

PIP FACE TO FACE ASSESSMENTS

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



Most claimants 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 person they are meeting.

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

You should always **take someone with you**. Think about who's the best person to ask. It needs to be someone who is both 'on your side' and who understands how your disability impacts on everyday life. This can be a friend, support worker, social care practitioner or someone in your family.

Be prepared

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

Read through your PIP claim forms again. Get help to do this. The last time you looked at it will have been months ago. Remind yourself what was written.

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! Explain what is difficult and how you manage (or don't!)

Agree how you will signal if you want the person supporting you to speak up. For whatever reason you may not be able to find your voice, so agree a way of signalling when you need help, or don't understand and want them to answer for you.

If you need to travel to your assessment, plan your journey. Assessments may happen at your home or at an assessment centre. If you are anxious it may 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

Take a photocopy of your appointment letter, as well as the original letter with you. This letter says you take someone to speak for you. You may be asked to hand over this letter. If you have another copy, it's easier to show the assessor that you know it is OK for your supporter to do the talking.

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

Ask for two copies of the feedback form. It's worth filling in one immediately after the face to face meeting, and keeping another to fill in later if you are unhappy with the health care professional's report!

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 a note of these details.



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Make sure the assessor understands what you have both agreed if you need your supporter to speak for you. Otherwise it may look like they are 'taking over' and the assessor may try to close them 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.

If you still don't have the feedback forms, ask for them now!

If you don't understand a question, feel confused, or think the assessor's pace is too fast, ask your supporter to help. Get them to do this in a clear, positive way, modelling to the assessor what helps you best. This might be repeating and phrasing questions more simply, using words you know, checking back that you really understand the question and haven't forgotten anything and that the assessor really understands the points you are making. This will help the assessor spot how easily things can go wrong. And help avoid any misunderstandings.

Beware of assessors who ask 'closed' questions. In fact, avoid just saying a straightforward 'yes' or 'no' because you 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'.

Encourage your supporter to add to and comment on what you say, if they feel you aren't saying enough, you are being unrealistic or are saying things just to impress.

Be aware that the assessor will observe and note everything: from whether you can sit comfortably to how you put your coat on.

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

Ask for a break, if you need 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. So if you think you've missed anything out, say so now.

Afterwards

Many people tell us their face to face meeting was a positive experience. But this may not be your experience. However you feel, fill in the feedback forms.

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** - If you are under 25, 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



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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 sendiass@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**
- **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 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 <https://amazesussex.org.uk/resources/fact-sheets/>
- **PIP overview** - Personal Independence Payment info on government's website: www.gov.uk/pip/overview
- **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

