents you have had.
- Keep a copy of your form.
- You could ask for help to complete the claim form from a local advice agency – see Further Help section for details.

When filling in the form, the aim is to explain how your disability or ill health affects you. The form asks you:

Washing, bathing and looking after your appearance – do you need help:

- getting in and out of the bath or shower?
- adjusting shower controls?
- shaving or putting on make-up?
- washing?

Going to the toilet – do you need help:

- adjusting your clothes after using the toilet?
- finding the toilet in unfamiliar places?
- using the toilet during the night?
- changing clothes or bedding if you have an accident?

Getting dressed or undressed – do you need help:

- with fastenings, shoelaces and buttons?
- recognising when your clothes are on inside out?
- putting clothes on or taking them off?

Communicating – do you need help:

- understanding or hearing people, or being understood by them?
- answering the phone?
- reading and writing letters?

Mealtimes – do you need help:

- eating and drinking?

Help with medical treatment – do you need help:

- identifying your tablets?
- reading and understanding instructions about taking medication?
- administering medication or treatment to yourself?
- managing a condition like diabetes?
- recognising whether your condition deteriorates?
- adjusting your hearing aid?
- dealing with the side effects of your medication?

Supervision – do you need someone to watch over you

- in case you have a seizure or pass out?
- because you lack awareness of danger?
- because you could be a danger to yourself or others?

- in case you get confused, forgetful or disorientated?
- to give you medication for angina or asthma attacks?
- to help calm you down during a panic attack?

Getting around indoors – do you need help

- navigating stairs?
- getting up from a chair?
- getting in and out of bed?
- moving safely from room to room?

Supporting information

You may have information about your health and the help you need from a number of different people. This might include:

- letters from your GP or consultant
- your care plan from your local council or trust – giving information about the help you need
- a report from your occupational therapist – giving information about the equipment and adaptations you need
- information from a Community Psychiatric Nurse
- appointment letters
- prescription lists.

You can send this information with your application.

If you are asked for more information

Once you have returned the form, the decision maker from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) may contact you, your doctor, or someone you mentioned on the form to ask for more information or to arrange for a doctor to visit you. In Northern Ireland this will be a decision maker from the Department for Communities (DfC).

If a doctor, appointed by the DWP or DfC, comes to visit you, your carer can be with you during the appointment. The doctor may want to examine

you and ask further questions. It is a good idea to make a note beforehand of the things you want to tell the doctor about.

If you have a terminal illness

Special rules allow people who are terminally ill to get help quickly. You are considered to be terminally ill if you have a progressive illness that is likely to limit your life expectancy to six months or less. It is impossible to say exactly how long someone will live and some people who receive Attendance Allowance under these rules live much longer than six months.

Under these special rules, you do not have to satisfy the qualifying period (ie that you have had the disability or been in ill health for at least six months). You also do not have to have been present in Great Britain for 104 out of the past 156 weeks before claiming – you only need to be present at the time of claiming.

If you are claiming Attendance Allowance under these rules, your claim should include a DS1500 form, which is available from your GP or consultant. You (or the person making the claim on your behalf) will be given a freepost address for the DS1500 when you make the claim over the phone.

You will not have to complete the part of the claim form that asks about your personal care or supervision needs, as you will automatically qualify for the higher rate of Attendance Allowance.

▶▶ Note: Under the special rules, a claim can be made on behalf of a person without their permission. The letter about the money awarded won't mention special rules.

The decision

You will receive a written decision on your claim that tells you what rates of benefit have been awarded and from what date.

Attendance Allowance can be awarded for a fixed period or for an indefinite period. If you are awarded the benefit for a fixed period, the decision will tell you when the period ends. A new claim form will be sent to you well before your award ends.

Challenging the decision

If you are refused Attendance Allowance or it is awarded at a lower rate than you expected, you can ask the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (England, Wales and Scotland) or the Department for Communities (DfC) (Northern Ireland) to look at the decision again. You must do this before you appeal. This is called a mandatory reconsideration.

If you still disagree once they have done this, you must lodge an appeal with the Tribunal Service (England, Wales and Scotland) or the Appeal Service (TAS) (Northern Ireland) and attach a copy of the mandatory reconsideration notice with the appeal.

