



Supported by



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

## Network 1000

# Finance and entitlement: Visually impaired people's take up of Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance

February 2008

Graeme Douglas, Sue Pavey and Christine Corcoran

Visual Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research  
(VICTAR)  
School of Education  
University of Birmingham  
Birmingham  
B15 2TT



Copyright VISION 2020 UK and University of Birmingham  
ISBN 0704426900 / 978 0704426900

# Contents

- Acknowledgements ..... ii
- 1 Executive summary ..... 1
- 2 Introduction and description of the Network 1000 sample ..... 2
  - 2.1 Background ..... 2
  - 2.2 Description of the sub sample of directly interviewed participants (n=884) .. 2
- 3 Finance and entitlement ..... 4
  - 3.1 Introduction ..... 4
  - 3.2 Perceptions of financial situation ..... 4
- 4 Disability Living Allowance (DLA) ..... 6
  - 4.1 Different components and rates of the DLA ..... 6
  - 4.2 Advice when applying for the DLA and appeal ..... 8
  - 4.3 Other factors associated with DLA benefit ..... 9
  - 4.4 DLA and people 65 years of age and over ..... 10
- 5 Attendance Allowance ..... 12
  - 5.1 Different rates of Attendance Allowance, appeals and advice received ..... 12
  - 5.2 Other factors associated with Attendance Allowance benefit ..... 14
- 6 Conclusions ..... 15
- 7 References ..... 16

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the many people who have supported this project. In particular: all of the participants who contribute so much of their time and support; Jenny Whittaker who has supported this project with great skill and good humour; Mike McLinden, Steve McCall, Paul Lynch, Annette Weston and other colleagues at the University of Birmingham for their support in shaping this project; Vision 2020 UK and their chief executive Mike Brace OBE; the project's Management Panel for their sustained help, advice and encouragement; ADSS, ADSW, and participating social services departments for their support in the sampling stage of the project; Big Lottery Fund for funding Network 1000 Phase 1; our many research assistants who have skilfully and enthusiastically carried out many research interviews.

We would like to acknowledge and thank Thomas Pocklington Trust, RNIB, and GDBA for funding Network 1000 Phase 2.

# 1 Executive summary

This report presents findings from Network 1000 Survey 2. The data was collected during interviews with 884 visually impaired people between November 2006 and January 2007. All the participants were registered as either blind or partially sighted and lived in Great Britain. Sampling and analysis accounted for the age distribution of the visually impaired population.

The findings presented in this report focus upon the Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance.

The key findings in relation to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) are as follows:

- An estimated 85% of people aged between 18 and 64 who are registered visually impaired are currently receiving DLA.
- Therefore, an estimated 10,000 people registered visually impaired are currently not receiving the DLA but are eligible to apply.
- The mobility component of the DLA is more commonly received than the care component. It is relatively rare for visually impaired people to receive the higher rate within either the mobility or care components of the DLA.
- There is clear evidence that receiving advice is associated with successful application for DLA.
- Over a quarter of people had to appeal before they received their current rate of DLA.

The key findings in relation to Attendance Allowance are as follows:

- An estimated 64% of people age 65 years and over who are registered visually impaired are currently receiving Attendance Allowance.
- Therefore, an estimated 73,000 people registered visually impaired are not currently receiving Attendance Allowance but are eligible to apply.
- Of those people who receive Attendance Allowance, the majority receive the lower rate.
- There is clear evidence that receiving advice is associated with successful application for Attendance Allowance.
- Over 20% of people had to appeal before receiving their current rate of Attendance Allowance.

## **2 Introduction and description of the Network 1000 sample**

### **2.1 Background**

In March 2004, Vision 2020 UK and the Visual Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR) at the University of Birmingham were commissioned by the Big Lottery Fund to carry out the research project “Network 1000: Surveying the changing needs of visually impaired people”. The initial funding was for three years and covered ‘Phase 1’ of the broader Network 1000 project. Network 1000 Phase 2 started in April 2007 and has been funded by Thomas Pocklington Trust, RNIB and GDBA. Phase 2 aims to further analyse the data gathered in Phase 1 as well as maintain the Network 1000 sample.

The project has four key aims. The first was to establish a consultation network of over 1000 visually impaired people aged 18 and over. The second aim was to adopt a more longitudinal approach to data collection that would enable the project to report and record changes in circumstances over time and enable further comparative data to be evaluated. This report presents some of the *second* round of this data collection.

