

Descriptor language

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Introduction

To be able to make consistent and fair decisions on the choice of descriptor for every person applying for Adult Disability Payment (ADP), decision makers need to understand the language that is used in the descriptors.

Aids and appliances

“aid or appliance” refers to any object or device:

- which is necessary for the individual to be able to perform an activity and
- which improves, provides or replaces the individual’s impaired physical or mental function

This can include an object or device which a person without a disability might choose to use for the same function.

This can include something that helps to manage toilet needs such as the use of incontinence pads

This can include a prosthesis ¹

1 ADP regs, PART 1 Interpretation, Paragraph2(a),(b),(c),(d)

Aids describe devices that help with an individual’s functional ability. They do this by improving, providing or replacing the individual’s impaired physical or mental function. For example:

- a walking stick to help an individual to walk reliably
- grab rails to assist with balance
- liquid level indicators to help to pour liquid.

Appliances usually describe devices that replace a limb or function, such as:

- a leg prosthesis
- a wheelchair.

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

When considering an individual's ability to carry out an activity, a case manager will consider aids or appliances they normally use or using aids or appliances they could reasonably be expected to wear or use¹.

1 ADP reg 7 (1) (a)(b)

When considering whether an individual is able to use an aid or appliance, a case manager will consider:

- is the aid or appliance easily available
- is the aid or appliance cost effective

If the availability or cost of an aid or appliance could prevent an individual being able to use it, it would be unlikely to be considered an aid or appliance as the individual could not reasonably be expected to use such an aid for the purposes of ADP.

Example – a bath board that sits over an unadapted bath could be considered an aid as it is likely to be easily available and not expensive. An electric bath chair would be unlikely to be considered as it is expensive to purchase and install.

Completing the activity unaided

“unaided” means without either:

- the use or aid of an appliance
- supervision, prompting or assistance, ¹

1 ADP regs, PART 1 Interpretation, Paragraph 1

The completion of an activity unaided is covered by descriptor A in the daily living and mobility component activities.

Descriptor A may apply to an individual whose needs relating to their condition or disability do not meet the threshold to be awarded a higher descriptor for that activity.

If descriptor A is considered likely to apply to an individual it does not necessarily mean that they do not have needs relating to their condition or disability.

When writing a justification for a descriptor choice a case manager is advised to avoid language that may suggest that a person does not have needs relating to their condition or disability.

Assistance

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

“assistance” means physical intervention by another person and does not include speech,¹

1 ADP regs, PART 1 Interpretation, Paragraph 1

Assistance describes support that requires the presence and physical intervention of another person to help an individual to complete the activity. This may include the other person doing some, but not all, of the activity.

Example of an individual who needs assistance to wash:

Tessa injured her shoulders and arms in an accident and she has reduced strength and mobility. She is able to wash her upper body but requires someone to wash her hair and lower limbs. It is reasonable that the person assisting Tessa does not complete all of daily living component activity 4 as Tessa can wash her upper body herself.

Prompting

“prompting” means reminding, encouraging or explaining by another person,¹

1 ADP regs, PART 1 Interpretation, Paragraph 1

Prompting describes support provided by another person to:

- remind or encourage an individual to start or complete a task
- explain a task to an individual but not physically helping with it.

This may include the other person prompting for some, but not all of the activity.

Example of an individual who needs prompting to undertake a journey:

Stephen has agoraphobia and experiences symptoms of severe anxiety when leaving the house. When planning to leave the house his sister will support him by helping him with breathing exercises and distraction techniques. On leaving the house she accompanies Stephen for five minutes until his anxiety symptoms improve and he is able to complete the journey (mobility component activity 1) on his own.

Supervision

“supervision” means the continuous presence of another person for the purpose of ensuring an individual’s safety,¹

1 ADP regs, PART 1 Interpretation, Paragraph 1

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

Supervision describes the need for the continuous presence of another person for the purpose of ensuring an individual's safety. The person providing supervision should not be involved in the activity. They are present to reduce the risk of a safety incident occurring. Supervision should usually be required for the full duration of the activity.

Example of an individual who needs supervision to prepare a meal:

Hugo has a learning disability. He attended a cookery course and is able to follow a recipe to make simple dishes. Due to his learning disability he can become distracted and leave the gas cooker hob on. In the past he has burned things when he was distracted. It would be appropriate that another person is present when Hugo prepares food (daily living component activity 1), but is only there to supervise for safety reasons.

