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## Personal Independence Payment after brain injury

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### Introduction

This factsheet has been written to offer information and guidance on the welfare benefit Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

Welfare benefits can be complicated and eligibility usually depends on personal circumstances, so this factsheet only offers general information on what the benefit is, the application process, tips for managing this with a brain injury, and what to do if you disagree with a decision.

If you need further detailed guidance or support with PIP, there is a list of useful contacts at the end of this factsheet. Alternatively, visit [www.gov.uk/browse/benefits](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits).

### What is PIP?

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a tax-free benefit that can help with the extra costs of living with a health problem or a disability that is expected to be long-term (12 months or longer).

It has replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA), although existing claimants of DLA do not need to do anything unless contacted by DWP about transferring onto PIP.

In most cases you need to be below the State Pension age to start to be eligible for PIP. If you are older than this, you can apply for Attendance Allowance instead. More information on this is available in the factsheet *Attendance Allowance after brain injury*.

### Applying for PIP

You can apply for PIP by phone (contact details are available at the end of this factsheet) or by writing to:

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

Following your application, you will receive a form called 'How your disability affects you'. This form will give you the opportunity to explain how brain injury affects specific aspects of your daily living and mobility.



It is important to think carefully about the information that you put down in this form and to offer as much detail as possible on how your brain injury affects each activity. After submitting the form, you will likely be asked to attend an assessment, and the responses you give on the form and in the assessment will be used to give you a score for the two 'components' of PIP:

### **Daily Living Component**

This component assesses how capable you are of independently carrying out day-to-day activities such as washing and dressing yourself and mixing with others

### **Mobility component**

This component assesses how able you are to move around independently

Your overall score will be totalled using a list of descriptors. It will determine whether you will be able to receive PIP and if so, how much.

For tips on completing the form, see the factsheet *Tips for completing benefits application forms*.

For tips on taking the assessment, see the factsheet *Preparing for welfare benefits assessments*.

## **PIP activities**

It can be helpful to be familiar with the activities of each component so that you can provide as much detail as possible on your application and in the assessment. This will help to make sure that you receive an accurate score. Citizens Advice has a downloadable list of activities, 'descriptors' and points that may be useful to refer to: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/PIP%20descriptors.pdf>.

Below is a list of each activity along with some of the ways that brain injury can affect these. These suggestions are provided as a guide only; you should only include details on your application form of things that you personally experience.

Remember that for each activity, you should carefully consider the following:

- how safely you can complete the task
- how long it takes you
- whether you need any help (from other people or equipment/aids)
- whether completing the task makes you feel anxious, upset or fatigued
- whether your ability to do the task fluctuates from day to day or within each day.

You should also describe any times that things have gone wrong for you while completing the task that may have risked your safety.



## Daily Living Skills

### Preparing food

This activity relates to how able you are to prepare a simple meal. You may get points if you need help with preparing a meal, either from someone supervising you or using aids. If you can only use a basic appliance such as a microwave, you may also get points.

Some ways that brain injury can affect this skill are:

- Memory problems affecting the ability to remember to attend to cooking
- Weakness/paralysis making it difficult to prepare or cook food
- Problems with sequencing information and following instructions, such as following recipes
- Problems with multitasking while preparing a meal
- Problems with motivation so that someone has to encourage you to prepare a meal
- Loss of taste or smell making it difficult to judge how seasoned food is and preparing food that is too high in salt

### Taking nutrition

This descriptor relates to how able you are to eat and drink independently. You may get points if you need help with eating or drinking, either from someone supervising you or using aids.

Some ways that brain injury can affect this skill are:

- Weakness or paralysis making it difficult to hold utensils/cups
- Difficulty or discomfort in swallowing (dysphagia)
- Forgetting to or lacking motivation to eat/drink, so that someone has to prompt you to
- Hormonal imbalances affecting hunger/thirst so that you may not drink or eat enough without prompting

### Managing treatments/medication

This section addresses whether you are on treatments/medication and if you have any difficulties with managing this. Brain injury survivors may be on medication for a variety of issue such as headaches, seizures, mood or hormones, among others.

You will also be scored on any health conditions that you are needing to monitor, such as managing catheters or diabetes.

Rehabilitation such as physiotherapy will also be considered under this activity.

You may get points if you need prompting to manage the treatment/medication, so



you should mention if you have memory problems or difficulties with motivation that affect this.

## **Washing and bathing**

This section assesses how able you are to wash and bathe yourself. You may get points if you struggle with washing or bathing parts of your body. You may also get points if you need someone to prompt or remind you to wash/bathe.

Some of the ways that brain injury can affect this skill are:

- Weakness/ paralysis or dizziness and balance problems making it difficult to wash or unsafe to get in/out of the bathtub unsupervised
- Hemineglect (inability to attend to one side of things) causing someone to not recognise when one side of the body needs to be washed/shaved
- Pain making it difficult to move or reach various parts of the body
- Being unable to identify one's own body odour due to loss of smell
- Executive dysfunction issues causing problems with sequencing (e.g. forgetting to take clothes off before washing)

## **Managing toilet needs**

This section relates to your ability to manage toilet needs. You may get some points if you need support with managing your toilet needs. You may get higher points if you have incontinence of either bladder or bowel function, or both.

