

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Assessment

You will usually have to have an assessment to complete your Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application. This is an opportunity for you to talk about how your condition affects you – it is not a diagnosis of your condition or a medical examination.

It is important that you prepare for your assessment because it is how the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) decides whether or not you can get PIP.

Assessments are carried out by a health professional who will write a report and send it to the DWP, but they are not usually learning disability experts.

You should not assume that they understand what your condition is and how it affects you. You should not assume that they know anything about you. They may not have read your PIP application before the assessment, so answer questions fully and make sure that you fully explain how your condition affects your daily living and mobility.

Getting to your assessment

The cost of the journey from your home to the assessment centre (and back again), including parking and fuel can be reimbursed. If you travel by car, the cost of parking can be reimbursed and **25p per mile** can be paid towards the cost of fuel.

If you take someone with you to the assessment, their travel costs can also be reimbursed, but only if they travel with you.

You can't get your travel expenses paid before the assessment and you can't be reimbursed for things like meals and loss of earnings.

If you travel by taxi, you must get the assessment centre to approve the use of the taxi **before** your assessment. If you don't, they may not reimburse the fare.

Ask the receptionist at the assessment centre for a travel expenses claim form and pre-paid self-addressed envelope. Include all your tickets and receipts with the claim form.

Talking about how your condition affects you

You should be prepared to talk about how your condition affects you, even if you've already mentioned it on your PIP claim form.

It can be hard, but it will really help if you can talk about:

- the kind of things you have difficulty with, or can't do at all (e.g. remembering to go to appointments or to take your medication, preparing food, self-care such as washing and bathing or dressing yourself, or difficulties that you have communicating)
- how your condition affects you from day to day
- what a bad day is like for you (e.g. "On a bad day, I'm so depressed I can't concentrate on anything")
- the support you need even if you don't get it now (e.g. you need someone to go through your post because you find it difficult to understand what letters say).

It's a good idea to take a copy of your PIP claim form and any relevant medical evidence with you. That way you can refer to it in the assessment and make sure you tell the assessor everything you want them to know about your condition.

The Citizens Advice website have a useful help sheet of dos and don'ts during the assessment which you can print off and take with you on the day.

If you can do some activities sometimes, but not safely or repeatedly and not within a reasonable timescale or in an acceptable manner, tell the assessor.

Don't let the assessor rush you and try not to just answer 'yes' or 'no' to their questions. Always try to explain if something takes you a long time to do, or you can do it but it is very difficult for you to do. For example, you can make a meal for yourself but it would take you several hours and you would need to be watched whilst doing so, and shown how to do certain things (such as using the oven or an electric mixer).

You should also tell the assessor how you find interacting and communicating with other people. For example, you are able to engage with others for a few minutes before you become overwhelmed and need to go somewhere quiet for a longer period before you are able to cope with any further social interactions.

What you say and do during the assessment

The assessor will use the information you gave on your PIP claim form but also draw opinions from what you say and do on the day. For example, they might ask you how you got to the assessment centre. If you say you came on the bus on your own, they'll make a note that you can travel alone on public transport.

If your condition is physical (or partially physical) you might also be asked to carry out some physical tasks during the assessment. Don't feel you have to do things in the assessment that you wouldn't normally be able to do. If you do them on assessment day, the assessor may think you can always do them.

If you're not comfortable with something - say so.

Take someone with you for support

It is a good idea to have someone who knows you well at the assessment with you. You can take someone with you into the actual assessment if they're 16 or over, such as a friend, relative or carer. They can provide you with moral support but also if you want, they can take part in discussions and take notes for you. They may be able to offer the assessor a different insight into how your condition affects you and the type of support that you need.

If you wish to have someone with you at the assessment you should include this person's details on your PIP claim form. If you've already sent the form, phone the assessment centre and tell them you will have someone with you. Try to do this at least 2 working days in advance of your assessment.

Ask for an adjustment

Check with the assessment centre to make sure it has everything you need (if it doesn't, you can ask for it). This can help make you feel more comfortable on the day. For example, ask:

- if you'll have to go upstairs, and if there's a lift that can accommodate a wheelchair if you need one
- how roomy the centre is if you get anxious in enclosed spaces - if the rooms or corridors are small, tell them this could make you anxious and see what they can offer you
- for an interpreter or signer if you need one - do this at least 2 working days before your assessment so they have time to organise it
- for the person carrying out the assessment to be the same gender as you, if that's important to you
- if you can make an audio recording of the assessment - you must contact the assessment centre at least three days before the date of the assessment to request this and ask for their rules on recording. Some assessment centres will now provide recordings for you if requested. Otherwise you will need permission to record the assessment and will

have to provide two identical copies of the assessment- one to be given to the assessor. You are not allowed to use PCs, laptops, tablets, smartphones or MP3 players to make recordings.

To ask for an adjustment, such as an interpreter, contact the assessment centre using the number on your appointment letter.

If you ask for an adjustment and it's not made, this could be discrimination - contact the Learning Disability Helpline for more help (0808 808 1111).

Changing the venue

If the location of your assessment is more than 90 minutes away by public transport you may be offered an alternative location or home visit.

You might be offered a home visit instead of having to go to an assessment centre, if your GP normally visits you in your home. Whilst it may be difficult or distressing for you to leave your home, it can be helpful to go to the assessment centre rather than having an assessment at your home as it gives the medical assessor a better idea of the difficulties that you face outside of your home environment.

However, if you want a home assessment you will need a doctor's letter confirming that you're unable to attend an assessment centre and need a home visit. Try to get this to Atos or Capita as soon as possible, or even send it in with the PIP claim form so that arrangements for a home assessment can be put in place.

You must go to your assessment

You must go to your assessment otherwise your PIP claim may be rejected and you'll have to start the application process all over again.

Contact the assessment centre straight away if you can't make your appointment or if you've already missed it. If you've a good reason for not going they may reschedule it.

The number to contact is on your appointment letter.

There are no rules on what is a good reason for missing an assessment but the DWP should take into account your health and things that may affect you like a family bereavement.

If your PIP claim is rejected because you missed your assessment, you can ask the DWP to change this decision. You must have been given at least 7 days' written notice of the assessment date (unless you agreed to a shorter notice period).

The length of the assessment

The length of an assessment varies from person to person.

On average, they last about **45 minutes** but they could be longer (up to an hour and a half) or shorter.

The healthcare professional will be observing what you can and can't do from when you arrive in the car park or from public transport.

We hope that you have found this factsheet useful. Whilst you are here, we have a small favour to ask. More people are using our service than ever before. We can't keep up with demand. We don't want to turn people away, and we want to keep on developing more information resources like this factsheet, but we don't have enough money to expand. So you can see why we need to ask for your help. We know that our information and advice can make a real difference to the quality of life of the people we support. If people using our service could help to support us, our future would be much more secure.

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