



Better Living Allowance (BLA) for Adults (over 18 years of age)

Information booklet

APPROVED BY: *[Signature]* 22 1 21.

This information booklet will help you fill in the form and will:

- explain the questions we ask
- tell you how to answer the questions
- give you examples of other things you can tell us
- tell you what you need to do next.



Please use black ink to fill in the form. Don't worry if you are not sure how to spell something or you make a mistake. If you want to correct a mistake, please cross it out with a pen – **do not scratch the error out and do not use correction fluid.** This booklet gives general information and does not cover everything.

Introduction

This information booklet will help you fill in the BLA Claim Form. The form is your chance to explain how your disability or long-term illness affects you. The amount you get depends on how severely your condition affects you, not the condition itself. You will be assessed by a health professional and a Social Care Officer to determine the level of help or assistance you need with daily activities of living, and your rate of financial support will be regularly reviewed to ensure you're getting the right support.

Eligibility:

You must be aged 18 years or over and have not reached pensionable age to claim.

You must also have a health condition or disability where you:

- have had difficulties with daily living or getting around (or both) for 3 months
- expect these difficulties to continue for at least 9 months (unless you are terminally ill with less than 6 months to live)
- If you are not a British citizen you must have lived on St Helena Island for at least 2 of the last 3 years or show proof that you intend to settle on the island.
- You must not be subject to immigration control (unless you are a sponsored immigrant).

There are 2 Better Living Allowance (BLA) components that you can claim from which is paid on a weekly basis i.e. **Daily Living Component** and the **Mobility Component**. Each component can be paid at one of 2 rates, either the standard rate or the enhanced rate. To be awarded BLA you need to score enough points from a list of descriptors.

You may get the daily living component of the BLA if you need help more than half of the time with things like:

- Preparing food
- Eating and drinking
- Washing and bathing
- Managing toilet needs or incontinence
- Dressing and undressing
- Reading and understanding written information
- Communicating verbally
- Managing your medicines or treatments
- Making decisions about money
- Engaging with other people

You may get the mobility component of the BLA if you have a physical or mental condition that limits your ability to carry out some or all of these activities:

- Planning and following journeys
- Moving around.

Stays away from home

BLA can be affected by overnight stays away from home. There are different rules depending on whether you go into hospital, or into residential care.

When you are in hospital, Payments of BLA Daily Living component and Mobility component **stop after 12 weeks** of you becoming a hospital inpatient. If you are in hospital when you first claim BLA, it can't be paid until you leave hospital.

When you are in residential care

If you are currently in a residential care facility (including for short-term breaks) the BLA care component stops being paid after 28 days. The mobility component is not affected.

Counting the number of days away from home

When counting the number of days away from home, the day you enter hospital and the day you are discharged are both treated as days at home. For example, if you go into hospital on a Monday and come back on Friday, then only Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday will count as days away from home. This is a total of three days.

The same rules apply to residential care.

Going in and out of hospital or residential care

When working out whether your BLA will stop, it is important to know that any stays in hospital or residential accommodation separated by less than 28 days at home will be added together. This is known as the 'linking rule'.

For example, you go into hospital for nine weeks, before being discharged home. After two weeks at home, you have to be re-admitted to hospital for another six weeks. Because the two hospital stays are separated by less than 28 days at home they are 'linked' together. This means that BLA will stop being paid after three weeks during your second hospital stay (that is, nine weeks in hospital + three more weeks = 12 weeks in hospital).

When you come home for at least 28 days, the 'link' is broken, and BLA can be paid again for another 12 weeks during any future hospital admissions.

When you spend time in both hospital and residential accommodation, these stays can also be linked.

Getting paid for days at home

If your BLA stop because you are in hospital or a residential setting, you are still entitled to BLA payments at a daily rate for the days you spend at home. For example, you have been away for respite at a residential facility for more than 28 'linked' days, so payments of BLA care component have stopped. When you come home on Friday and go back into respite care on Monday, BLA daily living component should be paid at a daily rate for Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday (four days).

