

Disability Law Service

Fighting injustice for disabled people

How to Prepare for Your PIP Assessment

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Introduction

Unless you have a terminal illness, you'll usually have to have an assessment to complete your Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application. The assessment is an opportunity for you to talk about how your condition affects you. However, its purpose is not to diagnose your condition or to serve as a medical examination.

It's very important you prepare for the assessment because the DWP will use its conclusions as evidence to decide if you can get PIP or not.

Your assessment provider will either be Atos or Capita (you will get a letter telling you which provider it will be).

A health professional will carry out your assessment. They will write a report and send it off to the DWP. The consultation will not be a full physical examination or an attempt to diagnose your medical symptoms. It will focus on how your life is affected by the challenges you face because of your health condition or disability.

Warning: You Must Attend Your Assessment

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

Contact your assessment provider straight away if you can't make your appointment. If you have a good reason for not going, they may reschedule it. The number to contact is on your appointment letter. You must be given at least 7 days written notice of the assessment date (unless you agreed to a shorter notice period).

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If your PIP claim is rejected because you missed your assessment, you can ask the DWP to change their decision; you will be asked to provide reasons for non-attendance. It is always a good idea to provide medical evidence if you missed the assessment due to illness.

If the DWP do not accept your reasons for non-attendance you can request a Mandatory Reconsideration. This can be requested by telephone or in writing. If the DWP still do not change their decision you have one month to lodge an appeal direct with The Tribunal's Service (HMCTS).

Talking About How Your Condition Affects You

You should be prepared to talk about how your condition affects you even if you've already detailed it in your PIP claim form. It can be hard to do this, but it will really help if you can talk about:

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

It is a good idea to take a copy of your PIP claim form with you. That way you can refer to it in the assessment and help you to remember to tell the assessor everything you want them to know about your condition.

Don't let the assessor rush you and try not to just answer 'yes' or 'no' to their questions. **Always try** to explain how doing something would make you feel afterwards and the impact it can have on you if you had to do it repeatedly in a short period of time.

Observations on What You Say and Do During the Assessment

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

You might also be asked to carry out some physical tasks during the assessment. Don't feel you have to do things in the assessment that you wouldn't normally be able to do. If you do them on assessment day, the assessor may think you can always do them. If you're not comfortable with something – say so.

The assessor will also make a note of your mental state during the assessment – for example, they'll record whether you look depressed or happy, tense or relaxed and how you cope with social interaction.

Take Someone with You for Support

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

Ask for an Adjustment

Make sure to check with your assessment provider that their assessment centre has everything you need to access it. If it doesn't, you can ask for it. It is important you do so as it can help make you feel more comfortable on the day.

For example:

- Ask if you'll have to go upstairs, and if there's a lift that can accommodate a wheelchair if you use one.
- Ask how spacious the centre is if you get anxious in enclosed spaces. If the rooms or corridors are small, tell them this could make you anxious and see what they can do to make you feel comfortable.
- Ask for an interpreter or signer if you need one. You must do this at least 2 working days before your assessment so they have enough time to arrange it.
- Ask for the person carrying out the assessment to be the same gender as you, if it is important to you.
- Ask if you can make an audio recording of the assessment. You must do this 3 days before your assessment and ask your provider about their rules for using recording equipment.

Changing the Venue

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

If your GP normally visits you at your 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 demonstrating you need a home visit or alternative location for your assessment.

How to Ask for an Adjustment

To ask for an adjustment, phone your assessment provider using the number on your appointment letter. If you ask for an adjustment and it's not made, this could be discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. ([contact your local Citizens Advice](#) for further advice).

Travel Expenses

The cost of the journey from your home to the assessment centre (and back again), 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 can't get your travel expenses paid before the assessment and you can't be reimbursed for things like meals and loss of earnings.

If you travel by taxi, you must get the centre to approve the use of the taxi before your assessment. If you don't, 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.

How to Claim Travel Expenses

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

Cancellations and Contact Details

If you have questions or a request relating to your consultation; cannot attend your appointment; or for cultural or religious reasons you need a same-sex assessor, you must contact the provider's enquiry centre as soon as possible.

You may contact:

CAPITA: 0808 1788 114.

ATOS: <https://www.mypipassessment.co.uk/contact-us/> (insert your postcode into 'our Contact details' and search for the relevant contact number for your area).

Legal Disclaimer

Although great care has been taken in the compilation and preparation of this Factsheet to ensure accuracy, DLS cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions. All information provided is for education / informative purposes and is not a substitute for professional advice.

Any links to external websites has been carefully selected but are provided without any endorsement of the content of those sites.

For further information and advice, please contact our helpline by calling 0207 791 9800.

Email: advice@dls.org.uk

Website: www.dls.org.uk

Address:

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Foundry, 17 Oval Way,
London, SE11 5RR.**

Please support the great work that the Disability Law Service does for those with disabilities and their careers by donating and making sure this service continues. You can donate in the confidence that 97.2% of all money raised is spent on our work.

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