

— PAYING FOR CARE

How to apply for Attendance Allowance: a step-by-step guide

Phone first to lock in the start date, then fill in the AA1 form so it shows day and night needs. Plus the special rules and what to do if you're refused.

By the JNP Sidona team · 9 October 2026 · 10 min read

You can apply for Attendance Allowance online through GOV.UK, or **call the helpline on 0800 731 0122 and ask for a paper form**. If you phone, your claim date is the day you called, as long as the form is back within 6 weeks. Face-to-face assessments are rare, so the form usually has to make the case on its own, and most of this guide is about filling it in properly.

KEY POINTS

- GOV.UK says Attendance Allowance is for people who have reached State Pension age and have needed help with personal care or supervision for at least 6 months. The 6 months count from when the help was needed, not from the diagnosis.
- For 2026/27, GOV.UK lists £76.70 a week at the lower rate and £114.60 a week at the higher rate (<https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance/what-youll-get>). Attendance Allowance is not means-tested, and rates change every April.
- DWP's claim notes say a person can get Attendance Allowance even if nobody is helping them yet, so describe the help your parent *needs*, not the help they get.
- DWP's notes suggest keeping a 24-hour record of a good day and a bad day before filling in the Attendance Allowance form, and sending it in with the claim.
- Under GOV.UK's special rules, someone a doctor or nurse thinks may have 12 months or less to live gets the higher rate of Attendance Allowance, with no 6-month wait and no care questions to answer.
- If an Attendance Allowance claim is refused, GOV.UK says you usually have one month from the date of the decision (<https://www.gov.uk/mandatory-reconsideration>) to ask

for a mandatory reconsideration.

Who can claim Attendance Allowance?

GOV.UK sets out the main tests. Your parent (or partner) must:

- have reached State Pension age
- have a physical disability (including sight or hearing loss), a mental disability (including dementia or learning difficulties) or a health condition
- need help caring for themselves, or someone to supervise them for their own or someone else's safety
- have needed that help for at least 6 months (except under the end-of-life rules)
- be in Great Britain when they claim and have been here for at least 2 of the last 3 years, with some exceptions
- not already get Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Armed Forces Independence Payment or the Scottish equivalents

Income, savings and home ownership don't matter, and DWP's notes say you don't usually need National Insurance contributions. This guide covers the GOV.UK claim for England and Wales. Northern Ireland has its own claim route, and in Scotland the benefit is Pension Age Disability Payment.

GOV.UK says the lower rate is for frequent help or constant supervision during the day, or supervision at night. The higher rate is for help or supervision throughout both day and night, or where a medical professional has said the person is nearing the end of life.

What counts as "help" and "supervision"?

- **Help with personal care** (DWP's AA1 notes): washing, getting in or out of the bath or shower, dressing, eating, going to or using the toilet, and making yourself understood. Help includes prompting: if your mother can wash only when someone prompts her, that counts.
- **Supervision** (AA1 notes): someone watching over you to avoid substantial danger, for example when taking medicines, because you don't recognise danger, or because you get confused.

Age UK's form guide advises concentrating on personal care, not housework, shopping or gardening.

How to apply for Attendance Allowance, step by step

- 1 **Decide who signs.** You can fill in the form for your parent, and the AA1 form sets out who signs:
 - 2 **Your parent signs** if they can, even when you have written the answers.
 - 3 **You can sign** if you are their benefit appointee, their deputy, or their attorney under a registered Lasting Power of Attorney for property and finance. A health and welfare LPA doesn't count.
 - 4 **Otherwise, question 15 lists the reasons** someone else may sign: the person is too ill or disabled to claim, lacks the mental capacity to manage their affairs, or the claim is made in their absence or without their knowledge. Tick the reason that applies at question 15.
 - 5 **Attorneys** send the registered LPA (original or certified copy), or DWP asks for the access code if it is held online.

If nobody holds that LPA or deputyship, GOV.UK says you can ask the helpline to make you their appointee; our guide to setting up a lasting power of attorney covers the longer-term option.

