

# INTRODUCTION TO BENEFITS AND ALLOWANCES

There can be extra expenses involved when you are looking after a child with a single ventricle heart condition, for example with feeding, warm clothes for winter and frequent hospital trips. To help with these costs, there are benefits you may be able to claim. Little Hearts Matter has a booklet called 'Benefits: a guide for parents' which gives more information.

## DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE (DLA)

DLA consists of two components, personal care and mobility. To claim this benefit, you need to demonstrate that your baby/child's needs are different to another child of their age. This is done through a long and detailed application form showing how their diagnosis affects them. Contact the Benefits Enquiry Line (telephone **0800 88 22 00**) to get a claim form.

### DLA Personal Care

- Can be claimed when your baby is three months old.
- Three different levels of award, depending on the care your baby/child needs during the day and the night.

### DLA Mobility

- The higher rate of Mobility allowance can be claimed when your child is three years old, if your child is "unable or virtually unable to walk".
- If your child needs guidance or supervision when walking out of doors at age five, they may be entitled to the lower rate of Mobility allowance.

## CARER'S ALLOWANCE

If you look after a disabled person and are unable to work, or only have low income, you may be able to claim Carer's Allowance. Your baby/child must be getting the DLA Personal Care component at the middle or highest rate, and your earnings must be less than £100 per week after certain deductions have been made (rate correct April 2010).

## CHILD TAX CREDIT

An extra amount is added to your CTC calculation for each child who receives DLA. You will need to tell HM Revenue and Customs about your child's DLA entitlement and the rate they get.

## OTHER FUNDING

There are other funds which may be available. Contact Little Hearts Matter, your cardiac liaison nurse or your hospital social worker to discuss your needs.

## DLA TOP TIPS

1. **Always** keep a copy of your form when you send it in.
2. Complete your claim form on a computer if at all possible as you can then save your application, and will just have to update it in future. Download a form from [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) - visit the section '**Disabled People**', then you'll see DLA as a link under '**Financial Support**'.
3. Ask for help e.g from LHM, your health visitor, a local charity, Citizens Advice Bureau, etc. Little Hearts Matter has a detailed guide which includes ideas to help answer some of the questions - phone the office on **0121 455 8982** to ask for the DLA Pack.
4. Be prepared for it to take a long time to complete the form - it can take days or even weeks, but it is worth it.
5. Keep repeating information if it is relevant to the question - don't worry about having already made the same point earlier in the form.
6. Think of the worst days and nights, not the best.
7. Be emotionally geared up to do this job - it can be draining.
8. Keep a pad of paper to hand so you can jot down ideas of things which take extra time when they happen.
9. Get supporting letters from people such as LHM, health visitor, nursery, school, cardiac liaison nurse, community nurse.
10. Include supporting documentation from organisations such as LHM and Heartline.
11. Make the most of the last page and paint a full picture of your child, their difficulties and how it impacts on the family.
12. Remember that the person who reads your form is not a healthcare professional - they may not even have heard of your child's diagnosis before, so tell them everything about how the condition impacts on everyday life.
13. First time parents may find it helpful to ask for input from other people (friends, grandparents, nursery) about how your child's needs differ from their peers.
14. Don't give up!