

The **Thalidomide** Trust

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Pack

Welcome to the PIP pack. This information is designed specifically to help beneficiaries of the Trust with their PIP applications. Getting the application form right – i.e. providing enough good information about your condition, and then confirming that information at the assessment, is absolutely essential to a successful application for PIP.

There is a wealth of good quality general information available about PIP, particularly the [Disability Rights Guide to claiming PIP](#). The information contained in this PIP Pack however focuses on the experience of Thalidomide affected people and their individual needs.

Contents of this PIP pack:

- Section A** - **Introduction to the PIP process**
- Section B** - **Case Studies**
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- Section D** - **A guide to making a claim**

Section A

What is PIP?

PIP stands for **Personal Independence Payment** and it is the name of the new benefit that has been introduced to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

Basic Information on how PIP works, eligibility and payment levels can be found [here](#)

The PIP Process

If you are already receiving a fixed or indefinite award of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), you do not need to apply for PIP. You will be contacted by the DWP and invited to make a new claim for PIP.

If you have never applied for or been awarded DLA, but feel that you may now be eligible, you will have to make a new claim for PIP by telephoning the DWP and you will then follow the process from stage 2.

Stage 1 – Notification by the DWP that you are being moved to PIP

Once you receive your letter from the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP), you have 4 weeks to contact the DWP on the number provided and provide the relatively straightforward information requested in the letter.

We would like to know when you have been contacted to move to PIP, even if you feel that you don't need any help at this stage, it is useful for us to understand how many people are being affected by the changes. Please email michelle-jane.robinson@thalidomidetrust.org to us to let us know

Stage 2 – Completing the form entitled: 'How your disability affects you'

Approximately 2 weeks after you have responded to the first letter, you will receive a form entitled: 'How your condition affects you'. You have **one month** to complete and return this form and it is important to remember to keep a copy of the form once you have completed it. This is so you can take it to your medical assessment or refer to it later on, if your application is contested.

It is very important to complete this form as fully and clearly as possible. This is the most important part of the process along with gathering any supporting evidence.

If you are unsure or need help completing this form there are a number of places you can get help. The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) has a good online tool: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/sick-or-disabled-people-and-carers/pip/help-with-your-pip-claim/fill-in-form/> and can also provide help face to face. You will need to call your local CAB and make an appointment, so do this in good time.

Click here to find your local CAB: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

If you would like more advice on the above please contact us by e-mailing michelle-jane.robinson@thalidomidetrust.org. We can discuss your form with you and signpost you to a local advice service.

We can also put you in touch with a beneficiary volunteer who will help you make sure you fill the form in as thoroughly as possible.

We have put together some **case studies** from other beneficiaries who have been through the PIP process, to give you some idea of how to provide the information on the form and evidence your difficulties. These are just examples to help you think about your own problems, they may not all be relevant to you and you may have more to say about your own problems. However, they will help you understand how to think about the descriptors. (See below)

Please [click here](#) for Case Study 1 – Upper limb and eyesight affected

Please [click here](#) for Case Study 2 – Upper limb and back affected

Please [click here](#) for Case Study 3 – Upper limb affected

Please [click here](#) for Case Study 4 – Hearing impaired

Please [click here](#) for Case Study 5 – Lower limb affected

You can download a blank form to help you think about your own difficulties [here](#).

What are the Descriptors

The PIP descriptors include 10 areas of everyday living of activities, and 2 aspects of mobility activity. Each of these descriptors is assessed by the DWP using a scoring system. To get an award of the daily living component you need to score 8 points for the standard rate 12 for the enhanced rate. To get an award for the mobility component you need to score 8 points for standard rate and 12 points for the enhanced rate. The person assessing your application will be looking at the detail in your form and judging it, along with the evidence you provide. To see the descriptors click [here](#).

Supporting Evidence

You have the opportunity to send supporting evidence to back up the information you have provided in the form. This will not be taken into account unless you disagree with the outcome of the assessment, however it is useful to get it together at this stage while you are focused on producing your information.

The extra information we suggest you gather could include:

- A medical report from any specialist you have been seeing. They may charge you for this.
- Information that confirms any adaptations you have made to your home or car – e.g. invoices
- A supporting letter that provides information about how your disability affects you. The Thalidomide Trust can provide this for you [click here](#) to see a sample letter, or you may have someone you see regularly relating to a long term condition who would also provide this – a physiotherapist for example.
- Letters confirming your appointments with any therapists you see regularly

Click [here](#) to see a guide, which will assist those you have approached to complete this element for you.

If you need more time to fill in your form, don't panic. You should contact the PIP claim line immediately and ask for an extension (telephone: 0800 9172222 or textphone: 0800 917 7777 8am to 6pm Mon to Fri). If you have a good reason, they'll agree a new deadline over the phone. If you are worried about time and need help asking for an extension, contact michelle-jane.robinson@thalidomidetrust.org for help.

Stage 3 – The Assessment

In some cases DWP assessor, will decide if they have enough information to make a decision based on the information in your form and supporting information alone. We are keen to know if this happens to you – please let us know by e-mailing michelle-jane.robinson@thalidomidetrust.org

If the DWP need further information from you to make a decision about your claim, they will then instruct one of two contracted assessment companies, Atos or Capita to further assess you. In most cases you will be contacted by one of these organisations and be invited to attend a face to face assessment. This will be held at an assessment centre that is relatively local to where you live. You are able to take someone with you to the assessment and bring along a copy of your application form so you can refer to this.

