



Constituency Casework Guide

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

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Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a benefit that has replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for people between the age of 16 and State Pension age. Given that constituency offices often receive requests for support and assistance with PIP claims and appeals, the purpose of this guide is to signpost to useful sources of information and advice on PIP. It includes:

- **A brief overview of PIP**
- **Sourcing information for constituents on PIP**
- **Sourcing information for those providing advice and assistance on PIP**
- **Special rules for terminal illness**
- **Other benefits and entitlements for PIP claimants**
- **Appealing a PIP decision**
- **The complaints process**
- **How to access statistics on PIP**
- **Where to find the statutory reviews of the PIP process**
- **Transitioning to PIP for those aged 16 and over**
- **Sources of independent information and advice**

Should MLAs or their constituency staff have suggestions for information they would like to see in the guide, or have links to useful sources that they would like to share, please feel free to contact the Research and Information Service at RaISeCSU@niassembly.gov.uk

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1 Personal Independence Payment (PIP): an overview

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) helps towards some of the extra living costs arising from having a long term physical or mental health condition or disability. PIP replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for working age claimants between the ages of 16 and State Pension age and was implemented in Northern Ireland under Part 5 of the [Welfare Reform \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2015](#). The roll out of PIP began in Northern Ireland in June 2016. PIP comes under the responsibility of the Department for Communities (DfC).

There are two parts to PIP, known as ‘components’. These are the ‘daily living’ component and the ‘mobility’ component. There are two rates of benefit for each component, the ‘standard rate’ and the ‘enhanced rate’:

PIP 2023/24 rates	Standard weekly rate	Enhanced weekly rate
Daily living component	£68.10	£101.75
Mobility component	£26.90	£71.00

PIP is tax free and paid every four weeks and can be claimed whether you are in work or not.

To be entitled to PIP a claimant will be assessed on their ability to carry out daily living and/or mobility activities. To be eligible, constituents must satisfy the ‘required period condition’; in other words, they have had difficulties for at least three months and that these are expected to last at least another nine months. There are four steps to claiming PIP and further information on these steps is available from the NI Direct website [here](#) and an ‘easy read’ guide on the claims process for constituents is available [here](#). As part of the claim for PIP, or a review of an existing claim, constituents may be asked to take part in a health assessment carried out by an independent health assessor. This can be carried out in person or over the phone by [Capita](#), an independent company commissioned by the Department for Communities (DfC) to carry out the assessments. Please note that there are special rules for claiming PIP for people living with a terminal illness.

The Capita website contains answers to a range of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) e.g. about the health assessment, who can accompany you to the assessment, how to obtain a copy of the assessment report, support for those with communication needs, as well as information on the different [types of consultations](#) (e.g. face-to-face, telephone).

Should a constituent disagree with their PIP decision they can ask for a ‘Mandatory Reconsideration’ and this means that the [PIP Centre](#) will look at the decision again. Information on how to apply for a Mandatory Reconsideration on a PIP is available [here](#). If a constituent is still not satisfied with the outcome of the mandatory reconsideration, they can appeal to an independent [Appeal Tribunal](#) (the Department for Communities may review the

case again before it goes to Tribunal). Further information on appealing a benefit decision is available from the NI Direct website [here](#).

As required by law, two independent reviews of the PIP assessment process in Northern Ireland have been commissioned and now completed (the Radar Review published in 2018 and the Cavanagh Review published in 2020). Signposting to the review reports, the Departmental responses to the reviews, and also the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman NIPSO 'own initiative' investigation into PIP, are available in section nine of this constituency guide.

The final part of the constituency guide provides information for constituents on independent sources of advice and information on PIP.

2 Sourcing information for constituents on PIP – where do I start?

A good place to start is the NI Direct webpage '[Personal Independence Payment \(PIP\)](#)' which provides information on the following:

- PIP eligibility criteria and PIP amounts paid.
- An overview of how PIP works (the daily living and mobility components).
- Special rules for terminal illness.
- The four steps in claiming PIP including information that constituents could use to help support their claim.
- PIP Assessments.
- The decision-making process.
- An overview of PIP claims and how they work.
- Reporting a change in circumstances.
- Disability Premiums and other sources of financial support for PIP claimants.
- What to do if an applicant or claimant disagrees with a decision.
- How to apply for a mandatory consideration.
- How to complain about the service you receive.
- How to contact the PIP Centre.

Contact details for the **Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Centre** including opening hours is available [here](#). It includes contact information for deaf or hard of hearing users and customers (textphone number and British and Irish Sign Language video relay service).

