



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

# Personal Independence Payment (PIP) handbook

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# Contents

Overview.....	6
Conditions of entitlement .....	7
Required period condition.....	7
Residence and presence.....	7
Age .....	7
Overlapping benefits.....	8
Assessment criteria .....	9
The activities .....	9
Guidance on applying the criteria .....	10
Reliability .....	11
Time periods, fluctuations and descriptor choices .....	11
Risk and safety .....	12
Support for other people .....	12
Aids and appliances .....	13
Assistance dogs .....	14
‘Unaided’ .....	14
Moving around.....	14
Moving around activity principles.....	15
Access to other benefits and services .....	16
Benefits .....	16
VAT reductions .....	17
Contracts of employment and working hours.....	17
Childcare and parenting .....	17
Health .....	17
Adult social care .....	17
Schools and finance .....	17

Voting .....	18
Transport .....	18
Vehicles .....	18
Concessionary travel and the Blue Badge scheme .....	18
More information about financial help for disabled people .....	18
PIP and existing DLA claimants .....	20
From October 2013 .....	20
From July 2015 .....	20
Important information about existing DLA claimants and PIP .....	20
When DLA ends .....	21
DLA claimants who have turned 65 after 8 April 2013 .....	21
Choosing to claim PIP before invited to do so by DWP .....	22
How to make a claim .....	23
Preparing for the telephone call .....	23
The telephone call – what to expect .....	24
Exceptions within the claim process .....	24
People whose first language is not English .....	24
Claimants who are unable to manage their own affairs .....	24
Paper claims .....	25
What happens next .....	25
Completing the ‘How your disability affects you’ form .....	26
About the questions in the form .....	26
Help with completing the ‘How your disability affects you’ form .....	27
Sending in additional supporting evidence .....	27
Information that will help us to assess a PIP claim .....	28
Information that does not help us to assess a PIP claim .....	29
Assessment process and assessment providers .....	30
Face-to-face consultation .....	30
The consultation .....	31

The assessment providers: Independent Assessment Services and Capita Health and Wellbeing.....	31
If a claimant reports a change of address that may include a change of assessment provider .....	32
Assessment providers' role.....	32
Independent Assessment Services .....	32
Capita Health and Wellbeing .....	33
Managing performance.....	34
Decision and payment.....	35
PIP decision .....	35
PIP award and reviews .....	35
Telling the claimant about the PIP decision.....	36
PIP payments .....	36
Changes in circumstances.....	37
How to report a change .....	37
Changes the claimant needs to report.....	37
Changes to daily living or mobility needs.....	37
Hospitals or similar institutions .....	38
Care homes .....	38
Linked spells in hospital and a care home.....	38
Imprisonment or claimant held in legal custody .....	38
Detained in legal custody .....	38
Leaving the country or planning to leave the country for a period of more than 4 weeks, even if this is a holiday .....	39
Change of name.....	39
Change of account PIP is paid into.....	39
Change of person acting for the claimant, by this we mean an appointee or someone with power of attorney for the claimant .....	39
Change of address .....	39
Change of doctor or healthcare professional.....	40
Changes the claimant does not need to report.....	40
Special rules for terminal illness .....	41
How to claim under the special rules for terminal illness .....	41
Preparing for the telephone call.....	41

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) handbook

The telephone call – what to expect .....	42
DS1500 report.....	42
Assessment process .....	43
PIP and existing DLA special rules claimants.....	43
Supporting young people to claim .....	44
Preparing young people for claiming PIP.....	44
When a young person makes a claim.....	45
Appointees .....	45
Disputes.....	46
PIP disputes .....	46

# Overview

This handbook is for individuals and organisations that support people who may be entitled to Personal Independence Payment (PIP). It provides detailed guidance about PIP and lists other sources of help.

Information for people who currently claim PIP or who would like to claim it is available at [www.gov.uk/pip](http://www.gov.uk/pip).

# Conditions of entitlement

## Required period condition

In order to be entitled to PIP, claimants have to satisfy a qualifying period of 3 months and a prospective test of 9 months. These 2 conditions are referred to as the 'required period condition' and help establish that the health condition or disability is likely to be long term.

The qualifying period establishes that the claimant has had the needs for a certain period of time before entitlement can start, and the prospective test shows they are likely to have continuing needs for a specified period after the award starts.

The 3-month qualifying period and the 9-month prospective test align the PIP definition of a long-term health condition or disability with that generally used by the [Equality Act 2010 and its published guidance](#).

Claims can be submitted during the qualifying period but entitlement to PIP cannot start until the qualifying period has been satisfied.

## Residence and presence

Claimants will need to be present in Great Britain, habitually resident in the United Kingdom (UK), Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man and not subject to immigration control.

They must have been present for at least 104 weeks out of the last 156 weeks in Great Britain.

We treat serving members of Her Majesty's Forces and their families as habitually resident in Great Britain when serving and stationed abroad.

A temporary absence abroad for up to 13 weeks may be allowed, or up to 26 weeks if the absence is specifically for medical treatment. The claimant should notify us if they are planning to go abroad for 4 weeks or more.

The PIP residence and presence conditions are the same as those for [Disability Living Allowance \(DLA\)](#), [Attendance Allowance](#) and [Carer's Allowance](#).

## Age

Children under the age of 16 are not eligible to claim PIP – they can claim DLA and continue to do so until they are 16.

Read more about [supporting young people to claim](#) in this guide.

PIP cannot be claimed from State Pension age except in certain circumstances where there has been a recent award of benefit. Entitlement can continue after State

Pension age if a claimant is already in receipt of PIP when they reach this age, providing they continue to satisfy the conditions of entitlement.

## Overlapping benefits

The PIP mobility component overlaps with [War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement](#).

The PIP daily living component overlaps with [Constant Attendance Allowance](#).

The overlapping benefit is always paid in full and PIP is reduced by the amount of the overlapping benefit.

Those receiving [Armed Forces Independence Payment](#) will not be entitled to claim PIP.

# Assessment criteria

PIP has 2 components – daily living and mobility. Both components are payable at a standard or enhanced rate, depending on the claimant's needs.

To determine entitlement to the 2 components and the level of payment, individuals are assessed on their ability to complete a number of key everyday activities. For example, this could be relating to their ability to dress and undress, make budgeting decisions, communicate and getting around.

Within each activity there are a number of descriptors, each representing a varying level of ability to carry out the activity.

Individuals will receive a point score for each activity, depending on how well they can carry them out and the help they need to do so.

The total scores will determine whether a component is payable, and if so, whether at the 'standard' or 'enhanced' rate. The entitlement threshold for each component is 8 points for the standard rate and 12 points for enhanced.

## The activities

There is a total of 12 activities.

Daily living activities are:

- preparing food
- taking nutrition
- managing therapy or monitoring a health condition
- washing and bathing
- managing toilet needs or incontinence
- dressing and undressing
- communicating verbally
- reading and understanding signs, symbols and words
- engaging with other people face to face
- making budgeting decisions

Mobility activities are:

- planning and following journeys
- moving around

Read the full details in section 2.3 and 2.4 of the [PIP assessment guide](#).

