

PIP FACE-TO-FACE ASSESSMENTS

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



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

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

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

Be prepared

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the day

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

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

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

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





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Speak up if you think a young person is having trouble following the thread of a conversation or is likely to misunderstand what other people say. Doing this in a clear, positive way: repeating and phrasing questions more simply, using words they know, checking back they really understood the question and everyone else has understood what the young person is trying to explain will help the assessor spot how easily things can go wrong.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Afterwards

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

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

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

Ask about

- **Blue Badge** – if you get eight points or more under the 'moving around' section of the mobility component of PIP, 10 points under planning and following a journey because you are unable to undertake any journey due to overwhelming psychological distress, or if you are severely sight-impaired you will be entitled to a 'Blue Badge', which allows the holder to park in disabled bays. To find out more email: blue.badges@westsussex.gov.uk or go to: www.westsussex.gov.uk, or contact: **01243 777653**. You can also apply for an on-street disabled parking bay outside your home through the above website.





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- **Citizen's Advice Bureau** – can help with benefits claims, including PIP. There are offices across the county. Tel: **0344 477 1171** or go to: **www.advicewestsussex.org.uk**.
- **Motability** – if you receive the enhanced rate of mobility for PIP, you may be able to use that part of the award to lease a car or scooter via the Motability scheme. Call: **0300 456 4566** or visit: **www.motability.co.uk**.
- **Social care** – your child's social worker may be able to help you to fill out the PIP form. For under 18s call the MASH, tel: **01403 229 900**, email: **MASH@westsussex.gov.uk**. For over 18s, contact the Adults' CarePoint call: **01243 642121**, or email: **socialcare@westsussex.gov.uk**. If you don't have a social worker, your health visitor (via your GP surgery) may also be able to help you.
- **West Sussex County Council's Benefit Advisor** – information and support for families of disabled children applying for benefits, including PIP. Tel: **0330 222 2569 / 07850 240874** or email: **robert.hayes@westsussex.gov.uk**.

Further information and useful links

- ***Making Sense of Adult Life*** – Reaching Families' handbook for parent carers of young people with SEND aged 14+ will guide you through involving your son or daughter in decisions, as well as providing essential information on PIP, further and higher education, social lives, money matters, social care, health, employment and travel. Go to: **www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/guides.html**.
- **Fact Sheets** – further PIP fact sheets: *What is PIP?*; *Tips for Claiming PIP*; and *Reconsiderations and Appeals for PIP and DLA* can be downloaded from our website: **www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/factsheets.html**.
- **Disability Rights UK** – has a helpful guide to making a PIP claim: *Personal Independence Payment - a guide to making a claim*, which includes the scoring system for the 12 activities. For more go to: **www.disabilityrightsuk.org**.
- **Personal Independence Payment (PIP)** – for an overview go to: **www.gov.uk/pip/overview** or to make a new claim call: **0800 917 2222**. For general help and advice call the PIP enquiry line on: **0800 121 4433**.
- **West Sussex Local Offer** – go to **<https://westsussex.local-offer.org>**.