Thirdly, the project is underpinned by a commitment to consult with visually impaired people. To this end the research team have adopted a collaborative approach to ensure that people with a visual impairment have had an input into the design process.

Finally, the project aims to provide statistically useful data on the changing views, experiences and needs of visually impaired people that can be used to influence service development and provision. Our aim is to report not only the voices of those who have taken part in the survey, but also to ensure that the statistics produced from the survey will enable these voices to be generalised to the wider visually impaired population.

This report draws upon the data collected from 884 visually impaired people. The report focuses upon data relating to Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance.

### **2.2 Description of the sub sample of directly interviewed participants (n=884)**

At the time of the Network 1000 Survey 1, the sample consisted of 1007 visually impaired adults split across five age groups (see Douglas, Corcoran and Pavey, 2006). All the participants were on the registers of blind and partially sighted people held by 20 social services departments in England (15), Scotland (4) and Wales (1). This sample of 1007 was split between 960 visually impaired people who were interviewed directly, and a further 47 Key Informant interviews (in which we interviewed people who were close to the visually impaired person who had learning

or communication difficulties). 884 participants were interviewed directly in Network 1000 Survey 2 (a drop of 76). It is the results from these interviews in relation to 'Finance and entitlement' which are presented in this report. In addition, 38 Key Informants were also interviewed in this phase of work, though this data is not reported here.

The weighting used in the analysis in this report is based upon the age distribution of people on the 20 registers used in the sampling. This distribution is almost the same as estimates taken from the official registration figures for England (Department of Health 2003), Scotland (Scottish Executive 2003), and Wales (National Assembly for Wales 2003, note figures are for 2001-2). These figures combined enable an approximate base population and population distribution to be calculated. The Network 1000 survey results can be statistically generalised to this base population.

**Table 1: Distribution of the sample across the five age groups of participants in Network 1000 Survey 2 by sex and distribution of population. Base: whole sample of directly interviewed participants (N=884).**

Age group	Sample (n)		Total sample (N)	Base population
	Male	Female		
18-29	(57)	(76)	(133)	9,000
30-49	(98)	(104)	(202)	28,000
50-64	(100)	(105)	(205)	31,000
65-74	(70)	(90)	(160)	37,000
75+	(65)	(119)	(184)	255,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>(390)</b>	<b>(494)</b>	<b>(884)</b>	<b>* 360,000</b>

\*Based upon estimates taken from official registration figures for England (Department of Health 2003), Scotland (Scottish Executive 2003), and Wales (National Assembly for Wales 2003).

As with the Network 1000 Survey 1, the distribution of participants in the Network 1000 Survey 2 remains broadly even in terms of sex (but, as expected, when weighted it suggests a higher proportion of women to men in the population – particularly in older age groups). Due to the migration of some participants from one age group to another, along with the drop-out of some participants, the distribution of participants across the age groups has changed.

The weighting applied in the analyses in this report is the same as that used in Network 1000 Survey 1 analyses, with slight adjustment to scale for the different sample size.

## **3 Finance and entitlement**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In Network 1000 Survey 1 participants were asked about the different types of income that they received, for example pensions, various allowances, benefits and tax credits, and a range of other types of income. Network 1000 Survey 2 revisited the topic of finances, but rather than adopting such a broad overview, the interview explored two particular benefits in more detail – Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance. It is the presentation of these results which is the main focus of this report.

Researchers asked participants directly about their receipt of DLA and Attendance Allowance, plus follow-up questions about the details of the rates received and the process of applying. The DLA and Attendance Allowance were focussed upon in this survey for several reasons. Firstly, both benefits are specifically for people who are 'physically or mentally disabled' (Directgov, 2007). Secondly, both benefits continue to be the subject of a lot of attention by the visual impairment voluntary sector, both in terms of support in the process of application (e.g. RNIB website, Action for Blind People fact sheet) and campaigns (e.g. the cross-sector 'Taken for a ride' campaign in 2007). Thirdly, the rules of who is eligible to apply for both DLA and Attendance Allowance are relatively straightforward (linked to age and presence of a disability). Importantly, eligibility for application is *not* linked to income or to receiving other benefits. Pragmatically, it is a relatively easy benefit to investigate because researchers do not need to ask a series of complex questions about eligibility.

