



Mental Health Survival Guide

*helping to break the link
between disability & poverty*

www.houlston.freeserve.co.uk/mental.htm

The above web site contains many mental health support information items. This leaflet focuses on the issue of benefits and in particular DLA – Disability Living Allowance.

DLA - are you missing out? Disability Living Allowance is a contribution towards the extra costs incurred by people with disabilities. Government sources indicate that less than 50% of people entitled to DLA actually make a claim. This may in part be due to its name. You don't have to be "disabled" to claim. It is based on care and mobility. Don't let the semantics put you off. "DLA is a most worthwhile benefit; it can lead to other benefits and concessions." Source: Employment Counsellor. DLA can enhance people's lives, awards range from a few pounds to substantial payments each week. If you have an enduring mental illness then Disability Living Allowance could be a most worthwhile benefit to claim.

DLA is a non means tested tax free benefit for those with an illness or disability, available up to age 65. For people under 16 there is a special claim pack. Claim packs are available from a local benefits office or by Freephone: 0800 882200. DLA covers two main areas of disabling illness, mobility and care. The rates vary according to the severity of the disability caused. This is the hard part of every application, to know what to write in what section in such a way that it is interpreted to receive the amount of money you need. There are few independent organizations that can truly help you overcome the complexity of completing a DLA application. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau or Social Services may have a specialist to help.
www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Claiming Disability Living Allowance is not my field of expertise but it is my area of experience. When it comes to DLA you won't see any expensive television advertising campaigns encouraging you to "Pick it up, it's yours". Claiming DLA on mental health grounds is not like rocket science, it's more difficult. For adults experiencing an enduring mental illness I recommend the "Claiming DLA Guide" from welfare rights specialists Benefits & Work. It is used by claimants, carers, advice workers, solicitors, social workers, health workers, housing workers and disability organizations throughout the UK. Thank you to Benefits & Work for creating this valuable guide available on the internet at:
www.benefitsandwork.co.uk

Retired people may claim Attendance Allowance instead of DLA. Freephone the Benefits Helpline on 0800 88 22 00 for more information.

There is no "magna carta" where entitlements to mental health community resources are set out - but inconsistent and confusing rules, complex forms and no easy route to finding out what's free and what you'll have to pay for. Mental Health Survival Guide is the first ever web site to decode the system for users, carers and survivors - with no jargon. Contacts for me or input to this and any following posters would be most welcome in the Guestbook of the Mental Health Survival Guide web site via this web link:
www.houlston.freeserve.co.uk/mental.htm

Stay well, Bob Houlston - Sep 2006.

All expressions in this leaflet are personal opinions of the author and do not represent a commitment.