

Factsheet: Attendance Allowance

CARE FEES PLANNING

Solving the problems of paying for care

Brownlow Wealth Management Ltd

Key facts and benefits

Tax free state benefit
Government help for
personal care

Weekly allowance
Low band = £49.30
High band = £73.60

Non means-tested
The ill or disabled over 65
may qualify

AA1 claim pack
Freecall 0800 88 22 00

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What is an Attendance Allowance?

People who are ill or disabled and who need help with personal care (things like help getting dressed, washing or going to the toilet), or who need to be supervised because of a mental or physical illness or disability, are entitled to receive Attendance Allowance (AA) from the government. Claiming AA may help the person needing care to remain independent and stay in his or her own home. This benefit is not taxable, not based on National Insurance contributions and not means-tested, so there is no requirement to give details of income or savings. Attendance Allowance is paid in addition to any other social security benefits.

Residents who pay the full charges in a care home are entitled to claim and receive Attendance Allowance, provided they fulfil the conditions.

Who can receive Attendance Allowance?

To claim the benefit, it is not necessary for the person needing care actually to have an 'attendant': he or she simply has to be assessed as needing that particular level of care. A lot of help and support may be being received already; or very little. The Attendance Allowance does not even have to be spent actually buying care. But any benefit given may be taken into account by the local authority or NHS when assessing whether the person has to make a contribution towards any care services that are provided.

How much is the Attendance Allowance?

There are two weekly rates of Attendance Allowance, depending on the level of dependence. Up to April 2012, these rates are:

- Lower rate £49.30
- Higher rate £73.60

Attendance Allowance is not paid to anyone receiving Disability Living Allowance.

Who can claim Attendance Allowance?

Attendance Allowance is normally paid to anyone who:

- is aged 65 or older (under that age, it may be possible to claim Disability Living Allowance); there is no upper limit.
- satisfies the day and/or night disability conditions prescribed by the government.
- has been ill or disabled and satisfied the day and/or night conditions for at least six months – special rules apply to those who are terminally ill.
- normally lives in the UK and has done so for 26 out of the last 52 weeks – unless terminally ill, when special conditions may apply.

When and how to claim

The Attendance Allowance claim pack (AA1) is available from the Benefit Enquiry Line (freecall 0800 88 22 00), can be downloaded from the website www.dwp.gov.uk or collected at any post office.

Anyone who has needed help for at least the previous six months should claim immediately. Those who suddenly become ill or disabled can claim AA, without waiting for the six-month condition (above). It takes time for the claim to be processed, and payments will only start after the qualifying period. Remember, the allowance will not be backdated to cover any period before the date the claim is made. Those with a progressive or terminal illness should ask the doctor for a DS1500 report to send back with the claim form; this eliminates the six-month waiting period.

The AA claim form is quite complex and an elderly person, requiring care, may need help completing it. A relative or friend can help to answer the questions, discussing them first and agreeing how best to express the needs. If the person needing care is already in a residential or care home, the manager or matron may be able to assist. Some sections must be completed by a friend or relative, or a professional nurse or doctor, who are asked to provide details about the illness or disability.

When all the relevant sections are completed, the person claiming AA must sign the form to confirm that all the details are correct. It is also possible for another individual (ideally the attorney holding an Enduring Power of Attorney) to complete the form and sign it on behalf of the person needing care. Alternatively, staff at the Benefit Enquiry Line can also arrange to help complete the forms over the phone or send a representative to help.

What happens next?

Once the form is submitted, staff at the Benefits Office may make contact to ask for more information or to speak to someone mentioned on the form (like a doctor or matron) – to clarify facts and so get a better idea of the requirements. A doctor, appointed by the Department for Work and Pensions, may be asked to make a visit and ask further questions.

The decision as to whether the applicant is entitled to receive Attendance Allowance – and, if so, at which level – will be sent in writing. It will also be stated whether the AA is to be awarded for a fixed period or indefinitely. It normally takes a little over 12 weeks for this decision to be sent. If the person claiming the benefit is turned down, he or she may appeal; this should be done within a month. If circumstances change and the person subsequently qualifies for the higher rate allowance, there is provision for the application to be reviewed.

How is the Attendance Allowance paid?

The benefit is paid either weekly or every four weeks in arrears into a bank, post office or building society account.

Useful websites

www.dwp.gov.uk

www.ageconcern.co.uk

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