### **3.2 Perceptions of financial situation**

Before focussing upon DLA and Attendance Allowance, it is useful to consider the general financial context that people are experiencing. In both Network 1000 Survey 1 and 2 participants were asked questions about their personal perceptions of their financial circumstances. This included how well they felt they were managing financially, whether there was anything that they had gone without, and whether they had had difficulty paying for their accommodation.

The findings from the surveys suggest that the majority of visually impaired people felt that they were at least 'just about getting by' financially, with only 4% stating they were finding it quite difficult or very difficult. However, perceptions of financial situation were clearly linked with age, with people of working age having a less positive view – 46% of working age people described themselves as 'just about getting by' or worse, compared to 22% of retirement age people. Further, 12% of working age people described themselves as 'finding it quite difficult' or 'finding it very difficult'.

Participants were also asked whether there was anything that they had gone without or had to use less than they needed, because they could not afford it, over the past year. In line with the previous discussion, visually impaired people of working age were less positive than those of retirement age – 32% feeling they had gone without compared with 13% of people of retirement age.

Why do people of working age perceive themselves as financially worse off than people of retirement age? There are a number of possible explanations. Firstly, older people may be generally less likely to report difficulties compared to younger people. Other likely explanations are linked to actual wealth rather than reported perceptions of it. Perhaps the most obvious explanation is the relative low rates of employment amongst visual impairment people of working age compared to the sighted population (an employment rate of approximately a third, see Douglas et al, 2006).

Another explanation could be linked to paying for accommodation. An estimated 29% (n=406 of the sample) of visually impaired adults described themselves as paying for their accommodation (via mortgage or rental payments). Of these, an estimated 15% reported having difficulties keeping up with their housing payments over the previous year (an estimated 16,000 people with a registered visual impairment). This is proportionally more common amongst people of working age. Additionally, paying for accommodation was far more common in younger age groups – 62% of those of working age either renting or paying for accommodation with a mortgage compared to 20% of those of retirement age.

These general findings relating to perceptions of financial situation are not explored in any great detail here. A more detailed exploration is planned which will include comparisons with data collected from the sighted population. Even so, the results indicate that significant numbers of people with a visual impairment have difficulty with their finances and this provides a useful context for exploring the take-up of two of the key available benefits – the DLA and Attendance Allowance.



## 4 Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

The DLA is ‘a tax-free benefit for children and adults who need help with personal care or have walking difficulties because they are physically or mentally disabled’ (Directgov, 2007). It was introduced in April 1992, and can be applied for by people who are under the age of 65 at the time of application, though they can continue to receive the benefit beyond this age. People 65 years of age and older can apply for Attendance Allowance (assuming they do not already receive the DLA).

Of the sample, 539 participants were eligible to have applied for the DLA at time of interview because they were under the age of 65 years. These participants were asked a number of questions relating to the DLA. In the main, the analysis of DLA will focus upon these (539) participants under the age of 65 years, although a section later will also consider those who are 65 years and older who could have applied for DLA in the past.

**Table 2. ‘Do you currently get the Disability Living Allowance?’ by three age groups. Base: all those eligible to apply for the DLA at time of interview (<65 years) (N=539), weighted.**

	18-29 %	30-49 %	50-64 %	Total weighted %	Total sample (n)	Base Population (nearest 1K)
Yes	82%	81%	88%	85%	(450)	58,000
No	16%	18%	12%	14%	(82)	10,000
Don't know	2%	1%	0%	1%	(7)	1,000
Number interviewed	(132)	(202)	(205)	100%	(539)	68,000

We can estimate that 85% of registered visually impaired people aged between 18 and 64 are currently receiving the DLA. In terms of numbers, there are an estimated 68,000 people registered as blind or partially sighted in Great Britain between the ages of 18 and 64 years (based upon estimates taken from official registration figures for England (Department of Health 2003), Scotland (Scottish Executive 2003), and Wales (National Assembly for Wales 2003)). This allows us to estimate that 10,000 visually impaired people are currently not receiving the DLA but are eligible to apply. Of those not receiving DLA, the majority (69%) reported that they had never applied while a significant proportion (29%) had applied unsuccessfully (2% could not remember).