Needs

“needs” where used in relation to an aid or appliance, or supervision, prompting or assistance from another person, means that it is reasonably required, though it may not have been available or provided. ¹

1 ADP regs, PART 1 Interpretation, Paragraph 2

The reliability criteria should be considered in determining whether an individual ‘needs’ any of the following:

- an aid or appliance
- supervision
- prompting
- assistance from another person

An individual can be considered to need any of the above if they require it to be able to complete an activity¹:

- safely
- to an acceptable standard
- repeatedly
- in a reasonable time

1 ADP reg 7 (2) (b)

Where an individual is unable to complete an activity in accordance with the reliability criteria it is likely a higher descriptor may be more appropriate.

Glossary of descriptor language

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

Phrase	Meaning
Aid or appliance	Any object or device which the person needs to be able to perform an activity and improves, provides or replaces the individual's impaired physical or mental function.
Aided	With the use of an aid or appliance, or supervision, prompting or assistance.
Assistance	Physical intervention by another person and does not include speech.
Assistance Dog	A dog trained to guide or assist a person with sensory impairment.
Basic verbal information	Information in the person's own native language conveyed verbally in a single sentence.
Basic written information	Signs, symbols and dates written or printed in standard size text in the person's native language.
Bathe	Includes to get into or out of an unadapted bath and shower.
Communication support	Support from another person trained or experienced in communicating with people with specific communication needs, including interpreting verbal information into a non-verbal form and vice versa.
Complex budgeting decisions	Decisions involving calculating household and personal budgets; managing and paying bills and planning future purchases.
Complex verbal information	Information in the person's native language conveyed verbally in either more than one sentence or one complicated sentence.
Complex written information	More than one sentence of written or printed standard size text in person's native language.
Cook	Heat food at or above waist height.
Dress	Includes put on socks and shoes.
Engage socially	Interact with others in a contextually and socially appropriate manner, understand body language and establish relationships.
Follow the route of a journey	Navigate and make their way along a planned route to a planned destination.
Manage incontinence	Manage involuntary evacuation of the bowel or bladder, including use a collecting device or self-catheterisation and clean oneself afterwards.

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

Phrase	Meaning
Manage medication or therapy	Take medication or undertake therapy, where a failure to do so is likely to result in a deterioration in person's health.
Medication	Medication to be taken at home which is prescribed by a registered doctor, nurse, pharmacist or health professional registered by the Health and Care Professions Council.
Monitor a health condition	Detect significant changes in the person's health condition which are likely to lead to a deterioration in the person's health; and take action advised by a registered doctor, registered nurse or health professional who is regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council without which person's health is likely to deteriorate.
Needs	Where used in relation to an aid or appliance, or supervision, prompting or assistance from another person, means that it is reasonably required, though it may not have been available or provided
Orientation aid	A specialist aid designed to assist disabled people to follow a route safely.
Prepare	In the context of food, means make food ready for cooking or eating.
Prompting	Reminding, encouraging or explaining by another person.
Psychological distress	Psychological distress related to an enduring mental health condition or an intellectual or cognitive impairment.
Read	Includes read signs, symbols and words, but does not include read Braille.
Simple budgeting decisions	Decisions involving calculating the costs of goods and calculating change required after a purchase.
Simple meal	A cooked one-course meal for one using fresh ingredients.
Social support	Support from a person trained or experienced in assisting people to engage in social situations.
Stand	Stand upright with at least one biological foot on the ground.
Supervision	The continuous presence of another person for the purpose of ensuring person's safety.
Take nutrition	Cut food into pieces, convey food and drink to one's mouth and chew and swallow food or drink; or take nutrition by using a therapeutic source.

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

Phrase	Meaning
Therapeutic source	Parenteral or enteral tube feeding, using a rate-limiting device such as a delivery system or feed pump.
Therapy	Therapy to be undertaken at home which is prescribed or recommended by a registered doctor, nurse, pharmacist or health professional who is regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council but does not include taking or applying, or otherwise receiving or administering, medication (whether orally, topically or by any other means), or any action which, in the person's case, falls within the definition of "monitor a health condition".
Toilet needs	Getting on and off an unadapted toilet, evacuating the bladder and bowel and cleaning oneself afterwards.
Unaided	Without the use of an aid or appliance or supervision, prompting or assistance.
Undress	Includes take off socks and shoes.

End of chapter