

DLA

As for children, the main benefit available to adults with hemiplegia is the Disabled Living Allowance (DLA). After the age of 16 it is the young person who has to apply. As an adult, it is no longer necessary to compare yourself with non disabled people; you simply need to have a long term condition which affects your everyday activities.

- The thinking behind DLA is that people with a disability have extra expenses in their daily lives compared to non disabled people – from the cost of shoes to domestic help to higher heating bills, or having to take a taxi or run a car because you can't use public transport easily.
- DLA is meant to help cover these extra costs, so it is not means tested; it doesn't depend on whether you work or not or any other income or savings, either yours or a partner's. It is also not counted as income if you apply for income-related benefits or credits.
- DLA is yours to do what you want with it, and though at the lower rate it is not a large amount it also opens the door to other benefits and concessions.
- DLA may be awarded for an indefinite period, or for a fixed period, in which case you will need to reapply. It may also be reviewed from time to time to check whether your needs have changed

Some HemiHelp members who had DLA as children have found it is more difficult to get as an adult, or they have been given a lower rate than they think their needs deserve, but it is worth persisting and if necessary appealing. The form can be daunting and it can be useful to get someone else to help you fill it in, either a professional (for example someone at your local Citizens Advice Bureau) or a relative or friend. You need to think through your answers and remember both the good and bad days, and having someone with you can provide emotional as well as practical support.

Also, as you get older your hemiplegia may affect you more seriously, so you may need to reapply for a higher rate of DLA.

DLA has two parts and either or both parts can be claimed.

1. Care Component

If you need looking after or help with personal care, you should qualify for the care component. For example, one question on the form asks whether you can cook a main meal from scratch without help. The care component of DLA is payable at three rates, depending on how much help you need.

If you get DLA it might increase the amount of other benefits or credits you're entitled to, such as Pension Credit, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and Working Tax Credit.

2. Mobility Component

If you have difficulty getting around you may qualify for the DLA mobility component. This is paid at two rates, depending on how much difficulty you have with walking.

If you get the DLA higher rate mobility component you can:

- learn to drive when you are 16, and apply 3 months before that
- if aged between 16 and 24, possibly get help towards the cost of driving lessons

- lease or hire purchase a car through Motability www.motability.co.uk. If you start by applying for a grant from Motability they will pay for your assessment. They may also pay for adaptations.
- apply for a Blue Badge for free parking, a parking bay and road tax exemption. You don't have to drive yourself for this or to access the Motability scheme – someone else can drive you. The Blue Badge Helpline can give you more information about using the scheme. The Helpline number is 020 7944 2914 or 0161 367 0009. You can also find more information on the Department for Transport website at: www.mobility-unit.dft.gov.uk. In Northern Ireland, you can find information on the Roads Service website at: <http://www.roadsni.gov.uk/index/bluebadge/bluebadge-bbscheme.htm>
- qualify, as a Blue Badge holder, for a 100 per cent exemption from the London Congestion Charge, but you must register with Transport for London (TfL) at least 10 days before your journey and pay a one-off £10 registration fee. For more information phone 0845 900 1234 or download a registration form from the TfL website <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/blue-badge-discount-registration-form.pdf>

For more information see HemiHelp's **DLA** and **Driving** information sheets, and useful addresses below.

Income Related Benefits

Working tax Credit (WTC) This is a benefit for people who are in work but with low earnings.

- Generally you need to be 25 or over to claim it, but if you are receiving DLA you can claim it from the age of 16.
- If you get DLA at the highest rate you are entitled to an extra disability element.
- If you get DLA at the highest rate and are living with a partner who qualifies for WTC, he or she can get the extra credit.
- However, Working Tax Credit may affect other income related benefits you get, for example, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

For details see www.hmrc.gov.uk/Taxcredits

Anyone with hemiplegia who is unemployed and looking for work can receive **income-based Job Seekers' Allowance**. Local Jobcentres have Disability Employment Advisors to support people with a disability into work.

Anyone assessed as being unable to work may be able to claim **Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)**, which has replaced the old Income Support and Incapacity Benefit. Anyone applying for this benefit has to go through a medical assessment. If you have a partner who is working, his or her earnings may affect the allowance.