## Guidance on applying the criteria

As the assessment will consider a claimant's ability to carry out the activities, an inability to carry out activities must be due to the effects of a health condition or disability and not simply a matter of preference by the claimant.

Health conditions or disabilities may be physical, sensory, mental, intellectual or cognitive, or any combination of these.

The impact of all impairment types can be taken into account across the activities, where they affect a claimant's ability to complete the activity and achieve the stated outcome.

For example, a claimant with a severe depressive illness may physically be able to prepare food and feed himself, but may lack the motivation to do so, to the extent of needing prompting from another person to carry out the task.

However, some activities focus on specific elements of function. For example, moving around relates to the physical aspects of walking, whilst engaging with other people face to face relates to the mental, cognitive or intellectual aspects of interacting with other people.

As the assessment principles consider the impact of a claimant's condition on their ability to live independently and not the condition itself, claimants with the same condition may get different outcomes. The outcome is based on an independent assessment and all available evidence.

Evidence may come from a variety of sources, including:

- the ['How your disability affects you'](#) form
- a factual report from the claimant's GP
- evidence from other health professionals involved in the claimant's care
- any other evidence from other professionals involved in supporting the claimant, for example social worker or support worker

Read more about [completing the 'How your disability affects you' form](#) in this guide. This includes examples of supporting evidence.

Sometimes we can make a decision by using just the written information a claimant has given us, but some people will be asked to attend a face-to-face consultation with a health professional.

The most appropriate descriptor for each activity will be selected, based on the assessment and any available evidence.

[Regular reviews](#) will take place during the lifecycle of a PIP award to ensure that the award still meets the claimant's support needs.

## Reliability

For a descriptor to apply to a claimant they must be able to reliably complete the activity as described in the descriptor. Reliably means whether they can do so:

- safely – in a manner unlikely to cause harm to themselves or to another person, either during or after completion of the activity
- to an acceptable standard
- repeatedly – as often as is reasonably required, and
- in a reasonable time period – no more than twice as long as the maximum period that a non-disabled person would normally take to complete that activity

We recognise that the reliability criteria are a key protection for claimants. Also, as a result of feedback received during the [consultation on the PIP 'moving around' criteria](#) (held between 24 June and 5 August 2013), measures are in place to ensure the reliability criteria are properly and consistently applied as part of the assessment.

Read the [Social Security \(Personal Independence Payment\) Regulations 2013](#).

## Time periods, fluctuations and descriptor choices

The impact of most health conditions and disabilities can fluctuate. Taking a view of ability over a longer period of time helps to iron out fluctuations and presents a more coherent picture of disabling effects. The descriptor choice should be based on consideration of a 12-month period. This should correlate with the qualifying period and prospective test for the benefit – so in the 3 months before the assessment and in the 9 months after.

A scoring descriptor can apply to claimants in an activity where their impairments affect their ability to complete an activity, at some stage of the day, on more than 50% of days in the 12-month period. The following rules apply.

If one descriptor in an activity is likely to apply on more than 50% of the days in the 12-month period – the activity can be completed in the way described on more than 50% of days – then that descriptor should be chosen.

If more than one descriptor in an activity is likely to apply on more than 50% of the days in the period, then the descriptor chosen should be the one that is the highest scoring. For example, if D applies on 100% of days and E on 70% of days, D is selected.

Where one single descriptor in an activity is likely to not be satisfied on more than 50% of days, but a number of different scoring descriptors in that activity together are likely to be satisfied on more than 50% of days, the descriptor likely to be

satisfied for the highest proportion of the time should be selected. For example if B applies on 20% of days, D on 30% of days and E on 5% of days, D is selected.

If someone is awaiting treatment or further intervention, it can be difficult to accurately predict its level of success or whether it will even occur. Descriptor choices should therefore be based on the likely continuing impact of the health condition or disability as if any treatment or further intervention has not occurred.

The timing of the activity should be considered, and whether the claimant can carry out the activity when they need to do it. For example, if taking medication in the morning (such as painkillers) allows the individual to carry out activities reliably when they need to throughout the day, although they would be unable to carry out the activity for part of the day (before they take the painkillers), the individual can still complete the activity reliably when required and therefore should receive the appropriate descriptor.

## Risk and safety

When considering whether an activity can be carried out safely it is important to consider both the likelihood of the harm occurring and the severity of the consequences.

For example, an activity could be deemed unsafe if the harm caused would be very severe, even though the likelihood of the harm occurring is low.

If the harm caused would be less severe, then the likelihood of that harm occurring would need to be higher for the activity to be deemed unsafe.

## Support for other people

The assessment takes into account where claimants need the support of another person or persons to carry out an activity – including where that person has to carry out the activity for them in its entirety. The criteria refer to various types of support.

Supervision is a need for the continuous presence of another person to ensure the claimant's safety to avoid harm occurring to the claimant or another person. We will consider the likelihood of the harm occurring and the severity of the harm were it to occur in the absence of such supervision. For example, an activity without supervision could be deemed unsafe if the harm caused would be very severe, even though the likelihood of the harm occurring is low. If the harm caused would be less severe, then the likelihood of that harm occurring would need to be higher for the activity to be deemed unsafe without supervision. To apply, supervision must be required for the full duration of the activity.

Prompting is support provided by another person by reminding or encouraging a claimant to carry out or complete a task, or explaining it to them, but not physically helping them. To apply, this only needs to be required for part of the activity.

Assistance is support that requires the presence and physical intervention of another person to help the claimant complete the activity - including doing some but not all of the activity in question. To apply, assistance only needs to be required for part of the activity.

A number of descriptors also refer to another person being required to complete the activity in its entirety. These descriptors would apply where the claimant is unable to reliably carry out any of the activity for themselves, even with help.

Activities 7 and 9 refer to communication support and social support, which are defined in part 2 of the [PIP assessment guide](#).

The assessment does not look at the availability of help from another person but rather at the underlying need. As such claimants may be awarded descriptors for needing help even if it is not currently available to them – for example, if they currently manage in a way that is not reliable, but could do so with some help.

## Aids and appliances

The assessment takes into account where individuals need aids and appliances to complete activities. In this context:

- aids are devices that help a performance of a function, for example, walking sticks or magnifying glasses
- appliances are devices that provide or replace a missing function, for example artificial limbs, collecting devices (stomas) and wheelchairs

The assessment will take into account aids and appliances that individuals normally use and low-cost, commonly available ones which someone with their impairment might reasonably be expected to use, even if they are not normally used.

This may include mainstream items used by people without an impairment, where the claimant is completely reliant on them to complete the activity. For example, this would include an electric can-opener where the claimant could not open a can without one, not simply where they prefer to use one.

Activity 11 refers specifically to 'orientation aids', which are defined as specialist aids designed to assist disabled people in following a route.

Claimants who use or could reasonably be expected to use aids to carry out an activity will generally receive a higher scoring descriptor than those who can carry out the activity unaided.