It is important to challenge a decision or get advice as quickly as possible because there are time limits that generally mean you must take action within one month. If you fall outside of this time limit then it may still be possible to challenge the decision. For more information about appealing a benefit decision, visit carersuk.org/appealsguide

What to do if your circumstances change

If you are paid the lower rate of Attendance Allowance for either daytime or night-time needs and the help that you need increases so that you have both daytime and night-time needs, you can contact the DWP (or Disability and Carers Service in Northern Ireland) and ask for your case to be looked at again. You will be asked to complete a form giving details of how your needs have changed.

If you ask for an Attendance Allowance award to be looked at again there is always the risk that the award could be decreased rather than increased, therefore it is always best to get help from a local advice agency before you contact the DWP (or Disability and Carers Service in Northern Ireland). To find out more about advice agencies in your area, see the Further Help section.

Going into hospital, a care home or a hospice

You or someone acting on your behalf should also tell the DWP (or Disability and Carers Service in Northern Ireland) if you have been admitted to a hospital, a care home or a hospice, as this may affect your benefit.

Going into hospital

Attendance Allowance is not payable after the first 28 days in hospital.

Going into a care home

Attendance Allowance is not payable after the first 28 days in a care home, unless you are completely self-funding.

Special rules apply if your council or trust is temporarily funding your stay in a care home while you sell your former home. Seek advice if you are in this situation. Attendance Allowance will continue to be paid if you are in a nursing home and the only help you get with your fees is an amount called the Registered Nursing Care Contribution from the NHS.

If you live in Scotland and receive free personal care towards residential care, your Attendance Allowance will stop after 28 days. To find out more about free personal care, contact Care Information Scotland on **0800 011 3200** or at careinfoscotland.scot.

The linking rule

Any stays in hospital or a care home separated by 28 days or less are added together when working out when Attendance Allowance should stop.

Going into a hospice

Attendance Allowance will generally still be payable if you are terminally ill and in a hospice.

Other help you might qualify for

Means-tested benefits and tax credits

If you are already receiving means-tested benefits or tax credits (such as Income Support, income related Employment and Support Allowance, income based Jobseekers Allowance, Pension Credit, Universal Credit,

Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction or Working Tax Credits) getting Attendance Allowance may mean that you become entitled to an increase in your benefits or tax credits.

If you're already receiving means-tested benefits or tax credits (or your partner is), notify all of the offices that pay them to you to let them know you are now getting Attendance Allowance. An award of Attendance Allowance can also mean that you become eligible for a means-tested benefit or tax credits for the first time. So, if you are awarded Attendance Allowance, it would be a good idea to get a benefits check.

Any deductions that are being made from means-tested benefits because other adults share your household, may be removed if you get Attendance Allowance. You can find out what benefits you are entitled to and how much you should be paid, by getting an online benefit check (see note below) or by contacting the Carers UK Helpline: advice@carersuk.org or the Carers NI advice line in Northern Ireland: advice@carersni.org.

▶▶ **Note:** You can get a personalised benefits check online, for example at: benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk/AboutYou. It will take about 20 minutes to complete.

These online tools are not suitable for everyone. Special rules apply to some groups of people, for example students, people under 18, people in permanent residential care, UK nationals who live abroad and people who are not British or Irish citizens.

Exemptions from the benefit cap

Households will be exempt from the benefit cap if you/your partner are entitled to Attendance Allowance.

Blue Badge Scheme

The blue badge scheme allows people with severe walking disabilities to park in parking restricted areas. For example, if you have a badge, you can park free and for any length of time at on-street parking meters and on-

street pay and display areas. There are some situations where you will automatically be eligible for a blue badge, which include if you:

- are registered blind or as severely sight impaired
- receive the higher rate of the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- receive Personal Independence Payment because you can't walk more than 50 metres
- receive the war pensioners' mobility supplement
- have been awarded a lump sum benefit from the Armed Forces Compensation scheme (tariffs 1 to 8) – you have also been certified as having a permanent or substantial disability which means you can't walk or find walking very difficult.