Videos

A series of videos that explain the key stages of PIP are also available on the NI Direct YouTube channel and constituents may find these more accessible and user-friendly. Links to these are included in the box below. The videos are also available in British and Irish Sign Language.

NI Direct YouTube Channel – PIP Videos

- [Is Personal Independence Payment for you or someone you know?](#)
- [Claiming Personal Independence Payment](#)
- [PIP – providing information to support your claim](#)
- [Your face to face PIP assessment](#)
- [PIP Assessment – what to expect?](#)
- [Key things to know about your PIP decision](#)
- [How the Department for Communities assesses your claim](#)

The videos can be viewed in British Sign Language and subtitles [here](#) and in Irish Sign Language and subtitles [here](#).

Are there leaflets I can provide to constituents?

A series of Department for Communities easy read leaflets on how to claim PIP, the PIP process and the use of information to support a claim are available to download [here](#).

3 Is there any information available for those providing advice and assistance on PIP?

The Law Centre NI has produced an '[Advice on PIP in Northern Ireland](#)' Guide (April 2023). This is an easy to read guide on PIP which would be useful for both advisers and constituents.

The Department for Communities (DfC) has produced a short PIP '[Guide for Advisors](#)'. There is also a [PIP Handbook](#) document on the DfC website that provides more detailed information on issues such as conditions of entitlement and assessments for PIP. The Department for Communities website also provides a range of other information resources on PIP which may be useful for those providing advice. These are available to download [here](#). The DfC [Advice for Decision Making Guides](#) also provide detailed information on the operation of PIP.

Helping with appeals

The Law Centre Advisor Practice Guide for advisors assisting with appeals to the Appeal Tribunal in Northern Ireland. The guide published in December 2021 is available to download [here](#).

Training sources

Training on PIP and other benefit issues may be available from organisations such as the [Law Centre NI](#) and [Advice NI](#) – you can search the websites or join their mailing lists to keep up to date with training opportunities.

Keep up-to-date with the last social security news:

The [Law Centre NI](#) publishes a quarterly **Social Security Law and Practice Bulletin** that provides information on topical benefits issues, case law, legislation, training and events. You can subscribe to the bulletin [here](#).

[Advice NI](#) publish a monthly newsletter '**Think**' that provides links to policy briefings, research, welfare reform issues and social security guidance for advisors. You can subscribe to the newsletter [here](#).

You can also access the latest social security news and development on RightsNet. The Northern Ireland Assembly Library holds a subscription and password details can be accessed [here](#) or by contacting the Assembly Library.

4 Where can I find information on the special rules for terminal illness?

The special rules for terminal illness have recently changed due to the [Social Security \(Terminal Illness\) Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#) which received Royal Assent on 30 March 2022. Fast track access to PIP is available where a person is terminally ill and has less than 12 months to live. If a person meets the criteria for the special rules they:

- Will not have to complete the PIP form 'How your disability affects you'.
- Will not need a consultation.
- Will be entitled to an award of the enhanced rate of the daily living part of PIP without having to satisfy the normal qualifying period.
- May also be entitled to the mobility component of PIP depending on their mobility needs.

Claiming under the Special Rules

A claim for PIP under the special rules can be made by phoning the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Centre (another person can make the call on someone's behalf). Contact details are available from the NI Direct website [here](#).

Further detailed information on the PIP special rules for terminal illness is available on DfC website [here](#). An information leaflet on the special rules is also available on the [DfC website](#). Note that if a person is terminally ill the information provided on NI Direct recommends that they obtain an SR1 form from a medical professional.

NI Direct also provides some further information on other benefits if a person is living with a terminal illness and this is available [here](#). Also included are contact details for a range of independent organisations that can provide information and support to those living with a terminal illness and their carers. This includes details for the '[Make the Call](#)' service in which a Benefits Advisor can check to ensure a person is receiving all the benefits, services and support that they are entitled to.

5 What other benefits and payments are people on PIP entitled to?

Depending on their circumstances, some PIP claimants may be entitled to, or in receipt of, a range of other sources of support depending on their circumstances and their eligibility for certain other benefits and payments, these include:

- [Disability Premiums](#)
- The disability element of [Working Tax Credit](#)
- The [Blue Badge Scheme](#)
- [Vehicle discount or exemption](#)
- [Motability scheme](#)
- The [cost of living Support Payment](#) 2023/24

Should a constituent be in a financial crisis they may be able to access financial support in the form of loans or grants. Further information on this is available from the NI Direct website [here](#).