### 4.1 Different components and rates of the DLA

The DLA has two components – a care component and a mobility component. It is possible to receive one or both of these components. Additionally, both the care and mobility components have different rates. The care component has three rates: a highest rate (at time of interview £62.25 per week), a middle rate (£41.65 per week), and a lowest rate (£16.50 per week). The mobility component has two rates: a

higher rate (at time of interview £43.45 per week) and a lower rate (£16.50 per week). Perhaps unsurprising a number of people could not remember the details of the components or rates of the benefits they received when asked (e.g. 14% of those receiving DLA did not know which component they received). Nevertheless some useful patterns did emerge, most obviously that the mobility component of the DLA is more commonly received than the care component (77% compared with 66%).

**Table 3. Different components of the DLA (by three age groups). Base: all those who reported receiving the DLA (N=450), weighted.**

	18-29 %	30-49 %	50-64 %	Total Weighted %	Total sample (n)
<b>Care component</b>					
Yes	69%	69%	63%	66%	(300)
No	17%	20%	21%	20%	(87)
Don't know	15%	11%	16%	14%	(63)
<b>Mobility component</b>					
Yes	79%	78%	76%	77%	(347)
No	4%	12%	9%	10%	(39)
Don't know	18%	10%	16%	14%	(64)
Number interviewed	(108)	(162)	(180)	100%	(450)

Responses about the rates of benefit received reveals that it is relatively uncommon for visually impaired people to receive the higher rates for either the care or mobility components of the DLA. The mobility component is particularly worth looking at carefully because this has been the subject of some debate elsewhere (e.g. the 2007 'Taken for a ride' campaign). Of visually impaired people who recalled receiving the mobility component of the DLA, 25% received the higher rate (compared with 68% who received the lower rate and 7% who did not remember). This 25% equates to approximately 16% of registered visually impaired people between 18 and 64 years of age (11,000 people). This analysis is returned to below when we consider what are the associated factors with receiving DLA.

**Table 4. Rates of the care component of the DLA (by three age groups). Base: all those who reported receiving the care component of the DLA (N=300), weighted.**

	18-29 %	30-49 %	50-64 %	Total Weighted %	Total sample (n)
<b>Care component</b>					
Highest	12%	9%	14%	12%	(35)
Middle	39%	39%	40%	40%	(119)
Lowest	41%	47%	41%	44%	(130)
Don't know	8%	5%	4%	5%	(16)
Number interviewed	(74)	(112)	(114)	100%	(300)

**Table 5. Rates of the mobility component of the DLA (by three age groups). Base: all those who reported receiving the mobility component of the DLA (N=347), weighted.**

	18-29 %	30-49 %	50-64 %	Total Weighted %	Total sample (n)
<b>Mobility component</b>					
Higher	20%	21%	28%	25%	(81)
Lower	73%	72%	64%	68%	(241)
Don't know	7%	6%	8%	7%	(25)
Number interviewed	(85)	(126)	(136)	100%	(347)

**4.2 Advice when applying for the DLA and appeal**

All participants were asked if they had ever received advice on how to get DLA. Over half (55%) had received advice, while the remainder had not received advice or could not remember (42% and 3% respectively). Those who received DLA were considerably more likely to have received advice about how to get it, although this must be interpreted cautiously. More relevant here is to limit the analysis only to those who have *applied* for DLA. There is clear evidence that receiving advice is associated with successful application for DLA (60% of those who had successfully applied for DLA had received advice, compared to 38% of those who were unsuccessful). This gives a clear indication of the success of the advice given and the importance it has to those applying for DLA. However, there is no evidence that advice is associated with the rate of benefit received (i.e. higher or lower rates).

Those participants who recalled the component and rate of DLA they received were asked whether they got this benefit on first application or whether they had to appeal. Significant proportions of visually impaired people had to appeal (35% for care component and 25% for mobility component). This highlights the importance of appealing in the event of an unsuccessful application, and again, advice in this complex process may well be important.

### 4.3 Other factors associated with DLA benefit

It is useful to consider what are the factors which are associated with the receipt of DLA. Here we consider the participant characteristics of registration status and employment status as reported in Network 1000 Survey 2. We also considered difficulties with independent living skills as reported by the participants in Network 1000 Survey 1 (see Douglas et al, 2006, p.57).

