

## **PIP ASSESSMENT INFORMATION SHEET**

### **Impact of Coronavirus**

At the moment, the Government has postponed all face-to-face medical assessments. The DWP will try to assess you by speaking to you at the telephone or by video conferencing.

If you are uncomfortable speaking at the telephone, you can let the DWP know and they can assess you by looking at your application and the medical evidence you have provided.

If you are concerned about being assessed over the telephone or by video conferencing, you can have someone aged 16 or over on the call with you to provide support. They can take part in the discussion and take notes.

If you have evidence about your health condition, which was not in your original claim form, you should mention this during your assessment. You should offer to send this additional evidence to the decision maker to help with your assessment.

However, this information sheet has been prepared as if face-to-face medical assessments were still being performed. This will give you a full appreciation of the facets of a face-to-face assessment.

### **Overview**

Unless you have a terminal illness, you will usually have to have an assessment to complete your Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application. This is an opportunity for you to speak about how your condition affects you. It is not a medical examination or a diagnosis of your condition.

It is very important that you prepare for the assessment. The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) will use evidence from the assessment to determine if you can be awarded PIP. Your assessment provider will be either Independent Assessment Services or Capita and you will receive a letter telling you which organisation will conduct your assessment.

A health care professional will conduct your assessment, they will write a report and submit their report to the DWP. The health care professional could be a registered nurse, a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist or a paramedic.

### **What to do if you cannot make your assessment appointment**

You must go to your assessment otherwise your PIP claim will be rejected and you will have to start the application process again.

If you cannot make your appointment or you have already missed your appointment, you must contact your assessment provider without delay. If you have a good reason for not attending, the appointment may be rescheduled. The telephone number to use is on your appointment letter.

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

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

### **Preparing for your assessment**

You should have a copy of your original PIP claim form with you. You will be able to refer to the copy claim form during the assessment and will be able to make sure that you have told the assessor everything you want them to know about your condition.

Have a list of any medication that you are taking, including the dosage and frequency, available for your assessment.

Have a list of the aids or appliances that you use, for example, hearing aids, walking stick, shower chair, available for your assessment.

Copies of any evidence about your health condition, which was not in your original claim form, for example, a letter or report from a healthcare professional.

You can take someone with you into the actual assessment if they are 16 or over. This could be someone who makes you feel more comfortable, like a friend, relative or carer. If you want, they can take part in the discussion and take notes for you.

You will need to take your appointment letter and two forms of identification to your assessment.

### **Ask for an adjustment**

Check with your assessment provider that your assessment centre has everything that you need, if it does not you can ask for it. This can make you feel more comfortable and less stressed on the day. For example:

- Ask if you have to go upstairs, and if there is a lift that can accommodate a wheelchair if you need one
- Ask how roomy the assessment centre is if you get anxious in enclosed spaces – if the rooms and corridors are small, tell the assessment provider that this could make you anxious and whether there are any alternatives available.
- Ask for any help that you need so as to make the assessment less stressful for you, for example, an assessor of the same gender or an interpreter (try to give at least 2 working days notice).
- Ask if you can make an audio recording of the assessment – you must do this at least 3 working days before your assessment and ask your provider about the rules for using recording equipment.

To ask for an adjustment, telephone your assessment provider using the number on your appointment letter. If you ask for an adjustment and it is not made, this could be discrimination and you should contact Swindon Carers Centre for further advice.

### **Assessment Venue Changes**

If the location of your assessment is more than 90 minutes away by public transport and you have difficulty travelling long distances, you might be offered an alternative venue or a home visit.

If your GP (Doctor) normally visits you at home, you might be offered a home visit instead of having to go to an assessment centre.

Your assessment centre might ask you for a letter from your GP or other evidence that you need a home visit or an alternative location for your assessment.

### **Talking about how your condition affects you**

You should be prepared to speak about how your condition affects you even if you have already detailed this in your original PIP claim form. Whilst this may be difficult for you, it will be beneficial if you can talk about:

- The type of things that you have difficulty with, or cannot do at all, for example, walking up steps without help, remembering to go to appointments, or needing help to wash.
- How your condition affects you from day to day.
- What a 'bad day' is like for you, for example 'On a bad day, I cannot walk at all because my injured leg hurts so much' or 'On a bad day, I am so depressed I cannot concentrate on anything'.

Do not let the assessor rush you and try not to answer their questions with a 'Yes' or 'No'. Try to explain how doing something would make you feel afterwards and the impact it can have on you if you do something repeatedly in a short period of time. For example, 'Yes, I can lift my arm above my head, but it's painful and I have to rest afterwards. If I had to do it more than once in a short period of time, it would make me tired but also dizzy'.

### **Observations on what you say and do during the assessment**

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

The assessor may ask you to do some simple tasks for example:

- Remembering three items in the room just from the assessor saying their names
- Say how much change you would get from £1 when you buy something for 75p
- Count back from 100, taking away 3 each time

You might be asked to carry out some physical tests during the assessment. Do not feel that you have to do things in the assessment that you would not normally be able to do. If you do them on the assessment day, the assessor may think you can always do them. If you are not comfortable with something, say so and why.

The assessor will also document your mental state during the assessment, for example, whether you look or sound depressed or happy, whether you look or sound relaxed or tense and how you cope with interacting with them.

The assessor will type their observations during the appointment. You can ask them to tell you what they have typed and ask them to correct it if it is wrong.

### **Travel expenses**

The cost of the journey from your home to the assessment centre (and the return journey), parking and fuel can be reimbursed. If you take someone with you to the assessment, their travel costs can be reimbursed but only if they travel with you.

You cannot get your travel expenses paid before the assessment and you cannot be reimbursed for items like food and loss of earnings.

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

If you travel by car, the cost of parking can be reimbursed and 25p per mile can be paid towards the cost of fuel.

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

### **Information about your assessment**

You can find out more about how Independent Assessment Services or Capita will run your assessment and how they can support you on the websites.

- Capita: Visit <http://www.capita-pip.co.uk/en/assessment-process.html>
- Independent Assessment Services: Visit <https://www.mypipassessment.co.uk/your-assessment/overview/>

### **How your claim will be assessed**

Central to the application of all the activities within the PIP assessment is a consideration of the manner in which they are undertaken. For a particular descriptor to be applied to you, you must be able to reliably complete the activity as described in the descriptor.

The term 'reliably' involves establishing whether you can complete the activity described:

- Safely – in a manner unlikely to cause harm to you or to another person, either during or after completion of the activity
- To an acceptable standard
- Repeatedly – able to repeat the activity as often as is reasonably required
- In a reasonable time – no more than twice as long as the maximum period that a non-disabled person would normally take to complete the activity
- What is the impact of completing the activity – consideration must be given to symptoms such as pain, discomfort, breathlessness, fatigue and anxiety.

This applies to every activity within the assessment. If you cannot reliably complete an activity in the way described in the descriptor then you should be considered unable to complete that descriptor and a different descriptor selected. For example, if you are only able to complete an activity safely when supervised, the appropriate descriptor, which refers to supervision, should be awarded to you.

## **Useful Information Sources**

The following links provide a very useful reference for the PIP Assessment process:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-independence-payment-assessment-guide-for-assessment-providers/pip-assessment-guide-part-1-the-assessment-process>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-independence-payment-assessment-guide-for-assessment-providers/pip-assessment-guide-part-2-the-assessment-criteria>