



Further info on DLA (to be read in conjunction with the information on [www.fosterline.info](http://www.fosterline.info))

It would be reasonable for the local authority (having parental responsibility) to have assurance that any DLA awarded to the child is being used for the purpose it is intended. A service provider may ask a foster carer for an informal breakdown on the way DLA funding contributes to the extra costs a foster carer may incur so the local authority can be ensured but it is the foster carer's decision on what the fund is used for to enhance the everyday living for the child.

The service provider should have a policy around DLA and their responsibility to monitor; foster carers may request a copy of the policy.

1. Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a Social Security benefit available to disabled children who require help with personal care and / or supervision over and above that of other children of the same age because of their illness or disability.
2. The DLA benefit contains both a care and mobility component and is paid at different rates according to the child's needs. DLA care component is paid at a low, medium or high rate and may be payable to a disabled child from the age of three months once the child's needs have been assessed. The Mobility Component is paid at low or high rate i.e. Higher Rate from aged three and Lower Rate from age five. Some children will receive either one or both elements.
3. Any adult caring for such a child, providing the child is not in hospital or residential care for more than 28 days, can apply for this benefit. Although the foster carer does not need the permission of the parent to apply for DLA, it would be good practice for the child's social worker to inform the parent of their intentions.
4. If a child is in receipt of DLA, prior to becoming a looked after child, the child's social worker should be involved in discussions with the parent concerning transfer of the DLA to the foster carer. The parent must notify the Department of Works & Pensions that the child is no longer in their care and the foster carer advised to make an application to receive it. In the same way if a child moves from one foster carer to another the foster carer must notify the DWP and any DLA money transferred to the new carer.
5. Where the child is in permanent foster care and in receipt of the mobility component of the DLA, this will transfer to the permanent carers.
6. DLA is paid to the child not the carer. Normally if the child is under 16 the carer acts as an appointee. Otherwise the young person, providing they are capable, can have the benefits paid to them direct.
7. There are no conditions laid down by the DWP as to how the money should be spent. It is intended that the money be used to enhance the child's life so that the child derives maximum benefit from the payment of this benefit.
8. Foster carers will be expected to set up a separate bank account, in the foster carer's own name, into which the DLA will be paid.

9. The money is not intended to be saved for the child for use in later years as this could result in them being penalised. For example, if there is more than £3000 in an account when the child returns home this will affect any benefits claimed by the parents. For a child reaching 16 a sum of more than £8000 will affect their claim for income support and housing benefits.
10. The child's social worker may be involved in discussion on how the DLA can be used to improve the child's life. Carers are not expected to produce receipts for small items of expenditure. Good practice may dictate any expenditure over £50.00 will require a receipt.

### **Examples of how the money could be spent**

- Activities that are costly e.g. horse riding, after school clubs.
- Provision of an escort to enable social events to be attended.
- Extra helper for an outing or holiday.
- Taxi fares for trips out.
- Special holiday for the child, which could include covering the family's expenses.
- Caravan expenses so that the child can have regular breaks in a familiar place.
- Extra support such as child sitting service, using individuals who are Disclosure and Barring Service checked.
- Individual equipment such as computer, communication aids.
- Laundry service and appliances.
- Replacement clothing where there is excessive wear and tear on clothing.
- Additional heating costs.
- Additional help with personal care.
- Anything that will improve the child's life.
- Special toys to meet child's needs – which may be of therapeutic value.
- Domestic help to allow carer to spend more time with child.

### **Examples of hidden costs:**

- Additional heating.
- Dieting e.g. greater use of convenience foods to allow carer to spend more time with the child.
- Additional wear and tear on domestic appliances e.g. washing machine, tumble drier, microwave etc.
- Damage to property.

Road tax, insurance and maintenance costs of second or larger car (NB exempt from road tax if paid higher rate of mobility allowance and this allowance can also be used to lease a car through mobility scheme, which then includes servicing costs).