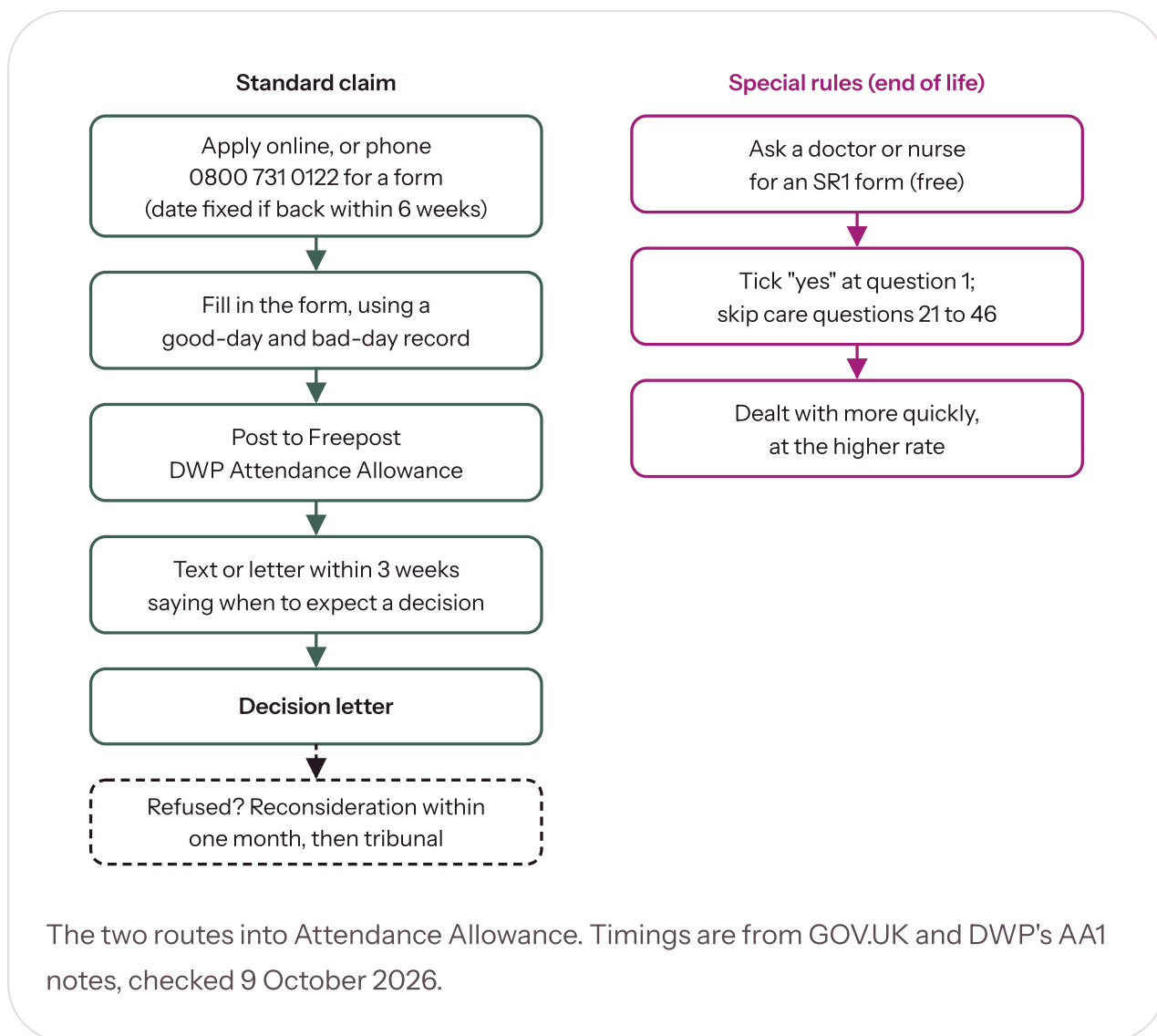
- 6 **Protect the claim date.** Phone 0800 731 0122 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm; Relay UK: 18001 then 0800 731 0122) and ask for a claim pack. Your claim date is then the day you called, as long as the form is back within 6 weeks.
- 7 **Gather the paperwork.** Their National Insurance number, GP details, a printed repeat prescription list, anyone else they've seen about their health in the last 12 months (consultant, district nurse, occupational therapist), hospital record numbers, and dates of any hospital or care home stays.
- 8 **Keep a 24-hour record.** Note everything they needed help with, from getting up one morning to getting up the next. If their needs vary, record a good day and a bad day.
- 9 **Fill in the form.** The AA1 has 32 pages. DWP's notes say you don't have to do it in one go, and ask for black ink. To type into the PDF, use a PDF reader on a computer; it can't be completed on a phone or tablet.
- 10 **Add evidence.** A discharge summary, consultant's letter, care plan or prescription list. Write your parent's National Insurance number on every extra sheet and list the documents at question 63.
- 11 **Post it free to Freepost DWP Attendance Allowance.** GOV.UK says to write nothing else on the envelope, with no stamp or postcode. Keep a photocopy of the whole form.