**Table 6. Links between % DLA receipt and other participant characteristics (registration status, employment status, and reported difficulties with independent living skills). Base: all those eligible to apply for the DLA at time of interview (<65 years) (N=539), weighted.**

	Weighted % Receiving DLA	Total sample (n)
<b>Registration status (N=537)</b>		
Blind	95%	(274)
Partially sighted	74%	(248)
Unsure	33%	(15)
<b>Employment status (collapsed) (N=501)*</b>		
Employed	69%	(171)
**Not employed	93%	(330)
<b>ILS: Difficulty preparing a meal (N=539)</b>		
Yes	91%	(230)
No / Don't do this task	80%	(309)
<b>ILS: Difficulty with household cleaning (N=539)</b>		
Yes	91%	(225)
No / Don't do this task	80%	(314)
<b>ILS: Difficulty with personal care (N=539)</b>		
Yes	95%	(113)
No / Don't do this task	81%	(426)
<b>ILS: Difficulty getting about the home (N=539)</b>		
Yes	94%	(83)
No / Don't do this task	83%	(456)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>(539)</b>

\* Sample size is reduced in employment analysis because women aged 60+ are excluded from question about employment

\*\* 'Not employed' includes all participants who do not describe themselves as employed in some way and includes those who describe themselves as unemployed, long term sick and disabled, retired, and a student.

Key observations are presented in the table and summarised as follows:

- People registered blind are more likely to receive DLA than those registered partially sighted (95% and 74% respectively).
- People not employed (including people who describe themselves as unemployed, long-term sick and disabled, retired or a student) are more likely to

receive DLA than those employed (93% and 69% respectively). Those describing themselves as long-term sick and disabled are particularly likely to receive the DLA (97%).

- People who report difficulty with independent living skills (including preparing a meal, household cleaning, personal care, and getting about the home) are more likely to receive DLA than those who do not report difficulty.

To some extent these results follow the expected patterns: people with poorer vision and greater reported difficulties with independent living tasks are more likely to receive the DLA. However, it is important to reflect upon the purpose of the entitlement. The mobility component is intended to support those who ‘cannot walk or need help getting around’ (Directgov, 2007). Visually impaired people are unable to drive and are consequently excluded from the enormous mobility benefits this affords (and related social and economic benefits).

#### 4.4 DLA and people 65 years of age and over

As already outlined, the DLA can only be applied for by people under the age of 65 years, although it is possible to continue to receive the DLA after the age of 65. People 65 years or older can apply for the Attendance Allowance (discussed below) if the DLA is not already received. However, the DLA has higher rates than the Attendance Allowance (a maximum weekly rate of £105.70 compared with £62.25 at time of interview). Therefore, there are clear advantages to applying for the DLA if it is possible.

Of the sample, 177 participants (an estimated 17% of the registered visually impaired population) were 65 years and over but also described themselves as having a sight problem (and/or another disability) before the age of 65 years. This analysis also accounted for when DLA was introduced in April 1992.

**Table 7. Type of benefit received (DLA, Attendance Allowance, or neither). Base: all those eligible to apply for the DLA in the past but now 65+ years of age (N=177), weighted.**

	Total Weighted %	Total sample (n)
Receive DLA	53%	(117)
Receive Attendance Allowance	15%	(21)
Receive neither DLA or Attendance Allowance	31%	(36)
Unsure	1%	(3)
<b>Total interviewed</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(177)</b>

Approximately half (53%) of those who could have applied for DLA before they were 65 did so successfully. The remaining 47% either did not apply (in the majority of cases) or applied unsuccessfully. It is unclear whether those who never applied would have qualified for the DLA because we are unsure about the severity of their condition at that time. However, data suggests that many were registered blind or partially sighted at that time and many have since successfully applied for Attendance Allowance. This suggests a significant number have missed the

opportunity to apply for the DLA, and therefore missed the opportunity that entitlement affords.

## 5 Attendance Allowance

Attendance Allowance is ‘a tax-free benefit for people aged 65 or over who need help with personal care because they are physically or mentally disabled’ (Directgov, 2007). Of our sample, 226 of the participants were eligible to apply for Attendance Allowance at the time of the Network 1000 Survey 2. This includes all participants aged 65 or over but excludes those who already received the DLA. Accounting for the age profile of visually impaired people, this sub-sample represents approximately 70% of the registered visually impaired population (252,000 people).