When considering whether it is reasonable to expect a claimant to use an aid or appliance that they do not usually use, the health professional will consider whether:

- the claimant possesses the aid or appliance
- the aid or appliance is widely available
- the aid or appliance is available at no or low cost

- it is medically reasonable for them to use an aid or appliance
- the claimant was given specific medical advice about managing their condition, and it is reasonable for them to continue following that advice
- the claimant would be advised to use an aid or appliance if they sought advice from a professional such as a GP or occupational therapist
- the claimant is able to use and store the aid or appliance
- the claimant is unable to use an aid or appliance due to their physical or mental health condition – for example, they are unable to use a walking stick or manual wheelchair due to a cardiac, respiratory, upper body or mental health condition

## Assistance dogs

We recognise that guide, hearing and dual sensory dogs are not ‘aids’, but have attempted to ensure that the descriptors capture the additional barriers and costs of needing such a dog where they are required to enable claimants to follow a route safely. Activity 11 therefore explicitly refers to the use of an ‘assistance dog’. Assistance dogs are defined as dogs trained to help people with sensory impairments.

## ‘Unaided’

Within the assessment criteria, the ability to perform an activity ‘unaided’ means without the use of aids or appliances and without help from another person.

## Moving around

Activity 12 considers a claimant’s physical ability to move around without severe discomfort such as breathlessness, pain or fatigue. This includes the ability to stand and then move up to 20 metres, up to 50 metres, up to 200 metres and over 200 metres.

This activity should be judged in relation to a type of surface normally expected out of doors such as pavements and includes the consideration of kerbs.

Standing means to stand upright with at least one biological foot on the ground with or without suitable aids and appliances. A prosthesis is considered an appliance, so a claimant with a unilateral prosthetic leg may be able to stand whereas a bilateral lower limb amputee would be unable to stand under this definition.

‘Stand and then move’ requires an individual to stand and then move independently while remaining standing. It does not include a claimant who stands and then transfers into a wheelchair or similar device. Individuals who require a wheelchair or similar device to move a distance should not be considered able to stand and move that distance.

Aids or appliances that a person uses to support their physical mobility may include walking sticks, crutches and prostheses.

When assessing whether the activity can be carried out reliably, consideration should be given to the manner in which they do so. This includes, but is not limited to, their gait, their speed, the risk of falls and symptoms or side effects that could affect their ability to complete the activity, such as pain, breathlessness and fatigue. However, for this activity this only refers to the physical act of moving. For example, danger awareness is considered as part of activity 11.

## **Moving around activity principles**

Individuals who cannot stand and then move 20 metres will receive 12 points and therefore the enhanced rate of the mobility component regardless of whether they need an aid or appliance.

However, as with all of the activities in the assessment, in order for a descriptor to apply, consideration must be given to the manner in which the claimant can complete the activity.

This means that if individuals can stand and then move more than 20 metres, but cannot do so in a safe and reliable way, they should receive 12 points and the enhanced rate.

# Access to other benefits and services

Entitlement to PIP provides a gateway or passport to other benefits, such as Carer's Allowance, and schemes sponsored by other departments, such as the Blue Badge scheme.

For many benefits and schemes there are additional qualifying conditions. For some schemes, such as Blue Badge, there are alternative ways of accessing the benefit that do not rely on a particular rate or component of PIP.

For DWP benefits, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction, we share information to enable claimants to automatically access other disability benefits and services. However, claimants should inform other benefit offices about their entitlement to make sure they're paid the correct amounts, particularly if there are any changes in their circumstances and awards. In most cases, claimants will need to use their PIP award letter as proof of entitlement.

All references to a disabled child or disabled children made for passporting purposes apply only to a qualifying young person aged 16 or over, because PIP is not available to children under the age of 16.

Carers may be able to claim Income Support (including for up to 26 weeks while the PIP claim is being assessed). And many carers may continue claiming Income Support after PIP is awarded.

An award of PIP may enable claimants to access means-tested benefits even if they have previously been told they are not entitled to do so. Claimants should seek advice if in doubt.

It may be possible to backdate passported benefits to the start of the PIP award.

## Benefits

Read about:

- [Access to Work](#)
- [Armed Forces Independence Payment](#)
- exemption from the [benefit cap](#)
- [Carer's Allowance](#)
- [Carer's Credit](#)
- [Child Tax Credit](#)
- [Christmas Bonus](#)

- [Council Tax Reduction](#)
- [Employment and Support Allowance](#)
- [Housing Benefit](#)
- [Income Support](#)
- [Jobseeker's Allowance](#)
- [Pension Credit](#)
- [Universal Credit](#)
- [Working Tax Credit](#)

## VAT reductions

For VAT reductions for grant-funded installation of heating equipment, security goods or connections of gas supply, see:

- [Financial help if you're disabled: VAT relief](#)
- [VAT for builders: work for disabled people](#)

## Contracts of employment and working hours

Read about [flexible working](#).

## Childcare and parenting

Read about [unpaid parental leave](#).

## Health

In England receipt of PIP will also be considered in the same way as DLA when calculating entitlement to help with health costs under the [NHS Low Income Scheme](#).

## Adult social care

Read about [income disregards in care home funding](#).

## Schools and finance

Read about:

- the [16 to 19 Bursary Fund](#) 'vulnerable groups' element

- cancellation of [student loans](#) and income disregard for deferring repayment of 'mortgage style' student loans

## Voting

Read about how to [apply to vote by proxy](#).

## Transport

### Vehicles

Read about:

- [Motability](#)
- [zero VAT for vehicles leased through Motability](#)
- [vehicles exempt from vehicle tax](#)
- [treatment of hire cards for disabled people as short life assets](#)
- [Insurance Premium Tax](#) – vehicles leased through Motability can be exempt

### Concessionary travel and the Blue Badge scheme

Read about:

- [England: concessionary travel](#)
- [England: Blue Badge scheme](#)
- [Scotland: concessionary travel](#)
- [Scotland: Blue Badge scheme](#)
- [Wales: concessionary travel](#)
- [Wales: Blue Badge scheme](#)

Local authorities will be able to determine automatic entitlement to these schemes from the claimant's award notification. If claimants with mobility problems do not meet the automatic entitlement criteria, they should contact their local authority, because they may still qualify under the further assessment category.

## More information about financial help for disabled people

Read about:

- [Disabled Facilities Grants](#)
- [financial help if you're disabled](#)

- [help if you have a disabled child](#)

# PIP and existing DLA claimants

PIP is for people aged between 16 and under State Pension age.

DLA is ending for people who were aged 16 to 64 on 8 April 2013 (the day PIP was introduced). It is also ending for people who turn 16 after this date.

## From October 2013

DWP started to invite some existing DLA claimants to claim PIP:

- if their DLA award is coming to an end
- if they are approaching age 16
- if we receive information about a change in their care or mobility needs – we will not ask claimants to claim PIP if the change they are reporting will have no effect on their entitlement, for example someone going into a care home or hospital
- if an individual chooses to claim PIP instead of their DLA

Read more about [supporting young people to claim](#) in this guide.

## From July 2015

We started to invite the remaining people who currently have a long-term or indefinite award of DLA to claim PIP. This means if their DLA ends after September 2017 or if their award has no end date.

## Important information about existing DLA claimants and PIP

Existing DLA claimants do not need to do anything until we contact them.