## **Dressing and undressing**

This section relates to your ability to get dressed and undressed. You may get some points if you need support with doing this, or if you need prompting either to get dressed/undressed or knowing when it is appropriate to get dressed/undressed.

Some ways that brain injury can affect this are:

- Pain making it difficult to bend or move the body to get dressed/undressed
- Weakness or paralysis making it difficult to get dressed/undressed, especially fastening or unfastening buttons/zips
- Hemineglect (inability to attend to one side of things) causing someone to not recognise when one side of the body needs to be dressed/undressed
- Executive dysfunction causing inappropriate undressing, problems with knowing what order to put clothes on or selecting inappropriate clothing for the weather/occasion

## **Communication**

There are several forms of communication problems following brain injury. Speech may be affected so that a brain injury survivor is unable to articulate words clearly due to difficulties with muscle control, or there may be issues with word retrieval.



You may get some points if you have difficulties with either expressing or understanding information, including if you rely on a communication aid (such as letter boards or Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices) to help with this.

You may get more points if you are unable to understand or express basic information, or are not able to understand or express information at all.

You should include information in this section about any Speech and Language Therapy you may be having.

### **Reading and understanding symbols and words**

This section relates to how able you are to read and understand information. You will not get points if you are able to do this with the use of glasses or contact lenses. However, you may get points if you use other aids or appliances to help.

Some of the ways that brain injury can affect this skill are:

- Visual problems causing difficulties with reading information
- Difficulties with information processing affecting comprehension of information
- Memory problems, or problems with attention or concentration, causing someone to struggling with following information and making sense of it
- Auditory agnosia (inability to comprehend spoken words)

### **Engaging with other people face-to-face**

Problems with engaging with others can be a direct impact of the effects of brain injury, or may be because the survivor has lost the confidence to interact with others following the injury.

You may get points if you need support to engage with others. You may get higher points if engaging with others causes you psychological distress or if your behaviour poses a risk of harm to yourself or others.

Some of the ways that brain injury can affect this are:

- Depression or anxiety, either as a direct result of emotional areas of the brain being injured, or as a result of recognising and accepting the changes in life after brain injury
- Executive dysfunction/ disinhibition causing inappropriate social behaviour
- Problems with managing anger causing someone to become aggressive or abusive towards others
- Overstimulation from noise, lights, conversations or other factors in the socialising environment that cause distress



## **Making budgeting decisions**

This section relates to making decisions about handling money. Points will be given depending on the level of complexity of budgeting that someone is able to do.

Some of the ways that brain injury can affect this skill include:

- Dyscalculia (problems with numerical skills)
- Problems with memory so that someone cannot remember what they have spent money on or need to spend money on
- Impulsivity so that someone impulsively spends money
- Lacking mental capacity for making appropriate financial decisions

## **Mobility skills**

### **Going out**

This skill relates to how able you are to plan routes, travel or undertake journeys. You may get points if you need support with this, including psychological support or support from an assistance dog.

Some of the ways that brain injury affects this skill are:

- Memory problems causing someone to get lost as they cannot remember where they are going or how to get home
- Problems with planning or problem solving, affecting the ability to plan a route or use alternative routes when needed
- Anxiety, especially social anxiety, making someone feel panicked or distressed about planning to go out
- Visual problems affecting the ability to safely travel, move around or when out following a journey.

### **Moving around**

This section asks about how far you can move around and whether you need aids to help with this. You may get points if you are unable to move more than 200 meters. The number of points you get from this section (maximum of 12) depends on how far you are able to move either aided or unaided.

Dizziness and balance issues may affect how far you are able to move around, as well as weakness/paralysis of limbs or visual problems.

Remember that your walking speed, safety and ability to move around to an acceptable standard, should all be considered.

## **After you apply**

Your eligibility for PIP will be based on your score from the application/assessment

Helpline: 0808 800 2244

Email: [helpline@headway.org.uk](mailto:helpline@headway.org.uk)

Website: [www.headway.org.uk](http://www.headway.org.uk)



stage. If you are considered to be eligible, the amount you get will depend on your score for each component. You can receive PIP for either component, or both.

You will receive a letter telling you whether or not you will get PIP and further details of when payment will start, how much you will get and when your PIP will be reviewed.

PIP awards can sometimes lead to other benefits entitlements, either for you or a carer. You should seek advice about other entitlements following a PIP award.

If you are considered to be ineligible or disagree with the amount you will receive, you should seek advice about the risk of challenging the decision, as while your award may go up following reconsideration, it could also go down or stay the same. You should ask for a mandatory reconsideration before appealing. More information on this process is available in the factsheet *Appealing a welfare benefits decision*.

## Useful contact numbers

- **PIP application**  
Telephone: 0800 917 2222  
Textphone: 0800 917 7777  
Relay UK (if you cannot hear or speak on the phone): 18001 then 0800 917 2222  
[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)
- **Turn2Us helpline:** 0808 802 2000  
[www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)
- **Citizens Advice**  
Adviceline (England): 0800 144 8848  
Advicelink (Wales): 0800 702 2020  
Relay UK - if you can't hear or speak on the phone, you can type what you want to say: 18001 then 0800 144 8884  
[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

**Acknowledgements:** Many thanks to Peter R., solicitor and welfare benefits advisor at Potter-Rees-Dolan Solicitors for his contribution to reviewing this factsheet.

This factsheet was published in June 2021.