If none of these apply to you, you may still be eligible for a blue badge (subject to further assessment by your council or trust) if one of the following applies:

- You have a permanent or substantial disability that means you can't walk or find walking very difficult.
- You have severe upper limb disabilities in both arms, drive a motor vehicle and have difficulty using parking meters.
- (Scotland only) You are unable to walk or virtually unable to walk because of a temporary but substantial disability which is likely to last for at least 12 months but less than three years.
- (Scotland only) You have a mental condition that means you lack awareness about the danger of traffic when making journeys.

Public transport concessions

If you live in England, Wales or Scotland and receive Attendance Allowance you may be able to purchase a Disabled Person's Railcard. For more information call **0345 605 0525** (textphone 0345 601 0132) or visit disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk. If you live in Northern Ireland and are aged 60 or above, you may be eligible for a SmartPass or Senior Citizens SmartPass. Contact Translink for more information on **028 9066 6630** or at translink.co.uk.

If you live in England, Wales or Northern Ireland and are disabled you may qualify for free local bus travel, although this is not directly linked to whether or not you receive Attendance Allowance. Contact Translink, your council or trust for further information. If you live in Scotland and receive Attendance Allowance you will receive free bus travel. Find out more at www.transport.gov.scot/concessionary-travel/60plus-or-disabled/

Companion entitlement (Scotland only)

If you receive Attendance Allowance, you will be eligible for a Companion Card, allowing a companion to travel with you for free. You should contact your council or visit Transport Scotland for further information:

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/concessionary-travel/60plus-or-disabled/>

Residence and presence

To satisfy the residence and presence tests you must meet both the following conditions:

- You must have been present in Great Britain (which for this purpose also includes Northern Ireland) for 104 weeks out of the 156 weeks before claiming (two out of the last three years).
- You must be habitually resident.

‘Present’ means physically present in Great Britain. Some people may be treated as being in Great Britain while abroad, eg members of the armed forces. The past presence test does not apply to people recognised as refugees and their families. Special rules apply to countries in the European Economic Area (EEA) and several others who Britain has agreements with. If you think this applies to you, you should seek advice. The AIRE Centre can provide advice on individual rights in Europe and can be contacted on **020 7831 4276** or by email at info@airecentre.org.

The habitual residence test is a test to see if you normally live in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Republic of Ireland or the Isle of Man. It applies if you have been living abroad. Relevant factors are where you normally live, where you expect to live in future, your reasons for coming to this country, the length of time spent abroad before you came here, and any ties you still have with the country where you have come from.

Further help

Our website contains a wealth of useful information on the financial and practical matters related to caring. Visit www.carersuk.org/ and click on “Help and Advice” in the main menu. You can find details of your local carers organisation on our website at www.carersuk.org/local-support

For information and advice, contact the Carers UK Helpline on **0808 808 7777** or email advice@carersuk.org. If you live in Northern Ireland you can contact Carers Northern Ireland for advice on **028 9043 9843** or email advice@carersni.org.

Other organisations

Age UK

A charity dedicated to helping everyone make the most of later life.
w: www.ageuk.org.uk | **t:** 0800 055 6112 (*England*), 0800 022 3444 (*Wales*), 0800 124 4222 (*Scotland*), 0808 808 7575 (*Northern Ireland*)

The Appeals Service Northern Ireland

The service that handles the appeals process for benefit decisions in Northern Ireland. **w:** www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/appealing-against-a-benefits-decision#toc-10

Citizens Advice

Provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice. *England, Wales, Scotland & Northern Ireland* **w:** www.citizensadvice.org.uk

HM Courts and Tribunals Service

To search for a court or tribunal in *England* or *Wales*, or a tribunal in *Scotland*. **w:** <https://courtribunalfinder.service.gov.uk/search/>

Independent Case Examiner

A free complaints review service for people who have made complaints about their claim for benefits. *England, Wales, Scotland & Northern Ireland*
w: www.ind-case-exam.org.uk | **t:** 0800 414 8529 (textphone: 18001 0800 414 8529)

NI Ombudsman

The government official responsible for dealing with complaints about state

services. *Northern Ireland*

w: <https://nipso.org.uk/> t: 0800 343424 (textphone: 028 90897789)

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

The government official responsible for dealing with complaints about state services. *England, Wales & Scotland*

w: www.ombudsman.org.uk | t: 0345 015 4033 (textphone: 0300 061 4298)