Depending on your circumstances, both of these allowances may give access to **Housing** and **Council Tax** benefits, as well as free prescriptions, sight tests and dental treatment.

For more information about some of the above see HemiHelp's **Family Benefits** Information Sheet.

Young people aged 16-18

If a young person aged 16-18 is at school or college or on an approved job scheme, and is getting DLA at any level, he or she may still be able to claim ESA. However, the family may opt to continue to receive certain benefits such as **Child Benefit** and **Child Tax Credit** instead. Which is better depends on family income - in general the higher it is, the more it makes sense for the young person, rather than his or her parents, to claim benefits. **Contact a Family** (see links below) has a useful guide: [Money When your Child reaches 16 Years of Age](#).

Other financial help - some of this may depend on receiving DLA

- **Warm Front** (England) / **Warm Deal** (Scotland) / **Home Energy Efficiency Scheme** (Wales) and **Warm Homes Scheme** (Northern Ireland) http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/your_world/gas_and_electricity/fuel_costs_and_saving_money.htm is a set of schemes for people on disability or income related benefits. They provide grants for measures to make homes warmer, for example central heating.
- Disabled people can get **VAT relief** on home adaptations, specialised clothing, furniture, equipment etc. related to their disability. You do not need to be receiving DLA or other disability benefits, just fill in a form saying that you have a disability, although HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) have a right to inspect. For details see www.hmrc.gov.uk/vat/sectors/consumers/disabled.htm
- **Disabled Facilities Grants** (in Scotland, Home Improvements Grants) are means tested awards available for making alterations to your home because of a disability. Contact your Local Authority. **Scope** has a useful factsheet.
- **Local concessions** Although there is no longer a national disability register, your Local Authority may have a register which gives the right to concessions for e.g. local leisure facilities, public transport or taxis, or a Blue Badge. Often 'disabled' is used to mean 'getting DLA' but each LA has own rules.
- A **National Rail Pass** gives a disabled person and one other adult one third off ticket prices.
- Disabled people can travel for free on **local buses** in England, Scotland and Wales, and for half price in N Ireland.

Also:

- theatres, concert halls, museums etc. usually give a discount and/or a free ticket for a carer.
- most national cinema chains are members of a scheme where if a disabled person buys a ticket a carer goes free. Forms can be downloaded from www.ceacard.co.uk to apply for a plastic card. This is not free but will pay for itself after one visit.

Housing, social care

Most people with hemiplegia live in ordinary housing, with adaptations if necessary, and get by without help other than that given by family and friends, or paid for out of DLA.

A few however will need more financial and other support, and how to provide this is the subject of much debate in the UK (as in other countries). Much of this is because more people are living longer and needing help towards the end of their lives, but often when social care is discussed disabled people are lumped in with the elderly, even though their needs are different.

At the same time there is a continuing trend towards disabled people taking more control of their lives, with direct payments, individual budgets, self-directed care - ideas that have come from disabled people themselves and are gradually being adopted by care providers. Your local council can tell you about its services and about supported or sheltered housing in your area.

Scope has useful publications on this subject, including:

My Money, My Way: A young person's guide to Direct Payments

Action 19+: A guide to getting what you need from your local authority at 19 plus.

For more information phone 020 7619 7342 or go to www.scope.org.uk/publications/dislive.shtml

See overleaf for other useful addresses.

Financial help if you are in education

16-18 years olds who stay in education may be eligible for **Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)**, a grant of up to £30 a week, if their family income is low. To find out more, go to www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning and search under EMA.

If you are planning to go to university, you should apply for the **Disabled Students Allowance**, a generous package which pays for learning support and specialised equipment as well as ongoing costs such as photocopying and ink cartridges. For further details go to

www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/EducationAndTraining/HigherEducation/index.htm

Useful addresses

There is a free **Benefits Enquiry** line 0800 882 200 (N Ireland 0800 220 674)

Online guides to **benefits** include:

www.direct.gov.uk/disability-money government website

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/a-to-z/> another government site about benefits etc

www.dwp.gov.uk/eservice fill in or download a DLA form here

www.benefitsnow.co.uk: Also has info on the Disabled Facilities Grant in England, Wales and N Ireland. For Scotland go to www.benefitsnow.co.uk/dfg/scotland.asp

www.entitledto.co.uk Find out what you can claim.