We will write to claimants individually and in plenty of time to explain what action they need to take and by when if they want to claim PIP.

All existing DLA claimants who are invited to claim PIP will need to decide if they want to make a claim for PIP. The invitation letter explains to the claimant what they need to do, how to make a claim, and the time limits for doing so.

It is not an option to remain on DLA.

There is no automatic entitlement to PIP even where an indefinite or lifetime DLA award has been made.

We will make sure DLA remains in payment for all claimants who comply with the new claims process, until a decision on PIP has been communicated to them.

If the claimant needs additional support we will make further enquiries before we take any action to suspend or remove DLA.

## When DLA ends

People cannot get PIP and DLA at the same time. A PIP decision will automatically end the DLA claim. If PIP is not awarded or not claimed then DLA will stop.

The claimant will have 28 days to make a claim to PIP when they are invited to claim. If they fail to do this, their DLA may be suspended after 4 weeks and after a further 4 weeks it may be terminated. If they do not comply with the PIP new claims process they may not be awarded PIP and their existing DLA award will be terminated. In these circumstances their DLA will continue to be paid for a further 13 days following their next payday.

If the claimant actively tells us they do not wish to claim or if they withdraw the PIP claim, their DLA will stop.

The DLA award will be extended if the claimant has made a claim to PIP within the specified timescales; their DLA award is due to end, but a decision has not yet been reached on the PIP claim.

Once a decision is made on the PIP claim no matter whether that decision is favourable or unfavourable, DLA will continue to be paid until 28 days after their next payday, until the PIP decision comes into force. These rules will also apply if the claimant is awarded PIP at a higher or lower rate than their previous rate of DLA or even disallowed altogether.

There will be no right of appeal against the decision to terminate entitlement to DLA unless DWP has incorrectly applied its legislative requirements (for example if we have invited someone who is outside of the qualifying age criteria to claim PIP). However, the claimant will have a right of appeal against the PIP decision.

There will be no right of appeal against the date when the claimant is invited to claim PIP.

Read more about the [disputes process](#) in this guide.

## DLA claimants who have turned 65 after 8 April 2013

All existing DLA claimants who were aged between 16 and 64 on 8 April 2013 will be invited to claim PIP, even if they have since reached age 65.

This means that existing DLA claimants whose 65th birthday is after 8 April 2013 will be invited to claim PIP. Only claimants whose 65th birthday was on or before 8 April 2013 will remain on DLA.

Claimants who turned 65 after 8 April 2013 will be treated as if they are still under 65 for PIP. This means they may qualify for the mobility component of PIP if they satisfy the eligibility criteria.

If an existing DLA claimant claims PIP after they have turned 65 and receives a nil award, their claim to PIP will automatically be treated as a claim to Attendance Allowance. They will not have to make a separate claim although they may be asked to provide further information.

## Choosing to claim PIP before invited to do so by DWP

If an existing DLA claimant contacts us to voluntarily claim PIP they can do so. However, if they are in receipt of both the higher rate mobility component and highest rate care component of DLA, we will advise them not to proceed. This is because they will have no likelihood of receiving an increase in benefit. These claimants would only be asked to claim PIP if they tell us that their condition or needs have improved.

# How to make a claim

To start a claim for PIP, the claimant should contact us using the details on the [‘How to claim’ page of the PIP claimant guide](#).

These details are for new claims to PIP only.

Anyone who has already claimed PIP or has a general query about PIP should call the [Disability Service Centre](#).

The telephone call can be made by someone supporting the claimant. The claimant must be present so that they can confirm the person supporting them has their permission to make the call.

## Preparing for the telephone call

It is important that the claimant has their basic information ready before they call the PIP claim line. Not having this information ready may delay progress of the claim.

They’ll need their:

- full name
- date of birth
- full address, including postcode
- daytime contact number
- National Insurance number
- nationality or immigration status
- bank or building society account details (so we can arrange any payments if the claimant qualifies for the benefit)
- GP or other health professional’s details

They’ll also need details of:

- any recent stays in hospitals, care homes or hospices
- time spent abroad, if they have been abroad for more than 4 weeks at a time over the last 3 years
- any pensions or benefits that they or a family member may receive from a European Economic Area (EEA) state or Switzerland
- if they are working or paying insurance to an EEA state or Switzerland

## The telephone call – what to expect

At the beginning of the telephone call the agent will ask the claimant a series of questions to verify their identity.

If the claimant is unable to answer these questions, the agent will continue to go through the rest of the questions on the application to gather as many details as possible, but DWP will need to take further action to verify the claimant's identity.

The agent will go through the claim with the claimant.

Some of the questions have a 'don't know' option.

The claimant will not have to answer detailed questions about their health condition or disability, just some questions to establish if they have a mental, cognitive or learning impairment. This will help us establish if the claimant may need additional support through the claim process.

The claimant will have the opportunity to tell us more about their health condition or disability and how it affects their daily living in the next stage of the claim process.

At the end of the initial telephone call, the claimant will be asked to agree a declaration that the agent will read out. When the claimant acknowledges this, the agent will submit the claim and the date of claim is set at this point.

## Exceptions within the claim process

### **People whose first language is not English**

We use a language interpreting service called 'thebigword'. The telephony agent will use this on any call where the claimant's first language is not English or where the caller is not comfortable continuing in English.

The agent will contact the interpreting service while the claimant is on the line and in most cases will be put through straight away to an interpreter for the appropriate language. A 3-way conversation will then enable completion of the PIP claim.

Claimants phoning from a landline in Wales will be able to select the option to speak in Welsh from the automated telephony service and be connected to a Welsh speaker at a DWP contact centre.

### **Claimants who are unable to manage their own affairs**

Where the claimant has an appointee, corporate appointee, power of attorney or curator bonis, the person appointed to act on behalf of the claimant must telephone to make the claim; the claimant does not have to be present.

## Paper claims

Where a claimant is unable to deal with us by telephone, or needs extra help and they have no one to support them making a claim by telephone, they can request that we post a paper claim form to them.

Claimants who are unable to deal with us by telephone can write to us to request a paper claim form at the following address.

Personal Independence Payment New Claims  
Post Handling Site B  
Wolverhampton  
WV99 1AH

This form will be unique to the claimant and cannot be used by anyone else.

We can only accept claims on an authorised form that we have issued. Stocks of paper claim forms are not available to order.

A paper claim form will also be issued to claimants who do not have a National Insurance number.

The claimant is given one month to return the paper claim form from the date the request was received. If received within one month, then the date of claim will be calculated from the date the form was issued.

During the telephone call, if the telephony agent identifies that the claimant needs additional support with completing the claim, they can arrange for a DWP visiting officer to assist the claimant.

## What happens next

Once we have established that the claimant has met basic entitlement conditions relating to age and residence, a 'How your disability affects you' form and an information booklet will be sent by post.

The claimant can use this form to describe how their health condition or disability affects their daily life, on both good and bad days and over a range of activities.

# Completing the 'How your disability affects you' form

The form will have a personalised barcode and contain basic claimant details, so it should only be used by the person it is sent to.

An information booklet will be sent with the form which claimants should read before they start to fill the form in.