Benefit helplines

Northern Ireland has three helplines for different purposes:

Benefit Enquiry Line for general questions

t: 0800 220 674 (textphone: 028 9031 1092)

Welfare Changes Helpline for independent advice on benefits changes

t: 0808 802 0020

Make the Call - to check you're not missing out on benefits

t: 0800 232 1271

In Northern Ireland there is one contact for Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance and Disability Living Allowance, the Northern Ireland Disability and Carers Service: t: 0800 587 0912 (textphone: 0800 012 1574)

Attendance Allowance

England, Wales & Scotland

t: 0800 731 0122 (textphone: 0800 731 0317)

Carer's Allowance Unit

England, Wales & Scotland

t: 0800 731 0297 (textphone: 0800 731 0317)

Disability Living Allowance

England, Wales & Scotland

- If born on or before 8 April 1948: t: 0800 731 0122 (textphone: 0800 731 0317) or after 8 April 1948: t: 0800 121 4600 (textphone: 0800 121 4523)

For Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support and Employment and Support Allowance:

Jobcentre Plus (England, Wales & Scotland)

New claims t: 0800 055 6688 (textphone: 0800 023 4888)

Existing claims t: 0800 169 0310 (textphone: 0800 169 0314)

Social Security or Jobs & Benefits Office (Northern Ireland)

Details of local offices: **w:** www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-benefits-offices. New ESA claims **t:** 0800 085 6318 (textphone: 0800 328 3419)
Existing claims **t:** 0800 587 1377 (textphone: 0800 328 3419)

Pension Credit and Pension Service

England, Wales & Scotland

New claims **t:** 0800 731 7898 (textphone: 0800 731 7339)
Existing claims: **t:** 0800 731 0469 (textphone: 0800 731 0464)

Northern Ireland

New claims (Pension Credit) **t:** 0808 100 6165 (textphone: 0800 587 0892)
Existing claims (Pension Credit) **t:** 0800 587 0892
New claims (State Pension) **t:** 0808 100 2658
Existing claims (State Pension) **t:** 0800 587 0892 (textphone: 0808 100 21 98)

Personal Independence Payment

England, Wales & Scotland

New claims **t:** 0800 917 2222 (textphone: 0800 917 7777)
Enquiry line **t:** 0800 121 4433 (textphone: 0800 121 4493)

Northern Ireland

New claims **t:** 0800 012 1573 (textphone: 0800 012 1574)
Enquiry line **t:** 0800 587 0932 (textphone: 0800 587 0937)

Tax Credits

England, Wales, Scotland & Northern Ireland

t: 0345 300 3900 (textphone: 0345 300 3909)

Universal Credit Helpline

England, Wales & Scotland

t: 0800 328 9344 (textphone: 0800 328 1344)

Northern Ireland

t: 0800 012 1331 (textphone: 0800 012 1441)


Note for Scotland: By the end of 2020, [Social Security Scotland](#) will be open to new claims only for Disability Assistance for Older People which will replace Attendance Allowance. More details will be available at: www.carersuk.org/scotland

This factsheet is designed to provide helpful information and advice. It is not an authoritative statement of the law. We work to ensure that our factsheets are accurate and up to date, but information about benefits and community care is subject to change over time. We would recommend contacting the Carers UK Helpline or visiting our website for the latest information.

Please email us your feedback on this factsheet by sending your comments to info@carersuk.org
This factsheet was updated in March 2020. Next review due April 2021.

Carers UK Helpline

For expert information and advice about caring.

 **0808 808 7777**
(Monday – Tuesday 10am-4pm)

 Advice@carersuk.org

Carers UK

20 Great Dover Street
London SE1 4LX
020 7378 4999
info@carersuk.org

Carers Wales

029 2081 1370
info@carerswales.org

Carers Scotland

info@carerscotland.org

Carers Northern Ireland

028 9043 9843
Carers NI advice line:
advice@carersni.org

However caring affects you, we're here

Caring will affect us all at some point in our lives.

With your help, we can be there for the 6,000 people who start looking after someone each day.

We're the UK's only national membership charity for carers: join us for free at carersuk.org/join

We're both a support network and a movement for change.

Visit us at our website to join us, help us or access more resources:
carersuk.org

**This information can be requested
in large print or as a text file.**