

Personal Independence Payment after brain injury



This publication is part of Headway's *welfare benefits after brain injury* series. To browse through our publications on a range of issues relating to brain injury and download these free-of-charge, visit www.headway.org.uk/information-library.

Introduction

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a welfare benefit for people who have a long-term illness or disability that affects their ability to complete day-to-day tasks. PIP can help with the financial impact of living with a long-term brain injury. After a brain injury, people may struggle with tasks such as washing, dressing, or preparing a meal for themselves and they may need assistance with these aspects of daily living, for instance through the use of specialist equipment or arranging for professional care. PIP can help to cover these additional costs. This publication has been written to offer information on the benefit Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and how to apply for it after brain injury.

Rules for welfare benefits change regularly. You should always check the latest guidance at 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).

PIP is available across the UK, although if you are in Scotland you will need to apply for Adult Disability Payment instead (more information on this is available at www.mygov.scot/adult-disability-payment).

In most cases you need to be below the State Pension age 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 our publication [Attendance Allowance after brain injury](#).

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Applying for PIP

You can apply for PIP by phone or by writing to the PIP New Claims team (contact details for both are available at the end of this publication).

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 our publication [Tips for completing benefits application forms](#). For tips on taking the assessment, see our publication [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: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/PIP%20descriptors.pdf.

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Below is a list of each activity along with some of the ways that brain injury can affect these. Remember that for each activity, you should carefully consider the following:

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

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

The information below offers general guidance on some of the ways in which a brain injury might interfere with your ability to work. However, you should always be honest about this. It might be helpful to ask someone who knows you well to help with answering some questions if you have problems with your memory or insight.

Daily Living Skills

Preparing food

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

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- 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 do so;
- Hormonal imbalances affecting hunger/thirst so that you may not drink or eat enough without first being prompted.

Managing treatments/medication

This section addresses whether you are on any treatments/medication and if you have any difficulties with managing this. Brain injury survivors may be on medication for a variety of issues such as headaches, seizures, mood disorders or hormonal imbalances, 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, difficulties with motivation or problems with organising yourself that might affect this.

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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 might also get points if you need someone to prompt 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 fail to wash one side of their body without being prompted first;
- Pain causing difficulties with moving or reaching various parts of the body;
- Loss of sense of smell affecting one's ability to smell their own body odour;
- Executive dysfunction issues causing problems with sequencing, for example forgetting to take clothes off before washing or forgetting that in the morning one should brush their teeth.

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 causing difficulties with moving the body to get dressed/undressed;
- Weakness or paralysis making it difficult to get dressed/undressed, especially fastening or unfastening buttons/zips;

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- Hemineglect (inability to attend to one side of things) causing someone to fail to dress one side of their body without being prompted first;
- Executive dysfunction causing problems with knowing what order to put clothes on or selecting inappropriate clothing for the weather/occasion;
- Disinhibition causing inappropriate undressing.

Communication

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

You might 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.

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 processing information that has been read;
- 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).

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Engaging with other people face-to-face

Problems engaging with others can be a direct impact of the effects of brain injury, or may be caused by the survivor losing confidence to interact with others. You might 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, making someone feel panicked 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 depends on how far you are able to move either aided or unaided.

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 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, when payment will start, how much you will get and when your PIP will be reviewed.

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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 our publication [Appealing a welfare benefits decision](#).

Useful contacts

- **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/pip

- **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

Acknowledgements

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

Last reviewed 2024.

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