The PIP toolkit contains an [example 'How your disability affects you' form and information booklet](#).

The claimant has one calendar month to return the completed 'How your disability affects you' form. An envelope will be provided in which they can return the form. If the claimant has not returned the form after 20 days, a reminder letter will be issued to the claimant.

If the form has not been returned after one calendar month, the case will be referred to a DWP decision maker and the claim may be turned down or terminated unless there are good reasons why it has not been returned in time.

Claimants who are making a claim to PIP because they are [terminally ill](#) will not have to complete the 'How your disability affects you' form. We will obtain the information required about mobility needs at the initial claim stage and the claimant will be encouraged to send in a [DS1500 report](#).

Where claimants in vulnerable situations are unable to return their 'How your disability affects you' form, we will arrange a referral direct to the assessment provider.

If the claimant is unable to complete the 'How your disability affects you' form within the given timescales, they should [contact the Disability Service Centre](#) to ask for an extension. Initially the telephony agent will be able to grant this.

Further extensions can be granted but only at the discretion of the DWP decision maker, who will consider whether there is good reason for the late return of the form.

If the claimant loses the 'How your disability affects you' form, they will need to contact us to request another form.

## About the questions in the form

When filling in the 'How your disability affects you' form the claimant may find it useful to have to hand:

- details of their medication or an up-to-date printed prescription list (if they have one)

- the name and contact details of any professionals who might be supporting them on a regular basis

The 'How your disability affects you' form includes a number of questions about the claimant's ability to carry out key everyday activities. The answers will help us to understand the impact of the claimant's health condition or disability on their everyday life and to assess their entitlement to the benefit.

In each section and for each question there is a tick box for the claimant to state 'yes', 'no' or 'sometimes'.

Claimants are asked to provide more detail in the 'extra information' box so that they can explain how their health condition or disability affects their ability to carry out the activities – the difficulties they face and the help they need. Where they need help from another person, they can tell us what kind of help they need and when they need it.

Read more about the [assessment criteria](#) in this guide. This includes examples of supporting evidence.

## Help with completing the 'How your disability affects you' form

If the claimant is having difficulty completing the 'How your disability affects you' form, they can ask a friend, relative, care provider or external organisation to assist them with completion.

We are providing advice and information to external support organisations to ensure that they understand the PIP process. This will enable them to provide assistance and support to claimants throughout the claims process.

The claimant can also [contact the Disability Service Centre for help](#).

The DWP telephony agent will be able to assist with basic enquiries and will also find out what level of support the claimant requires to complete the 'How your disability affects you' form. Depending on the level of support the claimant needs, the agent may arrange a call back to support the claimant in completing the form.

They may refer the most vulnerable cases to DWP visiting staff for face-to-face support.

If a DWP visiting officer is at the home of a claimant when they decide that they want to claim PIP, the visiting officer will be able to assist the claimant to make the initial telephone call to claim PIP and to complete the 'How your disability affects you' form if help is also needed to do this.

## Sending in additional supporting evidence

We want to use the widest range of evidence when we assess PIP claims to ensure awards are made correctly and claimants are paid promptly.

It is very important that claimants provide us with any relevant evidence or information they already have that explains how their condition affects them.

We do not need to see general information about their condition – we need to know how they are personally affected.

The supporting information does not need to be recent but should be relevant to their current condition.

Claimants should send in any documents as soon as possible in the same envelope as their completed 'How your disability affects you' form. Any delay in sending evidence may mean:

- it will take longer to make a decision on the PIP claim, or
- they may have to attend a face-to-face consultation with a health professional when it may not have been necessary, or
- we may not be able to get all the information we need to make the correct decision on the claim

Claimants should only send in photocopies of things they already have available. They do not need to ask for other documents which might slow down the claim or for which they might be charged a fee – for example, from a GP. If we need this we'll ask for it ourselves using the contact details the claimant provides on the form.

## Information that will help us to assess a PIP claim

It will help us to have reports about the claimant from:

- specialist nurses
- community psychiatric nurses
- social workers
- occupational therapists
- GPs
- hospital doctors
- physiotherapists
- support worker

It will also help us to have care or treatment plans from:

- occupational therapists
- social workers
- community psychiatric nurses
- learning disability support teams

Other sources of information that can help us are:

- hospital discharge or outpatient clinic letters
- a statement of special educational needs
- a certificate of visual impairment
- current repeat prescription lists
- photographs or x-rays
- letters about other benefits
- test results like:
  - scans
  - diagnostic tests
  - audiology

Letters from people who know the claimant are only helpful if they can provide us with information about the claimant's condition affects them that the claimant has not already told us.

## Information that does not help us to assess a PIP claim

It does not help us to have:

- general information or fact sheets about the claimant's conditions that are not about them personally
- appointment cards or letters about medical appointments such as times, dates and directions
- information about tests they are going to have
- fact sheets about medication

# Assessment process and assessment providers

The PIP assessment will be delivered by assessment providers working in partnership with DWP.

Sometimes we can make a decision by using just the written information a claimant sends us, but some people will be asked to attend a face-to-face consultation with a health professional.

The face-to-face consultation will be conducted by a health professional who considers the evidence provided by the claimant, along with any further evidence they think is needed.

The assessment looks at people as individuals, and focuses on the impact their condition has on their daily lives and over a range of different activities.

The health professional will complete the assessment and will send a report back to us. A DWP decision maker will then use all of this information to decide entitlement to PIP. The health professional will not make a decision on entitlement to PIP.

## Face-to-face consultation

The face-to-face consultation may take place at a designated assessment centre or in the claimant's own home.

The claimant will be encouraged to take someone along to the consultation to support them if they would find this useful. The person can participate in the discussion. The person chosen is at the discretion of the claimant and might be, but is not limited to, a parent, family member, friend, carer or advocate.

If it is clear that the claimant requires more than one person to accompany them to enable them to attend a face-to-face consultation, this should be identified as part of the booking process. The assessment provider may decide that the claimant would benefit from a home visit rather than a consultation at a medical centre if they require multiple people to assist them to attend the face-to-face consultation.

We have asked the assessment providers to ensure that claimants travel no more than 90 minutes (single journey) by public transport to their assessments.

This figure is an absolute maximum and it is expected that travel time will be far less for the majority of cases.

Home consultations may take place:

- at the claimant's request, if supported by an appropriate health condition or disability, as determined by the assessor, or

- if the claimant voluntarily provides confirmation through their health professional that the claimant is unable to travel on health grounds (note that this is not a mandatory requirement), or
- at the assessment provider's discretion for a business reason

## The consultation

At the consultation, the health professional will ask questions about the claimant's circumstances, their health condition or disability and how this affects their daily life.

The health professional may also carry out a short physical examination, but claimants will not be forced to do anything that causes them pain, embarrassment or discomfort.

The assessment providers will ensure that the health professionals have the right skills and experience to assess any claimant referred to them.

We believe that in most cases all health professionals should be able to assess the individual, even if they are not a specialist in their condition.

If the health professional feels they need more support before assessing someone, for example because the claimant has a condition they are unfamiliar with, the assessment provider will make someone with the appropriate skills available to either assist the original health professional or carry out the assessment themselves.