If you stay at home for more than 28 days, the daily living component should not be stopped again until after you've spent another 28 days in care/hospital.

Whenever you are in hospital or a residential setting it can impact on any Carer's Allowance paid to your main carer. However, even if you are in hospital or a residential setting for long periods, your carer may still be able to carry on getting Carer's Allowance if you regularly spends at least two days at home.

Carers can be paid at Part-time/Casual or Full-term rates. Your Social Worker will explain the difference to you if appropriate. Time spent preparing your home for your visit or cleaning up afterwards can count towards the casual hours care.

Be careful!

This is a complex area of the benefit system which can sometimes result in you or your carer being overpaid BLA/Carers Allowance. This usually happens when you or your carer unknowingly fail to inform the BLA officer about your stays away from home.

To avoid any confusion, we strongly advise you to tell the SW/BLA officer about any stays away from home in the places above. It's a good idea to keep a record of the dates you travel to and from your place of stay. The BLA officer need to be clear about how many days have been spent away from home to decide when these rules apply.

Terminal illness

You will get the higher rate of the daily living component if you are not expected to live more than 6 months. The rate of the mobility component will depend on your needs.

Change of circumstances

You must contact the BLA Officer immediately if:

- Your personal details change
- The help you need or your condition changes
- You are admitted into hospital
- You plan to go abroad
- You're imprisoned or held in detention

PLEASE NOTE:

You could be taken to court or have to pay a penalty if you deliberately give incorrect information or do not report a change in your circumstances.

The structure of the form

- Questions 1 and 2 ask you to list details of your health professionals, health conditions and medication.
- Questions 3 to 12 are about the 10 daily living activities.
- Questions 13 and 14 are about the two mobility activities.

Question 15 asks you to provide any additional information on the sheets provided.

The extra information boxes

Questions 3 to 14 is followed by a space below the question for you to explain how your health condition or disability affects your ability to do the activity. You can use the Extra information sheets if you need more space for your answer.

Describe the difficulties you face in as much detail as possible. For example:

- Do you need help from another person to do the activity?
- If you do need help, what kind of help do you need? Does someone reassure you, encourage you, remind you or explain to you how to do something? Or do they need to supervise you?
- Do you use aids and /or appliances to help you in an activity? If you do, say what they are and how useful they are.
- Can you do some parts of the activity but not others?

- Can you do the activity but it takes you a long time?
- Are you unable to do the activity at all? Explain why.
- If your needs vary, describe in what way and how often. Explain about better days and bad days or how your needs vary throughout the day.
- If you regularly have accidents – such as falls – or are at risk of having accidents, explain why and how often they happen and what triggers the accident.
- Do you have any side effects from doing the activity? Do you experience pain, breathlessness, tiredness or stress and anxiety, either during or after the activity?

Aids and appliances are things to help you carry out the activities. For example:

- a monkey pole or bed raiser may help you get on/off/up the bed
- a hoist, grab rails, shower seat can help you bathe or shower
- a commode, raised toilet seat or rails may help you with toilet needs
- a long handled shoehorn, button hook, zip pull or sock aid may help you dress
- a stair lift, raised chair, wheelchair or rails may help you move about in/outdoors
- a walking stick, zimmer frame, crutches or prosthetic limbs may help you get around
- special cutlery or a feeding cup/device may help you eat and drink, and
- a hearing aid, magnifier, writing board or pictures, signs and symbols may help you communicate.

About your health conditions and disabilities

By health conditions and disabilities, we mean physical, sight, hearing or speech difficulty, learning, developmental or behavioural difficulties or mental health problems.

Question 1: Your health professionals

This question asks for details of the professional(s) best placed to provide advice on your circumstances, including social workers, counsellors, support workers, home helpers or medical professionals such as your doctor, psychiatrist, or audiologist (hearing specialist).

Whoever you list will need to know about your daily living needs and any mobility problems you have. If possible, make an appointment with them to discuss your BLA claim.