**Table 8. Do you get Attendance Allowance? Base: all those eligible (i.e. aged 65+) to apply for Attendance Allowance who are not receiving the DLA (N=226), weighted.**

	65-74 %	75+ %	Total weighted %	Total sample (n)	Base Population (nearest 1K)
Yes	38%	65%	64%	(132)	161,000
No	55%	28%	29%	(79)	73,000
Don't know	7%	7%	7%	(15)	18,000
Number interviewed	(58)	(168)	-	(226)	252,000

We can estimate that 64% of registered visually impaired people who are eligible to apply for Attendance Allowance are currently receiving it. This is also linked with age – people 75 years of age and above are more likely to receive it than those between 65 and 74 (65% and 38% respectively). In terms of numbers, there are an estimated 252,000 people registered as blind or partially sighted in Great Britain eligible to apply (based upon estimates taken from official registration figures for England (Department of Health 2003), Scotland (Scottish Executive 2003), and Wales (National Assembly for Wales 2003)). This allows us to estimate that 73,000 visually impaired people are currently not receiving Attendance Allowance but are eligible to apply (and this figure does not include those who did not know whether they received Attendance Allowance).

Of those not receiving Attendance Allowance, the majority (74%) reported that they had never applied while a significant proportion had applied unsuccessfully (21%) or could not remember (5%).

### 5.1 Different rates of Attendance Allowance, appeals and advice received

There are two rates of Attendance Allowance, a higher rate (at time of interview £62.25 per week) and a lower rate (£41.65 per week). Of those receiving Attendance Allowance, just over half (53%) received the lower rate, whilst 29% received the higher rate. Eighteen per cent did not know which rate they received. As with general take up of Attendance Allowance, this is linked with age – people 75 years of

age and above are more likely to receive the higher rate than those between 65 and 74 (30% and 14% respectively).

Of those who did receive the allowance, 71% said that they received the rate upon their first application, compared with 23% who said that they had to appeal (6% did not know). This highlights the importance of appealing in the event of an unsuccessful application for Attendance Allowance. The figures allow us to estimate that 36,000 registered visually impaired people, the majority of whom are over the age of 75 years, would have had the complexity of having to apply *and* appeal before receiving the Attendance Allowance to which they are entitled.

**Table 9. Rates of the Attendance Allowance (AA) received and process of application (by two age groups). Base: all those who reported receiving Attendance Allowance (N=132), weighted.**

	65-74 %	75+ %	Total Weighted %	Total sample (n)
<b>AA Rate</b>				
Higher	14%	30%	29%	(34)
Lower	73%	53%	53%	(76)
Don't know	14%	18%	18%	(22)
<b>AA application</b>				
First application	68%	71%	71%	(90)
Appeal	32%	23%	23%	(36)
Don't know	0%	6%	6%	(6)
Number interviewed	(22)	(110)	100%	(132)

As with the DLA, all participants who were eligible to receive Attendance Allowance were then asked whether they had ever received any advice on how to get it, regardless of whether or not they were currently receiving it or had ever applied for it.

Interestingly, the results were similar to that for DLA; just under half (46%) of visually impaired adults who were eligible to apply for Attendance Allowance confirmed that they had received advice on applying for the benefit, with 47% stating that they had not (the remaining 7% were unsure). Those who received Attendance Allowance were considerably more likely to have received advice about how to get it, although this must be interpreted cautiously.

More relevant here is to limit the analysis only to those who have *applied* for the Attendance Allowance. There is clear evidence that receiving advice is associated with successful application for Attendance Allowance (59% of those who had successfully applied for Attendance Allowance had received advice, compared to 47% of those who were unsuccessful). This gives an indication of the success of the advice given and the importance it has to those applying for Attendance Allowance. However, there is no evidence that advice is associated with the rate of benefit received (ie. higher or lower rates).



## 5.2 Other factors associated with Attendance Allowance benefit

It is useful to consider what are the factors which are associated with the receipt of Attendance Allowance. Here we consider the participant characteristics of registration status and difficulties with independent living skills as reported by participants in Network 1000 Survey 1 (See Douglas et al, 2006, p57).

The results broadly follow the expected patterns: people with poorer vision and greater reported difficulties with independent living tasks are more likely to receive Attendance Allowance. Nevertheless, while this pattern is followed for most of the factors it is not particularly conclusive, and in the case of reported difficulty with 'personnel care' the pattern is reversed. This apparent fragility of association between the variables may be partly due to low numbers and the relative crudeness of the questions asked in the interview about the difficulties people experience with independent living activities. However, it may also suggest that successful application for Attendance Allowance may depend upon factors related to need and circumstances not examined in the interview or perhaps other relatively arbitrary factors such as how much support was received when completing the application form.