6 What if my constituent disagrees with a PIP decision?

If a constituent disagrees with the decision, they can ask for a 'mandatory reconsideration' by contacting the PIP Centre. The [NI Direct website](#) provides more detailed information on the mandatory reconsideration process including information on how to apply for a mandatory reconsideration, the process for sending in evidence, time limits to appeal, and what happens during the reconsideration process.

Constituents will receive the outcome of the mandatory reconsideration via a Mandatory Reconsideration Notice (MRN). Once they have received the MRN, and are still unhappy with this decision, they can appeal to an independent Appeal Tribunal. The NI Direct website states that the Department for Communities may review the case again before it goes to tribunal and that new or more evidence can be sent to support the claim at this stage. Further information on how to appeal a benefits decision is available on the NI Direct website [here](#).

An **easy read guide** on mandatory reconsiderations and appeals is available on the Department for Communities website; see '[Important things to know about your PIP decision](#)'.

7 What if my constituent wishes to complain about a service they have received?

If a constituent is unhappy about any aspect of the service provided, they can make a complaint to the Department for Communities (DfC). The NI Direct website states they can contact the department about any aspect of the service provided and that this will not affect their claim. The Department for Communities policy can be found [here](#).

Constituents can also complain about the service received from the PIP Service Provider Capita. Information including contact details can be found [here](#).

Information on how to complain about the Appeals Service and/or tribunal members is available [here](#).

8 Where can I find statistics on PIP?

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) statistics are available from the Department for Communities website [here](#). The latest publication is for May 2023 and the next publication will be released on 29 November. It includes data on registered claims, cleared claims, clearance time, awards, claims in payment, reassessed DLA claims and mandatory reconsiderations.

9 Where can I find the reports of the statutory reviews of PIP?

Article 94 of the [Welfare Reform \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2015](#) required the Department for Communities to lay before the Northern Ireland Assembly two independent reports on the operation of the PIP Assessment Process:

- The [First Independent Review of the PIP Assessment Process](#) in Northern Ireland was published in June 2018 and was carried out by Walter Rader. The review made 14 recommendations. The Department for Communities' Interim Response to the First Review is available to download [here](#).
- The [Second Independent Review of the PIP Assessment Process](#) in Northern Ireland was published in December 2020 and was carried out by Marie Cavanagh. The review made 12 recommendations. The Department for Communities' response to the second review is available to download [here](#).

In addition to these reports, the [Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman \(NIPSO\)](#) conducted an 'own initiative' investigation into 'PIP and the Value of Further Evidence' and concluded that the Department for Communities and Capita had failed to properly obtain and use all relevant medical information to help them assess claims for PIP. NIPSO's report was published in June 2021 and is available to download [here](#). A [follow-up report](#) was subsequently published by NIPSO in May 2023 monitoring the progress made since June 2021.

10 Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for the under 16s and transitioning to PIP aged 16 and over

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is still available for eligible children under the age of 16. Further information on DLA and the transition to PIP for children aged 16 and over is available on the NI Direct website [here](#). A DLA Child [information booklet](#) and application form are also available from the NI Direct website [here](#).

If a constituent's child is transitioning from DLA to PIP when they turn 16 years of age, and they find themselves financially worse off after they have been assessed for PIP, support may be available in the form of welfare supplementary payments. See the NI Direct website for further information [here](#).

Note that some claimants over State Pension Age will continue to claim DLA if they had been claiming the benefit before the transition to PIP. See [here](#) for further details.

11 Independent sources of advice and information

Law Centre

[Law Centre NI](#) – its [Social Security hub](#) provides advice on the law relating to social security benefits and provides representation before the Social Security Commissioners and/or at Social Security Appeals Tribunals. The advice line can be contacted on 028 90 244401 (Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm).

Advice NI

[Advice NI](#) can provide information and advice on issues such as social security benefits (including disability benefits), employment and advice. Its freephone advice helpline number is 0800 915 4604 or email advice@adviceni.net.

Local advice organisations

An interactive map of local advice organisations including contact details is also available on the Advice NI website [here](#).

Contact details for other independent community advice organisations are listed [here](#).

This information is provided to MLAs in support of their Assembly duties and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual or organisation. Whilst we strive to ensure that the information provided here is up to date, the information on external websites referred to may change frequently. This leaflet should not be relied upon as providing legal or professional advice, nor as a substitute for it. A suitably qualified professional should be consulted if specific advice or information is required.

The Research and Information Service is available to discuss the content of this briefing with Members and their staff, but not with the general public.

For more information, please use the following weblink or QR code: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/research-and-information-service-raise/>

