

Derbyshire Welfare Rights Service

Personal Independence Payment – The Medical Assessment Process

This leaflet follows on from our information about filling in the PIP2 form (Factsheet 10). If you have not seen this and would like a copy please contact us or go to the Welfare Benefits pages of the Derbyshire County Council website.

After your form is completed and sent to the DWP an 'independent health professional' will look at your claim form and any medical evidence that you provide from your GP or consultant.

You are likely to be asked to attend a face-to-face consultation with an independent health professional, after which that professional will give advice to the Case Manager (Decision Maker) at the DWP who will decide on your entitlement to PIP.

The consultation may be in person or by telephone.

If the details that you have already provided are sufficient to make your situation clear, you may not have to attend a face-to-face examination.

If you are terminally ill and claiming under the special rules, you will not have to attend a medical examination.

You must be given at least 7 days' written notice (including electronic communication) of the consultation (time, date and location) unless you agree to a shorter period.

You may also be asked to provide additional information – you will have one month to provide this, but more time can be allowed if it is reasonable to do so.

Failure to provide information or to attend or participate in a medical examination without good cause may lead to the refusal of your claim:

'Good reason' includes your state of health at the relevant time and the nature of any disability you have – so if you have been unwell and unable to attend an examination, this should count – but 'good reason' is not confined solely to reasons of health.

If you are not going to be able to attend, contact the company that offers the examination (see below) as soon as you can.

If you do not attend, you will be given a chance to explain why, but it is best not to wait for the DWP to contact you: if your benefit is stopped you may appeal against the decision.

Who will perform the examination?

Capita perform examinations in the DE, LE and NG post code areas.

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ATOS perform examinations in the SK and S post code areas.

Where?

Examinations may take place at a medical centre which should be no more than 90 minutes' travel by public transport from your home. You may request to be seen in your home if attending a centre would cause you difficulties because of your condition but you will need supporting evidence from your GP. This should be as specific as possible about the reasons why you need a home visit.

If you think that the medical centre is too far away and you are having problems getting a home visit, seek advice.

Will I get a reminder of the examination date?

Both companies send reminders prior to the examination.

Can I take someone with me?

Yes – you should be able to go with a companion, be it a friend, carer, support worker, mental health advocate.

What will happen?

Whether the interview is at a medical centre or in your home, you should be treated in a polite, professional manner - and in a way that is appropriate to your illness or disability.

The health professional will ask you questions relating to your daily activities and mobility needs (see our leaflet 'Factsheet 10 – Filling in the PIP2 form' for details) – you may be asked about your home (and, for instance, any problems you have moving about at home, any adaptations to your home to help with disability) your work (especially if what you can do is now limited, or you have had to change jobs owing to disability problems) and hobbies or social activities – remember to mention if you have had to give any such activities up because of illness or disability.

You may be asked to give a description of your typical day, including when you get up, washing, dressing, cooking and what difficulties you have with these.

You can explain the health conditions you wrote about in your claim, and how they affect your daily life. If someone is with you they cannot speak for you in most cases but they can prompt you to add useful information and they can add relevant information. (If you cannot make yourself understood, or cannot understand what is said to you without help then a common-sense approach should be taken by the health care professional).

Remember to add any information that you think has been missed by the health care professional.

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Remember to stress if you cannot do certain tasks safely, or if doing them repeatedly would cause you difficulties, if you have to take a long time over them or cannot manage them to an acceptable standard.

If the effects of your condition are variable over time, make this clear. If you are able to say how many 'good' or 'bad days' you have, this will help.

If a physical examination is needed, the professional needs to explain this to you and also needs your consent to proceed. You should not be asked, as part of any physical examination, to do anything that will cause you pain or discomfort, or which will affect you later.

The health professional will also make notes of how you walk, sit, stand, bend down get on and off an examination couch, and how you use any aids or appliances.

The professional should summarise their findings to you and invite any questions from you, but their findings are not the final decision on your entitlement to PIP.

Can I record the interview?

Atos and Capita do not provide recordings but you may use your own recording equipment, within reason. You should let the company know in advance that you wish to record the interview, you must be able to provide them with a CD or audio-cassette copy of the interview, and you will be asked to sign an agreement that you will provide a copy and that you will not use the recording for any unlawful purposes.

If you attempt to record the interview without permission, the examination may be halted, and if you refuse to stop recording, this may lead to the DWP refusing your claim.

The government has announced that PIP examinations will be recorded as standard part of the process, but a date for this change is not yet known; they are 'currently exploring potential options to test the recording of assessments, including video recording ...'

Remember: the details will be sent to a Case Manager (Decision Maker) who will decide if you are entitled to PIP, and at what rate.

If you disagree with the decision, see our 'Challenging Benefit Decisions' leaflet for information on how to seek 'Mandatory Reconsideration' of the decision, and your right to appeal.

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Help from the Council's Welfare Rights Service

If you would like help with a revision or an appeal, contact our Helpline.

We can assist you through the process and we can act as your representatives, which can include going with you to a tribunal hearing.

Please seek assistance as soon as possible – we need as much notice as possible that you would like help with an appeal.

We are not able to attend PIP examinations.

To keep up-to-date with benefit changes in Derbyshire go to
www.derbyshire.gov.uk/benefitnews

For more advice and information phone:

Benefits Helpline – 01629 531535 or email
welfarebenefits@derbyshire.gov.uk

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
11.00am – 4.00pm