There is no time limit for face-to-face consultations. Consultations will be as long as necessary to reach the evidence-based conclusions on individual cases.

## The assessment providers: Independent Assessment Services and Capita Health and Wellbeing

The PIP assessment process will be managed by 2 assessment providers who have been appointed to see whether different providers could introduce innovation – with the exception of the assessment itself, which must comply with the regulations and guidance. Having more than one provider means we can learn from these different models.

There are 3 regional contracts in place in mainland UK, and a further contract for Northern Ireland:

- in Scotland, London and north-east, north-west and southern England, the assessment provider will be Independent Assessment Services
- in Wales, central England and in Northern Ireland, the assessment provider will be Capita Health and Wellbeing

See the full breakdown of the [postcode areas of PIP assessment providers](#).

## If a claimant reports a change of address that may include a change of assessment provider

If a claimant reports a change of address into an area covered by a different assessment provider, we will check to see if case has been referred to the assessment provider.

If the case has not yet been sent to the assessment provider, the change of address will be recorded and the case will proceed as normal, with the assessment provider covering the new address.

If the case is already with the assessment provider, we will establish which assessment provider the case is with.

If the current assessment provider does not cover the claimant's new address, we will establish if that assessment provider can carry out an assessment without a face-to-face consultation. If they can the case proceeds without the need to change the assessment provider.

If a face-to-face consultation is required the current assessment provider will return the case back to us where the case will be reassigned to the assessment provider that covers the area the claimant has moved to.

## Assessment providers' role

How the assessment providers carry out assessments is governed by regulations and guidance.

Once the claimant sits down with the assessor, the experience will be very similar wherever you are in the country. Everyone will be able to bring a companion, see a same-sex assessor, claim back their travel expenses and so on. Whether someone is claiming in Liverpool (Independent Assessment Services) or Swansea (Capita Health and Wellbeing) the assessor will be recruited for their empathy as well as medical qualifications.

The assessors will encourage claimants to explain how they feel on a bad day as well as on a good day. The assessors will provide advice to us – we make the decision about entitlement to PIP.

The providers were encouraged to develop innovative solutions for some aspects of the process such as how appointments are booked, where assessments take place and how they communicate with claimants (for example, letters, text messages, email and so on). Both providers have different delivery models.

## Independent Assessment Services

Their service will be based on working with local partners, including the private health centres, physiotherapy practices and the NHS, using their premises and staff to carry out face-to-face consultations. Working with these local partners

[Independent Assessment Services](#) is able to offer PIP claimants familiar surroundings and experienced health professionals.

The reason Independent Assessment Services has adopted this approach is that:

- experienced staff and suitable accommodation are already in place
- assessment centres are often at the centre of established transport links, minimising the travel needs for many claimants
- it provides a flexible network, with back up consultation centre options if needed

The supply chain partners will carry out the face-to-face consultations – including the report writing.

Independent Assessment Services will carry out all other aspects of the service including:

- paper-based assessments
- home consultations
- booking appointments
- complaints handling
- payment of claimants' expenses

Independent Assessment Services plan to hold most consultations at assessment centres. Home consultations will be offered to claimants where appropriate.

If the Independent Assessment Services health professional decides that a face-to-face consultation is required, they will contact the claimant to arrange an appointment.

## Capita Health and Wellbeing

[Capita Health and Wellbeing](#) is planning to hold around 60% of consultations in the claimant's own home. The remainder will take place in assessment centres.

Their research with disabled people and their organisations showed that most claimants would prefer their consultation to take place at home. However, for some people attending an assessment centre is a better option.

Capita Health and Wellbeing's approach also allows claimants to choose their preferred method of contact (for appointment reminders and so on) and, once a health professional has decided that a face-to-face consultation is required, select their appointment time from a target range.

Capita Health and Wellbeing will make initial contact with the claimant by post. The postal pack will include a letter, a booklet and DVD, a satisfaction survey and an expenses envelope.

Capita Health and Wellbeing will provide claimants with access to a secure online portal (in addition to a telephone enquiry centre), which will allow claimants to schedule and make amendments to their consultation appointments.

Capita Health and Wellbeing's assessment centres have been carefully selected close to public transport and accessible parking.

## Managing performance

We will monitor the performance of the assessment providers to make sure they are conforming to the detailed specifications for the assessment laid out in their contract with us.

We have set clear service level agreements setting out expectations for service delivery, including the quality of assessments, number of days to provide advice to DWP and evidence of claimant satisfaction. We have not set any targets in relation to the outcome of PIP assessments. This will ensure all the assessments, no matter where in the country, are consistent, fair, evidence based and delivered to the required quality standard.

# Decision and payment

## PIP decision

The DWP decision maker will make a reasoned decision on entitlement. If the claimant is entitled to PIP, they will also decide the level of award and the length of any award. In all cases the decision maker will make a decision based on all the available evidence, such as:

- the report from the assessment provider
- the 'How your disability affects you' form
- any additional evidence that the claimant has provided, or
- further evidence that the assessment provider has given

If the decision maker is not satisfied with the report from the assessment provider or has any queries about the report or the evidence, they will be able to discuss the issue with the assessment provider.

The PIP toolkit contains an [example 'How your disability affects you' form and information booklet](#).

## PIP award and reviews

The decision maker will make an award of PIP based on the impact of the claimant's health condition or disability on their daily life and their ability to live independently. The length of award for PIP will be based upon each claimant's individual circumstances.

Over time a claimant's needs may change and we want to make sure a person's award of benefit reflects their current needs.

Awards vary in length from 9 months to 10 years, depending on when changes in a claimant's needs could be reasonably expected, with reviews set at regular periods.

The maximum time between reviews is 10 years.

Limited term awards will be given where changes in needs may be reasonably expected – these will be up to 2 years and have a fixed end date.

Awards made under the special rules for terminal illness will be for 3 years. The daily living component will be paid at the enhanced rate in all cases. Payment of the mobility component will depend on whether the claimant needs help to get around and, if they do, how much help they need.

Claimants will have [their award regularly reviewed](#), regardless of the length of the award. This will make sure everyone continues to receive the most appropriate level of support.

Read more about [special rules for terminal illness](#) in this guide.

## Telling the claimant about the PIP decision

We will send the claimant a letter giving a decision on the PIP claim and a clear reasoned explanation of how that decision has been reached.

If the claimant has been awarded PIP, the letter will detail the amount of the award, the length of the award and the reasons for making that decision. The point score for each descriptor will be included in the letter. The letter will also show how the evidence informed the selection of descriptors and the decision made. It will give details of how and when the claimant needs to tell DWP about any changes in circumstance. It will also signpost the claimant to other DWP benefits and services and local support organisations. The award letter will constitute a full statement of reasons for the decision.

If the claimant has not been awarded PIP, the letter will give all the same information as the award letter and will constitute a full statement of reasons for the decision. The letter will also explain what the claimant needs to do if they are not happy with the decision and explain how they can [request a mandatory reconsideration](#).

The decision letter will advise the customer that they can contact the DWP if they wish to discuss the decision further. If the claimant is still not happy with the decision after discussing it with the decision maker, the claimant can ask for a mandatory reconsideration.