**Table 10. Links between % Attendance Allowance receipt and other participant characteristics (registration status and reported difficulties with independent living skills). Base: all those eligible to apply for the Attendance Allowance at time of interview (>64 years and not receiving DLA) (N=226), weighted.**

	Weighted % Receiving AA	Total sample (n)
<b>Registration status (N=226)</b>		
Blind	69%	(84)
Partially sighted	60%	(139)
Unsure	56%	(3)
<b>ILS: Difficulty preparing a meal (N=226)</b>		
Yes	69%	(72)
No / Don't do this task	61%	(154)
<b>ILS: Difficulty with household cleaning (N=226)</b>		
Yes	75%	(89)
No / Don't do this task	55%	(137)
<b>ILS: Difficulty with personal care (N=226)</b>		
Yes	56%	(32)
No / Don't do this task	65%	(194)
<b>ILS: Difficulty getting about the home (N=226)</b>		
Yes	71%	(33)
No / Don't do this task	62%	(193)
<b>TOTAL</b>	64%	(226)

## 6 Conclusions

In this final short section we reflect upon the key findings in an attempt to begin the debate about the implications of the research. We first consider how to best interpret the findings related to the take-up of DLA and Attendance Allowance, before considering the process of applying for these benefits (specifically findings related to 'appeal' and 'support').

Perhaps a key challenge in interpreting these results is having a position about the 'desired' or 'target' take-up of DLA and Attendance Allowance by people who are registered as blind and partially sighted. Should we expect that all of the population should be eligible for the relevant benefit? This is a difficult debate to unpick given that both benefits involve individual needs assessments of those who apply. Nevertheless, the mobility component of the DLA is an interesting example to explore. The mobility component is intended to support those who 'cannot walk or need help getting around' (Directgov, 2007). Visually impaired people are unable to drive and are consequently excluded from the enormous mobility benefits this affords (and related social and economic benefits). Findings from the Network 1000 Survey 1 showed that people commonly reported that not being able to drive and having to rely on others were key barriers to getting out more (Douglas et al, 2006, p60). It might therefore be argued that those who are registered as blind or partially sighted should *always* be entitled to the mobility component of the DLA. If we take this position it follows that it is unsatisfactory that approximately 14% of those eligible to apply do not receive the DLA, and many of those have applied unsuccessfully.

What is clearly unacceptable is the finding that many visually impaired people have had to appeal before eventually receiving their current rate of benefit (over 20% appealing for both Attendance Allowance and DLA). The process of appealing is no doubt time consuming and stressful, and given the high numbers of successful appeals, it suggests that the initial assessment of applications is both inefficient and insensitive.

Related to the appeals process is the apparent support visually impaired people needed during the application process for DLA or Attendance Allowance. It is encouraging for those giving this advice (e.g. friends, family, voluntary and statutory sector professionals) that this support results in increased likelihood of successful application. Nevertheless, a less positive finding is that people who do not receive advice are less likely to get the benefit when they apply. This suggests that the application process is not very accessible, particularly to those without support networks who may be most vulnerable.

Finally, more work is needed which compares the results in this report to research findings elsewhere – e.g. take-up of benefits by other disability groups, sighted people's perceptions of their financial situation. This work is planned and the findings should further support our understanding of the barriers faced by visually impaired people in their day to day life.

## 7 References

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (2003). *Registered Blind and Partially Sighted People: Year ending 31 March 2003*. London: Department of Health. ISBN: 1 84182 7983.

Directgov (2007).  
<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/FinancialSupport/index.htm>.  
Accessed 12 October 2007.

Douglas, G., Corcoran, C., Pavey, S. (2006). *Network 1000. Opinions and circumstances of visually impaired people in Great Britain: Report based on over 1000 interviews*. Birmingham: Visual Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research, School of Education, University of Birmingham (mimeo). ISBN 0704426048/9780704426047

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES (2003). *SSDA900.1: Disability Register 2001-02, Version: 1 Released: 29/05/2003*. Processed by the Local Government Data Unit - Wales.

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE (2003). *Registration of Blind and Partially Sighted Persons 2003*. Unpublished statistics.