

Disability Allowance

DEPT OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY AFFAIRS

Your first step before applying for any benefit is to find out which payment you may be entitled to. The advice from the Citizens Information Board is, if in doubt, apply. "If you think you may be entitled to any benefit, you should apply unless you are absolutely sure that you do not qualify."

Disability Allowance (DA) is a long-term means-tested payment made to people with disabilities including people in residential care. To qualify you must live permanently in Ireland, be between the ages of 16 and 66 and have a specific disability (physical, intellectual or mental health) which results in your being 'substantially restricted' in doing work that would otherwise be suitable for a person of your age, experience and qualifications.

You may be required to attend a medical assessment to confirm your disability if this cannot be decided from your application form alone. The decision to approve your application is made by the Deciding Officer based on the report of the Medical Assessor who is a registered doctor.

Do not be discouraged from applying by bureaucratic form-filling. The system is generally designed to be user-friendly and there are helplines available. People who feel they may not be able to adequately represent themselves are entitled to be assisted or accompanied by a disability advocate.

DA is a means-tested payment. A test of means is a way of checking if you have enough money to support yourself and what amount of payment, if any, you may qualify for. Means tests are complex. It is difficult for an individual to assess their own means accurately. This is why it is important to apply – you may qualify. Even if you do not qualify for the full personal rate of DA, you may get a reduced rate and be entitled to certain secondary benefits.

The full personal rate of Disability Allowance is currently paid at €204.30 per week for qualifying individuals. If you are married or living with a partner and you both qualify for DA, you are each entitled to a weekly personal rate of DA. If your spouse or partner is

in receipt of another social welfare payment, you may still get the full personal rate of DA if your spouse or partner have no other means. You can receive your payment by direct credit transfer into a current account or through your local post office.

If you are awarded Disability Allowance, you get a Free Travel Pass automatically. This allows you to travel free on public transport and your spouse or partner to travel free in your company. If you are unable to travel alone, you may be entitled to a Companion Free Travel Pass.

DA may also entitle you to receive the Household Benefits Package which is made up from three allowances: electricity or gas allowance, telephone allowance and free television licence. These allowances provide contributions towards your electricity or gas and are applied directly to your bills, where applicable.

You are entitled to earn up to €120 per week from what is termed "rehabilitative or therapeutic" work without affecting your Disability Allowance. This may include participation on a FÁS training course or Community Employment Scheme.

Equally, if you are thinking of returning to second or third level education and are receiving a reduced rate of DA, you can apply for a Back to Education Allowance (BTEA). Provided you are over 18 years of age, the BTEA entitles you to the full personal rate of DA and an annual Cost of Education Allowance of €500.

CITIZENS INFORMATION CENTRES

Citizens Information Services are provided at 268 locations throughout the country offering free, confidential and impartial information on all aspects of rights and entitlements. When necessary, staff can help you access your entitlements and make appeals.

The Citizens Information Phone Service operates Monday to Friday 9am-9pm.

LoCall 1890 777 121. The Citizens Information website is www.citizensinformationboard.ie

WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION?

DISABILITY ALLOWANCE

The first step in applying for DA is to complete and return Application Form DA 1 which is available from your local Social Welfare Services Office or LoCall Leaflet Request Line 1890 20 23 25. Alternately you can download an application form from www.welfare.ie. Document SW 29 gives a full explanation of Disability Allowance.

FREE TRAVEL PASS AND COMPANION PASS

Contact Free Travel Section, Department of Social and Family Affairs, College Rd, Sligo. LoCall 1890 500 000 or see www.welfare.ie

HOUSEHOLD BENEFITS PACKAGE

Contact Household Benefits Section, Department of Social and Family Affairs, College Rd, Sligo. LoCall 1890 500 000 or see www.welfare.ie

BACK TO WORK ALLOWANCE

To apply for BTWA, phone LoCall 1890 202 325 and request form BTW 1 and information leaflet SW 93 or contact Department of Social and Family Affairs, Carrick-on-Shannon. Tel 071 967 2698. LoCall 1890 66 22 44 or see www.welfare.ie

BACK TO EDUCATION ALLOWANCE

To apply for BTEA, phone LoCall 1890 202 325 and request form BTE 1 or contact the Department of Social and Family Affairs, Carrick-on-Shannon. Tel 071 967 2698. LoCall 1890 66 22 44 or see www.welfare.ie

REHABILITATIVE WORK

Contact the Department of Social and Family Affairs. LoCall 1890 66 22 44 or see www.welfare.ie



GOING IT ALONE

Liam Conlon, who has a severe form of ataxic cerebral palsy, qualified for Disability Allowance over twenty years ago when the payment was referred to as the Disabled Persons' Maintenance Allowance.

Liam is currently living in a residential setting at The Phoenix Lodge in Limerick City but intends moving into private accommodation in the coming months.

Liam's main source of income is the full rate of Disability Allowance which he describes as "a small amount of money on which to survive."

However, he remains determined to return to community living and believes by managing his resources efficiently he will be in a position to support himself.

"Each person has their own unique set of requirements which must be met by combining a number of resources," says Liam.

In Liam's case, in addition to Disability Allowance, he also qualifies for Mobility Allowance. When he moves into his own accommodation, he will qualify for the Living Alone Allowance and the Household Benefits Package. People living on their own who qualify for Disability Allowance are also entitled to the Living Alone Allowance. By combining these allowances with personal assistant hours provided by the IWA Assisted Living Service, he is confident he can live independently.

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