

PIP FACE TO FACE ASSESSMENTS

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers



Most disabled young people now have to attend a face to face assessment as part of their claim for Personal Independence Payment. The assessor will want to see for themselves how what is written on the PIP form matches up with the young person they are meeting.

This can feel very overwhelming to a disabled young person but there is a lot you can do to make it a fair and a positive experience.

A young person should always have someone to support them and may need help to think about who's the best person to ask. It needs to be someone who is both 'on their side' and who understands how their disability impacts on everyday life. This can be a friend, support worker, or health, education or social care practitioner. It's usually most likely to be their parent or carer.

Be prepared

Start keeping a diary: This will help a young person illustrate what they can and can't do, and the help they need.

Read through your PIP claim forms again. A young person may not have had much involvement in writing their PIP claim and even if they have, the last time either of you looked at it will have been months ago.

Spend a bit of time rehearsing: take turns asking and answering 'open' questions. For example, 'Can you tell me about how you would make a cup of tea?' or 'How did you get here today?' but don't practise too much!

Agree how your young person will signal that they want you to speak for them. For whatever reason a young person may not always be able to find their voice, so agree a way of signalling when they'd like you to speak for them.

If you need to travel to your assessment, plan your journey. Assessments may happen at your home or at an assessment centre. If a young person is very anxious it may even help to practise the journey and 'stake out' the building a few days before. Check for accessibility.

Keep travel receipts or note mileage: Travel expenses will be reimbursed. Parking charges are covered too.

On the day

Arrive in good time. Make sure you are both feeling as comfortable and calm as possible.

As you introduce yourselves, ask the assessor's name and a little about their experience: for most assessors this is a part time role, so you could ask them about their main job or whether they, for example, have experience of learning disability, autism or visual impairment?

Make sure the assessor understands what you have both agreed if your son or daughter needs you to answer for them. Otherwise it may look like you are 'taking over' and the assessor may try to close you down.

Tell the assessor if you intend to make a record of what is said at the meeting. You are allowed to do this but you have to give a copy to the assessor at the time, so tell them well in advance.



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If a young person struggles to 'follow' the thread of a conversation or is likely to misunderstand what other people say, you will need to act if you notice this is happening.

Doing this in a clear, positive way - repeating and phrasing questions more simply, using words they know, checking back they really understood the question and everyone else has understood what the young person is trying to explain, will help the assessor spot how easily things can go wrong.

Beware of assessors who ask 'closed' questions. In fact, discourage a young person from using a straightforward 'yes' or 'no' because you or they need the opportunity to qualify any answer. For example to 'Can you cook a simple meal?' replying 'I have only ever made beans on toast, and even then I burnt the beans' says far more than 'Yes'.

Add to and comment on what a young person says if you feel their own perception of their abilities is unrealistic or they are saying things just to impress.

Agree beforehand how a young person will tell you or signal that they need to stop.

Be aware that the assessor will observe and note everything: from whether a young person lets a door go in your face as you come into the room, to how they put their coat on.

If there is any sort of physical examination, a young person should not feel pushed to do more than they can safely manage or anything that is painful. Agree beforehand how they will tell you or signal that they cannot carry on.

Ask for a break, if a young person needs one. It's important the assessment goes at a comfortable pace.

Towards the end of the assessment, the assessor should give a summary of their findings and ask if there are any questions or if there is anything more you would like to add. Later they will write a report and send it to the DWP.

Afterwards

Many parents and young people tell us their face to face meeting was a positive experience. But this may not be your experience.

If there is anything about the process or the assessor's manner that you feel was unfair, if reasonable adjustments weren't in place, if the assessor just asked irrelevant or 'closed questions', just accepted 'yes' or 'no' without asking any more curious questions, if you felt there was any coercion or coaxing, make a written note of your concerns as soon as you can.

The decision about whether to award PIP, at what rates and for how long is made by the DWP. You will be contacted by letter about the outcome.

Ask about

- **SENDIASS** - Amaze provides the **Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service** for East Sussex. We provide help around health, education, benefits and social care issues for families with children and young people with SEN and disabilities. Our helpline workers can give you advice around making PIP claims, and let you know where you can go to get further help. Please note, we cannot offer one-to-one help with filling out PIP forms. Call **Amaze** on **01273 772289** or email **helplineeastsussex@amazesussex.org.uk**
- **Welfare Benefits Project** - If you live in Eastbourne, Hailsham, Seaford, Hastings and Rother you can get advice and help from the Welfare Benefits Project on **0333 344 0681**



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- **Newhaven Advice Hub and Information Centre** - If you live in the Lewes district you can contact the Newhaven Advice Hub and Information Centre for benefits advice on **01273 517375**
- **Possability People** - **Possability People** (formerly The Fed Centre for Independent Living) can give disabled adults and parent carers advice and information around making claims for disability benefits. Call **01424 234460**
- **General benefits and financial advice** - **Citizen's Advice Bureau** can give help with benefits claims. Call **03444 111 444** or visit www.citizensadviceeastsussex.org.uk/. **Money Advice Plus** can offer advice and support with debt and benefits. Call **01323 635 999** or visit www.moneyadviceplus.org.uk
- **PIP enquiry line** - **0800 1221 4433** for general help and advice on PIP
- **Help with transport** - You may be able to get a Blue Badge or a disabled parking bay outside your house. Contact the **Blue Badge helpline** on **01323 464244**, or to enquire about disabled parking bays call the **Highways team** on **0345 60 80 193**. You may use the mobility component of your PIP or DLA award to lease a car or scooter via the **Motability** scheme. Call **0300 456 4566** or visit www.motability.co.uk

Further reading and useful links

- **What is PIP? and Tips for Claiming PIP** – Download these companion Amaze fact sheets at www.amazesussex.org.uk/resources/publications/fact-sheets
- **PIP overview** - Personal Independence Payment info on government's website: www.gov.uk/pip/overview
- **Through the Maze** - Amaze's handbook for parent carers of children with SEN and disabilities (0-14) has extensive information on PIP and other benefits. Request a copy via our helpline on **01273 772289**.
- **Personal Independence Payment: guide to making a claim** - Helpful guide from Disability Rights UK which includes the scoring system for the 12 activities: www.disabilityrightsuk.org/personal-independence-payment-pip