Should you apply online or on paper?

The [GOV.UK online service](https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance/how-to-claim) (https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance/how-to-claim) lets you apply for someone else, either as a helper or as their appointee, attorney or deputy. It deletes your answers after 90 minutes without activity, so gather everything first.

Three ways to claim Attendance Allowance (GOV.UK and DWP, checked 9 October 2026)

Route	Claim starts from	Best for
Apply online	The day you submit it	Sending quickly once your notes and evidence are ready
Phone 0800 731 0122 for a form	The day you called, if the form is back within 6 weeks	Fixing the claim date while you keep a care record and gather evidence
Download the form	The day DWP receives it	Starting straight away if you can't get through by phone (the call date isn't protected)



How to describe care needs on the Attendance Allowance form

GOV.UK says an assessment is only needed if it's unclear how the condition affects the person. These tips come from DWP's notes and Age UK's form guide.

Write about the bad days honestly

DWP's notes say: "We know that disabilities can affect people more on one day than another." Age UK's guide warns not to assume the person reading the form will read between the lines. Say how many days a week are bad (question 38 asks this) and give real examples: "On about four days a week Mum can't get out of the bath without me" tells DWP far more than "Mum has arthritis."

Count everything: time, pain, risk, prompting

For each task, say whether it is painful, slow, leaves them breathless, or risks a fall, and whether they manage only when someone reminds them or stands by. Question 27 asks about aids, from a perching stool to a dosette box, and whether they need help to use them.

Don't skip the night section

The AA1 form defines night as the time after "the household has closed down at the end of the day". Questions 42 to 45 ask how many times a night help is needed, for how long, and on how many nights a week. Getting to the toilet, changing incontinence pads, turning over, or someone staying awake because your father wanders all count, even if you're the one getting up.

Supervision matters as much as hands-on care

If your parent gets confused, forgets medication, leaves the cooker on, falls, or can't safely be left alone, answer question 40, which asks how long they can safely be left. For a parent with dementia, see our guide to claiming Attendance Allowance for dementia.

Repeat yourself, and get a supporting statement

Age UK says it's fine to repeat the same difficulty under different questions, and to write in the third person ("My mum struggles to...") if you're filling it in for your parent. The AA1 form says the optional statement from someone who knows them (questions 55 to 62) is best done by whoever is most involved in their care, such as a district nurse or GP, and that if you are signing for your parent, someone else should fill it in.

A common mistake: answering for the help your parent already gets instead of the help they need. If your sister visits twice a week but your mother really needs help every morning, describe every morning.

How long does Attendance Allowance take?

GOV.UK gives no fixed decision time. It says you'll get a text or letter **within 3 weeks** saying when to expect a decision. Once awarded, Attendance Allowance is paid from your claim date (step 2), provided your parent had already needed help for 6 months by then. Age UK suggests sending the form on time and saying further evidence will follow.

Can you claim Attendance Allowance from hospital?

Yes; question 47 of the AA1 asks about it. DWP's notes say that if someone is awarded Attendance Allowance while in hospital or a council- or NHS-funded care home, it can't be paid until they come out, though people paying their own care home fees can be paid. GOV.UK says to report any hospital or care home stay to the helpline.