The person carrying out the assessment will have all the information from your form. It is **essential** that at the assessment you repeat and reinforce this information as that is what the assessor is looking for. The assessor is there to observe your situation in line with the descriptors and ask questions to confirm how your disability affects your day to day activities in the following areas:

Ten areas of **daily living activity**

- Preparing food
- Taking nutrition
- Managing therapy or monitoring a health condition
- Washing and bathing
- Managing toilet needs or incontinence
- Dressing and undressing
- Communicating verbally
- Reading and understanding signs, symbols and words
- Engaging with other people face to face
- Making budgeting decisions

Two areas of **mobility activity**

- Planning and following journeys
- Moving around

The DWP assessor will utilise the information provided by the professional, who has met you, to make their final decision. Ultimately the power of award and decision lies with the DWP.

Requesting a Home Assessment

In some circumstances you can request that assessment takes place at your home, particularly if you can evidence that you have significant difficulties travelling and moving around due to your disabilities or anxiety for example and would have great difficulty getting to the assessment centre.

Evidence will need to be provided from a GP or other healthcare professional who is treating you that you are unable to travel due to health grounds

Preparing for an Assessment

The assessment is a key part of the process and it is helpful to understand the criteria that the assessor will use and how you can help them understand the impact your disability has on you.

People have told us that they find the assessment a difficult experience because it forces them to focus on the negatives and all the things they can't do. Many beneficiaries cope very well on a day to day basis, have a very positive outlook towards their abilities and hate to define themselves as disabled. However it is very important, that the assessor

understands what life is like for you most of the time to ensure to award you the correct number of points.

There are two key areas – how often you have difficulty carrying out an activity and how reliably you can carry it out.

The assessor will ask about how **often** you experience the difficulties with the activities of daily living that you have described in your form. . The important point for the assessment is to be clear whether you experience each difficulty on **more than half** of the occasions that you undertake that task within any set period, which may be daily, a week, a month, or a year.

The assessor will award you points based on whether you can complete a task within a descriptor **RELIABLY**. The “Reliably” test is very important and means:

Safely

- You have to be able to manage an activity in a manner that is unlikely to cause any harm to yourself or anyone else. Harm doesn't have to occur, but if it is likely to occur then you are not able to complete a task “**reliably**”.

*For example – if you can make a sandwich (or cup of tea) and experience numbness in your hand which means that there is a high risk that the knife (or kettle) might slip and you could cut yourself– you cannot prepare food “**safely**”.*

Repeatedly

- If the effort of completing the activity makes it hard for you to repeat that particular task or prevents you from completing other tasks, e.g. due to a combination of pain and fatigue, you are not '**reliably**' able to do it.

*For example – if you can go to the toilet independently in the morning using the commode, (or walk 50 metres) but cannot do it later in the day as your pain and tiredness is worse, then you cannot do it “**repeatedly**”.*

In a reasonable time

- If a person did not have the same mental or physical condition as you, then how long would they take to do that task? If you would take more than twice as long as this, then you are not achieving that particular descriptor '**reliably**'.

*For example – if you can manage to shower and dress yourself but it takes more than twice as long as someone who does not experience the same difficulties as you in managing this task, then you cannot do it “**in a reasonable time**”.*

To an acceptable standard

- If you perceive that you can manage a task and actually see it through but are unable to carry it out effectively and thoroughly then this has not been achieved '**reliably**'. This is because it has not been carried out to an 'acceptable standard'.

*For example – if you can wash yourself but can't reach your hair and certain parts of your body thoroughly even with using an aid, then you cannot do it “**to an acceptable standard**”.* You may be able to squirt the shower gel on your chest and then you leave the water to rinse the gel, but this not getting thoroughly cleaned.

Stage 4 – Notification of the Decision

You will be notified of the decision by letter usually within 4 weeks of the assessment. This will tell you which element of PIP you have been awarded and at what level.

Please let us know by e-mailing michelle-jane.robinson@thalidomidetrust.org the outcome of your PIP application for our records and if you are unhappy with the decision, contact us for help with what to do next.

Stage 5 – Mandatory Reconsideration

If you think the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) has made the wrong decision about your claim for PIP, and you did not get the award that you think you were entitled to, you can challenge the decision by asking the DWP to look at their decision again. This is called a 'mandatory reconsideration'. This is the process whereby you formally ask the DWP to look again at their decision and can provide further evidence or information to help your case.

If you wish to appeal at a later date, you **MUST** have gone through this process first.

Click here for more information <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/sick-or-disabled-people-and-carers/pip/appeals/mandatory-reconsideration/>

If you would like some help or advice at this stage, please contact us by e-mailing michelle-jane.robinson@thalidomidetrust.org

Stage 6 – Appeal

If you are not happy with the outcome of the DWP's reconsideration, then you can appeal to the First Tier Tribunal in writing.

The Tribunal may be able to make a decision based on your written appeal, or you may be required to attend in person. Click here for more information on Appeals <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/sick-or-disabled-people-and-carers/pip/appeals/apply-to-tribunal/>

If you are considering an appeal and feel you need some help, please contact Michelle Robinson on 01480 474074 or e-mail michelle.jane.robinson@thalidomidetrust.org to talk about the help that is available.

You may also want to read the following guide on "[How to win a PIP appeal](#)"