## PIP payments

Specific details of PIP payments, including the date payments will start and their frequency, will also be included in the letter sent to the claimant. PIP can be paid into a bank account, building society or credit union. The claimant will be asked to provide these details when they make a claim to PIP.

Payment will usually be made every 4 weeks in arrears. Awards of PIP under the special rules for terminal illness will be made weekly in advance.

# Changes in circumstances

The PIP decision letter gives details of how and when the claimant needs to tell DWP about any changes in their circumstances.

We need to know if the claimant's condition, the amount of help they need or their circumstances change. This is because it may change how much PIP they can get.

It is important the claimant tells DWP straight away about any changes in their life that could affect their benefit. Based on these changes their benefit may go up, go down, stay the same or it may stop. If the claimant is overpaid, they will normally have to repay the money. Failure to tell DWP about any of these changes may result in prosecution.

## How to report a change

The claimant should contact us using the contact details in the ['Changes of circumstances' page of the PIP claimant guide](#).

## Changes the claimant needs to report

### Changes to daily living or mobility needs

The claimant should tell DWP if, for example, they need more or less help or support or the condition will last for a longer or shorter time than they previously told DWP about.

This change may affect entitlement to PIP. The amount and the period of the PIP award may change.

The following changes may affect the amount of PIP that can be paid to the claimant:

- admission to a hospital, care home or hospice
- entry into a residential school or college
- entry into foster care, local authority care, sheltered housing or social care trust care

DWP needs to know the name and address of the place the claimant has gone into, and the date they went in. We need this information as soon as they go in. Failure to tell DWP this straight away could result in an overpayment. We also need to know if the claimant spends any nights at home and the date the claimant comes out of this place as soon as this happens. This is because we may be able to pay PIP for any nights spent at home and as soon as they come out of this place.

## **Hospitals or similar institutions**

Both components of PIP cease to be payable 28 days after the claimant is admitted to an NHS hospital. Privately funded patients are unaffected by these rules and can continue to be paid either component of PIP.

If a claimant is in hospital or a similar institution at the date entitlement to PIP starts, PIP is not payable until they are discharged.

## **Care homes**

The daily living component of PIP ceases to be payable after 28 days of residency in care home where the costs of the accommodation are met from public or local funds.

The PIP mobility component can continue to be paid. People who fully self-fund their placement are unaffected by these rules. If a claimant is in a care home at the date of entitlement, the PIP daily living component is not payable until they leave.

## **Linked spells in hospital and a care home**

Spells in hospital are linked if the gap between them is no more than 28 days. The daily living component for spells in a care home is also linked if the gap between them is no more than 28 days. There is no link for the mobility component because payment is not affected when in a care home.

Both components of PIP will stop being paid after a total of 28 days in hospital. The daily living component of PIP will stop being paid after a total of 28 days in a care home. If a claimant moves between a hospital and care home, or the other way around, these periods will also link.

## **Imprisonment or claimant held in legal custody**

This change may affect the amount of PIP that can be paid to the claimant.

We need to know the date the claimant was taken into prison or legal custody and the length of time they are expected to be there if known.

## **Detained in legal custody**

PIP ceases to be payable after 28 days where someone is being detained in legal custody. This applies whether the offence is civil or criminal and whether they have been convicted or are on remand.

Suspended payments of benefit are not refunded regardless of the outcome of proceedings against the individual. Two or more separate periods in legal custody link if they are within one year of each other.

## **Leaving the country or planning to leave the country for a period of more than 4 weeks, even if this is a holiday**

This change may affect the claimant's entitlement to PIP. We will need to know the date the claimant is leaving the country, how long they are planning to be out of the country, which country they are going to and why they are going abroad.

## **Change of name**

This change will not affect payment or eligibility for PIP, but it is important that we have the most up-to-date details for the claimant.

This change needs to be reported in writing – if the claimant phones to give these details, we will ask for these details to be put in writing. The written notification must contain:

- full details of their previous name
- their new name
- details of any changes made to the bank or building society account into which PIP is paid, such as the name of the account or the account number
- their signature on the letter

## **Change of account PIP is paid into**

We need full details of the name and address of the new bank or building society along with details of the new account including the name of the account, the account number and the sort code or roll number.

## **Change of person acting for the claimant, by this we mean an appointee or someone with power of attorney for the claimant**

This change is important so that we can make payments to the right person at the right time. We need the full name, address and contact details of the new person who is acting for the claimant. If the person acting for the claimant has moved or has different contact details, we just need the new details.

## **Change of address**

This change, providing it is not a hospital or nursing home will not affect eligibility or payment of PIP. It is important that we hold the most up-to-date details for the claimant.

We need full details of the new address the claimant has moved to, including the postcode and the date that they moved.

## **Change of doctor or healthcare professional**

This change will not affect payment or eligibility for PIP and is not mandatory once a decision on the PIP claim has been made. However, if the change happens during the claiming stage it is essential that we have the most up-to-date information. This will make sure the assessment provider has the right contact details to gather any further details they may require. We need the full name, address and contact details of the new doctor or health care professional.

## **Changes the claimant does not need to report**

PIP is not means-tested and can be paid whether the claimant is working or not. There is no need to report that the claimant has started or finished work or if the nature of their current employment has changed, unless the amount of help that they need has changed.

Read the [PIP guide for claimants](#).

# Special rules for terminal illness

There are special rules that allow people who are terminally ill to get help quickly when they claim PIP.

Claims made under the special rules for terminal illness criteria follow a different process, so are dealt with more quickly than standard PIP claims.

Claimants who meet the criteria for claiming under the special rules:

- will not have to complete the 'How your disability affects you' form
- will not need a face-to-face consultation, and
- if entitled, will receive an award of the enhanced rate of the daily living component of PIP without having to wait until they satisfy the usual qualifying period

Both the daily living component and, providing the conditions are met, the mobility component will be paid straight away.

## How to claim under the special rules for terminal illness

Use the contact details on the ['How to claim' page of the PIP claimant guide](#). A dedicated team will take their call and will complete the claim process.

If the claim is being made under these rules, the telephone call can be made by someone supporting the claimant (such as a support organisation or family member) without the claimant needing to be present.

However, the claimant should be told that a claim to PIP has been made because we may need to contact them to verify their details and we will send notifications and any payment to them.

The claimant does not need to know that the claim has been made under the special rules for terminal illness, and this will not be mentioned by DWP in any contact with the claimant.

## Preparing for the telephone call

It is important that the claimant (or the person calling on their behalf) has as much information ready as possible before calling DWP, or it may delay progress of the claim.

The claim can be taken even if the caller does not have all of the information, but certain details are needed to register the claim. If the caller does not know the answer to some of the questions the claim may be delayed because we will need to get the detail before the claim can be put into payment.

The claimant will not be sent the form 'How your disability affects you' if they meet the criteria for an award under the special rules. Instead, they, or the person claiming on their behalf, will be asked some extra questions whilst they are on the telephone about their condition and how it affects their ability to get around.