Special rules: claiming at the end of life

If a doctor or nurse thinks your parent may have **12 months or less to live**, GOV.UK's special rules apply. You tick "yes" at question 1 and skip the care questions (21 to 46); there's no face-to-face assessment, and DWP deals with the claim more quickly.

Ask the GP, consultant, hospice doctor or a specialist nurse (such as a Macmillan nurse) for a free **SR1 form**. DWP's notes say to send the claim straight away and the SR1 when you can. GOV.UK says one SR1 covers every benefit claimed under the special rules.

You can claim under these rules **without telling your parent**: DWP's letter to them won't mention the special rules. If they already get the lower rate and a clinician now thinks they may have 12 months or less, report it to the helpline. For care at home towards the end of life, see [palliative care at home](/palliative-care-london) (/palliative-care-london).

What if the claim is refused?

- 1 Ask for a mandatory reconsideration** by phone or in writing, using the contact details on the decision letter or [GOV.UK's mandatory reconsideration form](https://www.gov.uk/mandatory-reconsideration/how-to-ask-for-mandatory-reconsideration) (https://www.gov.uk/mandatory-reconsideration/how-to-ask-for-mandatory-reconsideration). A written request must arrive within the month; GOV.UK says late requests can be accepted for a good reason, such as a hospital stay or bereavement.
- 2 Add what was missing.** Compare the decision letter with your copy of the form, and send a fuller night-time account, a care plan or a letter from someone involved in their care.
- 3 Appeal to a tribunal.** GOV.UK says to appeal to the Social Security and Child Support Tribunal within one month of the reconsideration decision. It's free; appeal online or on form SSCS1, with the mandatory reconsideration notice.

Age UK's Advice Line gives free help with the form or a challenge: 0800 678 1602, 8am to 7pm, every day of the year.

What else opens up once it's awarded?

- **Pension Credit:** GOV.UK says a person who gets Attendance Allowance could get an extra £86.05 a week (2026/27) in Pension Credit, and that someone with a disability might be eligible even if their income is above the usual limit. A parent who was turned down before may qualify now, so ask the Pension Service on 0800 99 1234. Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction can also increase.
- **Carer's Allowance:** GOV.UK says a family carer aged 16 or over who cares for at least 35 hours a week, earns £204 a week or less (2026/27) after tax, National Insurance and expenses, and isn't in full-time education may qualify. See our Carer's Allowance guide.
- **Moving to the higher rate** later is possible if night-time needs develop, but Age UK warns that a review could remove the award instead of increasing it, so get advice first.

Check before a family carer claims Carer's Allowance. GOV.UK says that when someone gets Carer's Allowance for looking after your parent, your parent will usually stop getting the severe disability amount in their Pension Credit, so the household can end up worse off. Get a benefits check first, for example from the Age UK Advice Line.

Does the council count Attendance Allowance for care charges?

If the council arranges care at home, its financial assessment can count Attendance Allowance as income. The government's Care Act guidance (Annex C, paragraphs 39 and 40) says the council should let your parent keep enough to pay for disability-related costs it isn't meeting, such as a community alarm, privately arranged care, or day or night care the council isn't arranging. Each London borough sets its own charging policy within those rules; our guide to the [council financial assessment for care](/blog/financial-assessment-for-care) (/blog/financial-assessment-for-care) explains what to ask for.

How we can help

If you are also working out how to pay for help at home, our guide to [paying for care in London](/paying-for-care-london) (/paying-for-care-london) sets out the options, and Jackie, our registered manager, can visit for a free home assessment.

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About this guide

Written by the JNP Sidona team using the official sources listed above, which we checked on 9 October 2026. Rules, rates and thresholds change, usually each April, so always confirm the current position with the source or your council. This guide is general information, not medical, legal or financial advice. If you spot something out of date, email info@jnpsidonasupportservices.co.uk (<mailto:info@jnpsidonasupportservices.co.uk>) and we will correct it.