Question 2: Your condition and medication

This question asks you to list your health conditions or disabilities and approximately when each of these started. There's no need to be too specific about the date if you are not sure – the year it started will be enough. Do not explain how your health conditions affect you in this question – you will be asked about this later in the form.

You are then asked to list any tablets or medicines you are taking or treatments you are having. This includes anything you pay for yourself (e.g. pain killers) as well as anything you have been prescribed. If you have a printed prescription list, you can attach a copy to the form.

If you have any side effects as a result of the medication, list them. Also include any medications that you should take but can't because of side effects.

Question 3: Preparing food

Write down if there is any aspect of preparing or cooking a simple meal that is a risk to you. List any incidents that you have happened in the past. Have you cut yourself mishandling knives or burnt yourself on hot pans? Let them know if you can't work out sell-by dates or read or understand cooking instructions on packets.

If you use any aids or appliances to cook, do you need some help even when you use them? Write down if you have difficulty timing the cooking correctly. Let them know if you are so exhausted after cooking a meal, or in so much pain, that you couldn't do it again that day.

Question 4: Eating and drinking

Write down if you need someone to encourage you to eat the right portion sizes. If you can cut up some food but can't cut up tougher items, such as meat, make a note of this. If you need an appliance such as a food pump to eat, let them know if you have any help to use it properly.

Question 5. Managing treatments

Write down if there have been times in the past when you have forgotten to take your medication, or have taken too much. Although it may be difficult, you must let them know if you have taken a deliberate overdose, or if you self-harm.

Write down if you need someone to keep an eye on you because you aren't aware of your condition getting worse – sometimes this is the case with conditions such as diabetes or epilepsy.

If you need supervision, prompting or assistance to be able to manage your treatment, explain or write down how many hours on average you need this per week.

Question 6. Washing and bathing

Write down any aids or adaptations you use to wash or bathe yourself. These could include a long-handled sponge, shower seat or bath rail. Let them know if there are any parts of your body that you can't reach (for example, your back) even when using such aids.

Question 7. Managing toilet needs

Write down if you need to use any aids or appliances, such as a commode, a raised toilet seat, a bottom wiper, incontinence pads or a collective device (such as a urine bottle or catheter). Let them know if you need help even when you use an aid, or if you need help to use an appliance (for example, securing a stoma bag, washing around it to prevent infection). If there is an aid that could help but you don't use it, explain why.

Question 8. Dressing and undressing

List any aids you use to dress, such as modified buttons, zips, front-fastening bras, trousers, Velcro fastenings and shoe aids. Write down if you still need assistance, despite using such aids, even if this doesn't take long.

Let them know if you need someone to choose clothing that is clean and appropriate (for example, if you have a visual impairment and you plan to go out but can't see stains or marks on your clothing).

Question 9. Communicating

This is the most important part of the form if you are deaf or have partial hearing loss.

It doesn't matter if you don't currently get communication support. What counts is the help you reasonably require, not the amount of help you actually get.

You may need help with communication in a range of situations such as when visiting the doctor, using the public transport, while at work, at the shops, or for social and leisure activities. It helps if you can give examples of when and how often you need this help, and how long you need it for.

Question 9a asks if you can use an aid or appliance to help you communicate with others, and 9b asks if you need help from another person to communicate. Make sure you use the 'extra information' sheets to give more details if necessary.

About your communication needs

Include details of:

- Any aids or appliances you use to communicate with others, including hearing aids, cochlear implants, conversation listeners, and so on.
- Your preferred method of communication – for example, lipreading and speech, board and marker, British Sign Language etc.
- Whether you have difficulties with lipreading
- Whether you have problems understanding written English
- Whether you have any speech difficulties

The reason for your difficulties has to be your communication disability. It's not relevant if your communication difficulty is, for example, because English isn't your first language.