These questions are:

- do you need someone else to plan any journey for you that you wish to take?
- do you have difficulties following the route of a familiar journey? For example, do you need:
  - another person with you
  - an assistance dog, or
  - aids, such as a white stick?
- do you have difficulty walking short distances up to 50 metres?
- do you have difficulty walking short distances up to 20 metres?

## The telephone call – what to expect

At the beginning of the telephone call the DWP agent will ask the claimant a series of questions to verify their identity.

The DWP agent will explain what the special rules for terminal illness mean and will confirm if the claimant wishes to claim under the special rules.

If you are claiming on someone else's behalf you will also be asked for your name and address.

The call will be quicker if the caller has the postcode for each address they give.

## DS1500 report

Claimants are asked to get and send in a DS1500 medical report to support the claim. The DS1500 is a report about their medical condition, not their prognosis, and the claimant can obtain one from their GP, consultant or certain other professionals, including Macmillan nurses. The claimant will not have to pay for a DS1500 report.

The DS1500 report can be sent to us either by the health professional or by the person requesting it but it is important that it is sent in quickly to support the PIP claim. The claimant (or the person making the claim on their behalf) will be given the freepost address below for the DS1500 when they make the claim over the phone.

It is important that the DS1500 is sent in quickly to support the PIP claim. The address to send the DS1500 to is:

Freepost RTEU-HXBG-YTST  
Personal Independence Payment 10  
Mail Handling Site A

Wolverhampton  
WV98 1AE

It's important to use the full address, including the '10', to avoid unnecessary delay in processing the claim.

We cannot treat a DS1500 report as a claim to PIP. It is important that a claim to PIP is made in addition to providing the DS1500 report.

Read DWP's guidance on [what Personal Independence Payment \(PIP\) means for the health sector](#).

## Assessment process

The claim information and the DS1500 report will be sent to an assessment provider – either Independent Assessment Services or Capita Health and Wellbeing – who work in partnership with DWP.

A health professional working for the assessment provider will be able to complete the assessment using the information provided during the claims process, the DS1500 report and any further evidence gathered.

Claimants who are deemed to qualify under the special rules will not need a face-to-face consultation.

The health professional may need to contact the person who has completed the DS1500 report for more information.

Read more about the [assessment providers and process](#) in this guide.

## PIP and existing DLA special rules claimants

Those claimants who are already in receipt of DLA under the special rules will only be invited to claim PIP when their DLA award expires. This includes children reaching age 16 who would otherwise have to claim PIP.

If an existing DLA claimant contacts us to say that their condition has deteriorated and they are now terminally ill, they will be invited to claim PIP under the special rules for terminal illness.

# Supporting young people to claim

DLA will remain for children under 16. Young people will not be invited to claim PIP until they are at least 16 years of age.

## Preparing young people for claiming PIP

We will write to parents or guardians of young people, who are currently in receipt of DLA and are living in reassessment areas as they approach age 16.

At age 15 years and 7 months a letter will be sent to the parent or guardian to explain that:

- PIP replaces DLA as the correct benefit for anybody over 16 years old
- the young person will need to claim PIP at 16 years of age
- we will write to the young person about this to explain how to claim PIP, when they are 16
- if the young person makes a claim for PIP when they reach 16, we will make sure their DLA continues to be paid until we make a decision about their PIP claim
- they need to let us know who to pay DLA to once the young person turns 16 and if they make a claim for PIP, while we make a decision about their claim
- they should discuss the letter with the young person

The letter will also ask whether the young person will need an appointee when they turn 16.

At age 15 years and 10 months, a letter will be sent to the parent or guardian to explain that the young person will shortly be invited to claim PIP at 16. A variant of the letter also repeats the questions in the previous letter if an answer has not been received.

At age 16, a letter will be sent to the young person, or their appointee, to invite them to claim PIP. It will explain:

- how to claim PIP and when by
- that if they do not claim PIP by the date given on their letter, their DLA will stop
- that their DLA will continue to be paid (even if their DLA award was due to expire) as long as they send us any information we ask for and go to an assessment consultation, if required

## When a young person makes a claim

If a young person makes a claim to PIP, their DLA will continue to be paid until we make a decision on their PIP claim.

When the decision on their PIP claim is made, their DLA will end even if they currently have a long term or indefinite award.

If the young person is awarded PIP, it may be the same amount or more or less than their current DLA. This could affect other benefits that the young person, or others in their household, may receive.

## Appointees

If a young person cannot do things like tell us if their condition gets better or worse, or about changes in address or bank details and so on, another person may need to act on their behalf, as their 'appointee'. This must be because of their illness or disability and not just because they are still a young person.

# Disputes

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 includes the introduction of changes to the appeals process to ensure more disputes against DWP decisions are resolved without being referred to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS).

The changes to the appeals process for DWP are:

- mandatory reconsideration of decisions before appeal
- direct lodgement of appeals with HMCTS, and
- time limits for DWP to return appeal responses to HMCTS

We introduced mandatory reconsideration and direct lodgement for PIP from April 2013.

## PIP disputes

Once a decision has been made on a claim, a decision notification will be sent to the claimant advising them of their award or disallowance, giving the reasons for the decision and advising what steps the claimant needs to take if they dispute the decision.

Claimants have one calendar month from the date on their decision letter to request a mandatory reconsideration.

The decision letter will advise the customer that they can contact DWP if they wish to discuss the decision further. If, after the decision maker has discussed the decision, the claimant still disputes the decision and would like us to look at the decision again, they can request a mandatory reconsideration. The claimant will be asked to be specific about the points at issue or descriptors they are unhappy with and will be encouraged to send in any further evidence or information they may have to us at this point.

We expect that if the decision is communicated confidently and effectively there will be a reduction in the number of disputes.

When a mandatory reconsideration request is received, a second DWP decision maker will look at the decision, including any additional evidence or information that has been provided to decide if the original decision is fair and consistent with the evidence.

A letter called the 'mandatory reconsideration notice' will be issued to the claimant responding to any issues that they had about the decision and advising them of the outcome of their mandatory reconsideration request. It will also contain the claimant's right of appeal against the decision and advise them how to make an appeal to HMCTS and where they can get an appeal form (SSCS1).

Read the guidance for claimants on [how to challenge a benefit decision](#).

If, after we have reconsidered the decision, the claimant still disputes the decision, they can lodge an appeal directly with HMCTS. The claimant has one calendar month from the date on the mandatory reconsideration notice to appeal direct to HMCTS.

If the claimant sends the appeal in error to us, we will not forward the appeal request to HMCTS. We will first check that a mandatory reconsideration has been carried out, and if not will treat any appeals they receive as a request for a mandatory reconsideration. If the claimant has had a mandatory reconsideration we will return the appeal to the claimant.

An appeal cannot be lodged with HMCTS until after DWP has reconsidered the decision. The claimant will need to include a copy of the mandatory reconsideration notice from DWP with their appeal.

When HMCTS receive the appeal, they will validate it and send it to DWP for a response. We will send our response back to HMCTS within 28 days of receipt of the appeal response request.

HMCTS will administer and process the appeal, advising all parties of hearing dates if an oral hearing is to be held.

Read the guidance for claimants on [how to appeal a benefit decision](#).