www.benefitsandwork.co.uk An independent subscription site offering tips and tactics for applying for DLA, ESA etc

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist-guides/decision-makers-guide/> click on Volume 10 to be sneaky and read the guide used by the decision makers when awarding DLA

BIBIC www.bibic.org.uk, an organisation for people with acquired brain injury, has an excellent guide to filling in a DLA form

General Info and advice

www.adviceguide.org.uk / www.adviceguide.org.uk/scotland online information from Citizens' Advice

Connexions www.connexions-direct.com is the government funded agency for young people aged 13-19, or to 25 in the case of young people with a physical and/or learning disability. Their site has a lot of information and advice on a range of issues (learning, work, housing etc.), including a separate disability section and links to local services.

Contact a Family www.cafamily.org.uk/publications.html?scat=39 Helpline: 0808 808 355 has downloadable booklets on ESA, transition, benefits, sex and relationships. Transition guidance covers England, Scotland and Wales. For NI follow 'In Your Area' link.

Disability Alliance www.disabilityalliance.org is a charity with the principal aim of improving the living standards of disabled people. Publications include the *Disability Rights Handbook* and a range of useful factsheets and other information on such things as direct payments, tax credits and the Employment and Support Allowance.

Disability Law Service www.dls.org.uk Advice line 020 7791 9800 E-mail: advice@dls.org.uk A charity run by and for disabled people to provide advice and information on the law as regards disability, benefits, employment etc. Their site has range of factsheets and they also provide a casework service, and support at any level of the legal system.

In Control <http://www.in-control.org.uk> is a social enterprise that was set up to transform the current social care system into a system of Self-Directed Support and Individual Budgets – giving disabled people as much control as possible of their lives. This approach is gradually being adopted by social services departments across the UK. The website has factsheets on how it works, and also on getting a job. **The Independent Living Fund** www.ilf.org.uk gives grants to people with severe disabilities aged 16 and over, to buy services and equipment that enable them to maintain an independent lifestyle. Employers can also receive grants for adaptations and equipment in the workplace, from the Jobcentre Plus Access to Work scheme. For minor adaptations, repairs and equipment, e.g. handrails or environmental control systems, you may be able to get help from the local Social Services Department.

Radar www.radar.org.uk is the UK's largest disability campaigning organization. Their Publications include '*Doing Money Differently*', '*Get Motoring*' and a guide to the National Key Scheme, which allows people with disabilities to use over 8000 locked toilets across the UK (you can also order a key from the site).

Skill www.skill.org.uk is the national organisation for students with disabilities. Go to 'Information' for sheets on benefits for students.

Transition Information Network www.transitioninfonetwork.org.uk Tel: 020 7843 6006 Email: TIN@ncb.org.uk TIN is an alliance of organisations and individuals working together to improve the experience of disabled young people's transition to adulthood, and a source of information and good practice standards for disabled young people, families and professionals. Provides information through website, magazine, e-newsletter and seminars. TIN does not provide advice and does not have a helpline.

The National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL) www.ncil.org.uk has information on direct payments and individual budgets, and a directory of local support services in England. Sister organizations in other parts of the UK are:

Inclusion Scotland (IS) www.inclusionscotland.org

Disability Wales www.disabilitywales.org

Centre for Independent Living Belfast www.cilbelfast.org

Turn 2 Us www.turn2us.org.uk another site to help you find out about benefits, grants and other financial help, including managing money. Has an easy to use benefits checker and a grants search section containing the details of hundreds of grant-giving charities (national, regional and local) that may be able to provide financial support and other services.

HemiHelp has a range of information sheets for both families where there is a child with hemiplegia and adults with the condition, as well as a Useful Names and Addresses List to help you contact other organisations.

Hemiplegia is a neurological condition that weakens one side of the body and affects one child in a thousand. It is sometimes described as a form of cerebral palsy and the effects are similar to those of a stroke. **HemiHelp** is a membership organisation offering information and support to children and adults affected by hemiplegia and their families.

HemiHelp is happy for you to make photocopies of any part of this document.

Helpline: 0845 123 2372 (Mon-Fri 10am-1pm)

Admin: 0845 120 3713 • Fax: 0845 120 3723

Email: support@hemihelp.org.uk • Web: www.hemihelp.org.uk

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