The communication support you get from family and friends

Many people who are deaf or have hearing loss use their family and friends to help with communication. It is important that you describe the help you get or need. For example:

- Do you find it difficult to hear what strangers are saying?
- Do you need help to communicate with strangers whom you do not understand?
- Do you need someone to attract your attention before speaking to you – for example, by tapping you on the shoulder?
- Do you need someone to place themselves in a certain position before speaking to you – for example, close by and in light – so you can see their lips move?
- Do you find it difficult to hear what friends or family are saying?
- Do you need someone to repeat what is said and explain it to you?

- Do you need general conversation explained to you, especially if there are several people speaking and you cannot see who is talking?
- If you have some hearing, do you still need some sounds and some speech explained to you?
- Do you find it difficult to understand gestures or body language used by people who are hearing and need to have them explained?
- Do sounds such as traffic, alarms and announcements have to be brought to your notice and explained?
- Do you need someone to explain what children are saying to you because they cannot sign or speak clearly enough for you to lipread them?
- Does someone need to let you know when a child is crying or distressed?
- Can you follow TV programmes that don't have subtitles?
- Do you need TV programmes explained to you even when they are subtitled?
- Do you need someone to explain radio programmes to you?
- If using hearing aids, do you find yourself in situations when you need help to understand what's being said – for example, in crowded places when other people are speaking?
- If you rely on lipreading, do you find yourself in situations where you are unable to see the face of the person speaking?
- Do you find that, when you are lipreading, people use words and phrases that have to be explained to you?
- Even though you may be able to lipread well, are there any reasons why you still can't communicate in all situations?
- Do you find you can only lipread a trained lipspeaker?
- If you can't lipread, do you need an interpreter or other communication support?

Support from sign language interpreters

If you use a sign language interpreter, they must have breaks. Say how often and for how long, because the breaks mean that communication can take much longer.

It is important to mention that there are no appropriate alternatives to interpreters, such as using handwritten notes, if full and effective communication is to take place. Don't be shy about explaining your needs – give as much detail as you can.

Question 10. Reading

Write down if you need to use aids to help you read – for example, a magnifier or magnifying glass. If you can manage indoors, but can't adequately read signs or notices outdoors, let them know.

Base your answers on reading and understanding information in your own language and how you cope with long sentences or something like a utility bill or bank statement.

Question 11. Mixing with other people

If you avoid mixing with other people because you have nobody to help you, write this down. How would you feel mixing with others without any support? Write down if you would get panicky, angry or paranoid. Do you have difficulty understanding the way that people behave towards you?

Question 12. Making decisions about money

Write down if you would have problems buying a few items from your local shop. Would you be able to give the shop assistant the right amount of money? Would you know if the change was correct?

If going to the local shop would cause no problems but you would have problems with more complex budgeting decisions, such as working out the monthly household budget or sorting out the utility bill, be sure to write this down.

Let them know if you can do most of the tasks by yourself but would still need some support to finish it properly.

Question 13. Going out

This activity assesses your ability to work out and follow a route safely and reliably. Two types of route are considered familiar and unfamiliar. You should only be considered able to travel to an unfamiliar destination if you're able to use public transport such as a bus or taxi.

If you are profoundly deaf or have severe hearing loss, you may need someone to guide or supervise you when you are travelling on unfamiliar or familiar outdoor routes. Explain why you need someone with you in these situations. For example:

- Do you know when traffic is approaching? Can you hear warning sounds such as car horns or sirens?
It may be argued that you should be able to rely on your eyesight to stay safe, so explain if this isn't the case – for example, when you can't see traffic well enough. Try to give examples of dangerous situations you have been in.
- Do you need someone to explain loudspeaker announcements to you?
- Do you avoid travelling by yourself in places you don't know well?
- Can you understand and follow street signs/maps or do you need someone to help you follow directions to where you are going?
- Can you understand and follow written directions?
- Can strangers understand your speech when you ask for directions?
- If a person who is hearing gives you directions, do you have difficulty understanding them?
- Can you lipread strangers if they are explaining directions to you?
- Do you have balance problems, Meniere's disease, Parkinson's Disease or vertigo, which makes you unable to walk safely without help?

Even if you don't actually go out every day, you should write down whether you would need help if you did go out. Remember, it's about the help you need, not just the help you currently get.

Question 14. Moving around

This question looks at your physical ability to stand and then move around without severe discomfort (such as breathlessness, pain or tiredness). You are first asked how far you can walk using, if necessary, any aids such as a walking stick, frame, crutches or a prosthesis.

Base your answer on what you can manage most of the time and don't over estimate your ability. Write down how far you can walk 'safely', in a 'reasonable time period' and without severe discomfort. If you could walk 50m, but would be in severe discomfort over the last 30m, then your walking ability will be considered to be limited to 20m.

You are given a number of boxes stating different distances to tick as well as a box for 'it varies'. Only tick the box 'it varies' if none of the other boxes apply for at least half the time.

Use the space below the question to write your notes or the 'extra information' sheet to list any symptoms that you feel when walking, such as pain, fatigue or breathlessness. Once the symptoms come on, how long do they last?

Write down if you are at risk of falling – for example, due to balance problems or Meniere's disease. Give examples of falls you have had outdoors in the past. Were you injured? Were you able to get up again unaided?

Describe the way you walk – for example, do you find it hard to balance or do you limp or often lose balance? Give an idea of your speed. If you walk slowly and were to cover 20 meters, what in your opinion, distance would someone without a disability or health condition cover in that time?

If your condition is worse on some days, give details. It may be helpful to keep a diary over a week, to show your walking limit on each day. You can attach a copy of the diary to your form.

Question 15. Additional information

The box here gives you more space to explain your difficulties. If you run out of space, use extra information sheets. Be sure to write your name and the number of the question you are answering on each page.

Supporting evidence

You are encouraged to send supporting evidence with your completed form, such as:

- Prescription lists, care plans and information from health professionals, such as a letter from your doctor or consultant outlining your condition, a report from an occupational therapist or physiotherapist or from your audiologist (hearing specialist) and a certificate of visual impairment (if you have one).
- Evidence from other people such as a letter from a carer, relative or friend who helps you or know your difficulties well.
- A diary, to clarify how your condition affects you over a number of days or how it varies over time (include your name and address at the top of every page. Read the form you have

completed and look at the activities where you filled in information. Your diary should record how you are managing in each of these areas.

The descriptors

Your ability to carry out each activity is measured against a list of standard statements describing what you can or can't do. These are known as descriptors. The health professional and social care officer will advise the BLA Officer which descriptor applies to you for each activity.

For example, there are six descriptors for 'Dressing and undressing', ranging from 'Can dress and undress unaided' to 'Cannot dress or undress at all'.

Each descriptor carries a point's score ranging from 0 to 12.

Can you carry out the activities reliably

When the assessor decides which descriptor applies to you, they may consider whether you can carry out the activity reliably. This means:

- Safely in a way that is unlikely to cause harm either to you or anyone else, either during the activity or afterwards.
- To an acceptable standard
- Repeatedly as often as is reasonable required
- In a reasonable time period – should take you no more than twice as long as someone without your condition.

Using aids or appliances

Your ability to carry out the daily living activities and mobility activities will be assessed as if you were wearing or using any aids or appliances that it would be reasonable for you to use. This applies whether or not you normally use those aids or appliances. However, if you use or need aids and appliances, this can help you to score more points.

An aid is any item which improves, provides or replaces impaired physical or mental function. It doesn't have to be specifically designed as a disability aid. Examples include a stool you need to sit on when cooking, or a walking stick to help you stand, balance and walk.

Scoring your abilities

The BLA Officer will add together your points from all the daily living activities. If you get between 8 and 11 points in total, you'll get the daily living component of BLA at the standard rate. If you get less than 12 points in total, you'll get the daily living component at the enhanced rate.

Your points from the mobility activities will also be added together and if you get between 8 and 11 points in total, you'll get the mobility component of BLA at the standard rate. If you get less than 12 points in total, you'll get the mobility component at the enhanced rate.

ADULT BLA – Table of activities, descriptors and points

Daily Living Activities

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTORS	POINTS
1. Preparing food	a. Can prepare & cook a simple meal unaided.	0
	b. Needs to use an aid or appliance to be able to either prepare or cook a simple meal.	2
	c. Cannot cook a simple meal using a conventional cooker but is able to do so using a microwave.	2
	d. Needs prompting to be able to either prepare or cook a simple meal.	2
	e. Needs supervision or assistance to either prepare or cook a simple meal.	4
	f. Cannot prepare or cook a simple meal.	8

Write notes below.

ADULT BLA – Table of activities, descriptors and points

Daily Living Activities

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTORS	POINTS
2. Taking Nutrition	a. Can take nutrition unaided	0
	b. Needs – (i) To use an aid or appliance to be able to take nutrition; or (ii) Supervision to be able to take nutrition; or (iii) Assistance to be able to cut up food.	2
	c. Needs a therapeutic source to be able to take nutrition for example, enteral tube feeding using a rate limiting device, such as a delivery system or feed pump.	2
	d. Needs promoting to be able to take nutrition.	4
	e. Needs assistance to be able to manage a therapeutic source to take nutrition.	6
	f. Cannot convey food and drink to their mouth and needs another person to do so for them.	10
Write notes below.		

ADULT BLA – Table of activities, descriptors and points

Daily Living Activities

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTORS	POINTS
3. Managing therapy or monitoring a health condition	a. Either – (i) Does not receive medication or therapy or need to monitor a health condition; or (ii) Can manage medication or therapy or need to monitor a health condition.	0
	b. Needs any one or more of the following: (i) To use an aid or appliance to be able to manage medication; (ii) Supervision, prompting or assistance to be able to manage medication (iii) Supervision, prompting or assistance to monitor a health condition.	1
	c. Needs supervision, prompting or assistance to be able to manage therapy that takes no more than 3.5 hours per week.	2
	d. Needs supervision, prompting or assistance to be able to manage therapy that takes more than 3.5 but no more than 7 hours per week.	4
	e. Needs supervision, prompting or assistance to be able to manage therapy that takes more than 7 but no more than 14 hours per week.	6
	f. Needs supervision, prompting or assistance to be able to manage therapy that takes more than 14 hours per week.	8

Write notes below.

ADULT BLA – Table of activities, descriptors and points

Daily Living Activities

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTORS	POINTS
4. Washing and bathing	a. Can wash and bathe unaided.	0
	b. Needs to use an aid or appliance to be able to wash and bathe.	2
	c. Needs supervision or prompting to be able to wash or bathe.	2
	d. Needs assistance to be able to wash either their hair or body below the waist.	2
	e. Needs assistance to be able to get in or out of a bath or shower.	3
	f. Needs assistance to be able to wash their body between the shoulders and waist.	4
	g. Cannot wash and bathe at all and needs another person to wash their entire body.	8

Write notes below.

ADULT BLA – Table of activities, descriptors and points

Daily Living Activities

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTORS	POINTS
5. Managing toilet needs or incontinence	a. Can manage toilet needs or incontinence unaided.	0
	b. Needs to use an aid or appliance to be able to manage toilet needs or incontinence.	2
	c. Needs supervision or prompting to be able to manage toilet needs.	2
	d. Needs assistance to be able to manage toilet needs.	4
	e. Needs assistance to be able to manage incontinence of either bladder or bowel.	6
	f. Needs assistance to be able to manage incontinence of both bladder and bowel.	8

Write notes below.

ADULT BLA – Table of activities, descriptors and points

Daily Living Activities

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTORS	POINTS
6. Dressing and undressing	a. Can dress and undress unaided.	0
	b. Needs to use an aid or appliance to be able to dress or undress.	2
	c. Needs either – (i) Prompting to be able to dress, undress or determine appropriate circumstances for remaining clothed; or (ii) Prompting or assistance to be able to select clothing.	2
	d. Needs assistance to be able to dress or undress their lower body.	2
	e. Needs assistance to be able to dress or undress their upper body.	4
	f. Cannot dress or undress at all.	8

Write notes below.

