# The PIP Toolkit – RNIB Top Tips for completing your PIP2 form

## Is Personal Independence Payment for you?

If you are blind or partially sighted the RNIB PIP Toolkit will help you to complete your Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application form effectively.

## What is PIP?

PIP is a benefit which helps with some of the extra costs related to disability if you’re aged 16 or over and under state pension age when you claim. It has replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for working age people but DLA can still be claimed by children under 16.

PIP has two parts, a mobility component and a daily living component.

For more information about PIP you can request a copy of our PIP factsheet by ringing our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** 8am – 8pm on weekdays and 9am – 1pm on Saturdays or email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**. It is also available online at **rnib.org.uk**.

## How do I claim PIP?

You begin your PIP claim by ringing **0800 917 2222**. You will be helped to complete the first section of the PIP application form over the phone. This involves providing some basic information, including your National Insurance number and details of health professionals involved in your care.

You will then be sent the second section of the application form called “How your disability affects you” (PIP2) form to complete. This is your opportunity to explain your difficulties with carrying out various everyday activities and with getting about outdoors.

**Please note** that you can ask the DWP to send you the PIP2 form in a format that is accessible for you.

## How can the PIP Toolkit help?

This Toolkit is designed to help you to complete your PIP2 form as clearly and completely as possible. The PIP2 form contains questions about how your disability affects your ability to undertake a range of activities related to daily living and getting out and about. You score points, for each question based on the level of difficulty you have in completing the activity.

This toolkit is focussed on the activities on the PIP2 form that are most relevant to many blind and partially sighted people. Guidance and tips are provided to help you explain your difficulties with carrying out the PIP activities and tasks related to those activities.

It does not cover all of the questions on the PIP2 form. You may have difficulties that we have not identified resulting from other disabilities or health issues you have. It is important that you look at all the questions on the PIP2 form and explain the difficulties you have because of all your disabilities, when carrying out a particular activity.

For example, if you also have hearing loss you should complete the pages about the activity of ‘Communicating’. Or, if you have arthritis in your hands, as well as sight loss, you will, for example, need to explain the different ways that your ability to prepare food or to get dressed is affected by your disabilities.

Within each activity there are “descriptors”. These are descriptions of the tasks within each activity. The tasks vary in the level of difficulty or the nature of assistance needed (including using aids) to complete the task. The points awarded vary for each task within each activity (please see our PIP factsheet for more information about how points are awarded in the PIP assessment).

Examples of descriptors that are included in the Preparing food and reading activities:

Activity: ‘Preparing food’ - descriptor 1d:

* The claimant needs prompting to be able to either prepare or cook a simple meal.

Activity’: ‘Reading’ - descriptor 8b:

* The claimant needs to use an aid or appliance, other than spectacles or contact lenses, to be able to read or understand written information

Each activity in the PIP2 form has a number of tick box questions, followed a by a page headed ‘Extra information’. You should always fill-in the ‘Extra information’ when an activity is relevant to you. This is the main opportunity for you to explain your difficulties in carrying out an activity and any help you get or might need, to enable you to do the activity, as well as any aids you use.

#### Completing PIP activities reliably

When assessing your ability - or not - to carry out a PIP activity, the DWP decision maker must consider your ability to complete it “reliably”. If you cannot complete an activity, or part of an activity, reliably, meaning:

* safely, and
* to an acceptable standard, and
* repeatedly where required, and
* within a reasonable time period

the decision maker must accept that you are not able to carry out the activity.

So carefully consider the reliability criteria when you are explaining your difficulties in carrying out each activity. Ask yourself are you able to complete the task in an activity:

1. “safely” - meaning in a manner unlikely to cause harm to you or to another person, either during or after completion of the task (e.g. in “preparing food” have you cut or burnt yourself? In “washing and bathing” have you had falls getting into or out of the bath?). The likelihood of the harm occurring, and the severity of that harm are relevant here
2. “to an acceptable standard” meaning in a manner that would be deemed satisfactory or adequate (e.g. in “preparing food”, the meal you make should not be burnt; for “planning and following journeys” you should get to your intended destination)
3. “repeatedly” - meaning as often as the activity is reasonably required to be completed, as often during the day as the individual activity requires, where applicable. Consideration needs to be given to the cumulative effects of symptoms such as pain and fatigue
4. “within a reasonable time period” - meaning no more than twice as long as the maximum period that a person without a physical or mental condition would normally take to complete the activity (e.g. in the reading activity, if you can only read a letter or other print items very slowly, or you miss words so that you have to re-read the item, you may be considered as not able to read written information).

When answering all the questions about daily living and mobility activities think about the following questions and give your answers on the “Extra information” pages provided throughout the PIP2 form:

* Can you complete these tasks safely? State if you have had to stop doing an activity because it became too difficult or unsafe, or if you were having accidents. List any accidents you have had, and if you needed treatment at home or had to seek medical treatment e.g. attend A&E
* What difficulties do you have with these tasks?
* What help do you need? Remember, what matters is whether you need help, not whether it is given. If someone already helps you explain who this is, what help they give, and for how long they help each time
* Do the difficulties that you have vary from day to day or throughout the day? If so, how does it vary and how often?
* How long does it take you to complete each task?
* Can you complete each task to an acceptable standard? For example, do you get lost when trying to find your way around on a familiar or unfamiliar journey?
* Can you complete each task as often as you need to?

### The daily living component

The daily living component is paid at two rates: the standard rate and the enhanced rate. The PIP2 form asks questions about a number of activities related to daily living.

The activities that we have identified as being most relevant to blind and partially sighted people are:

* Preparing food
* Taking nutrition
* Managing treatments
* Washing and bathing
* Dressing and undressing
* Reading and understanding signs, symbols and words
* Mixing with other people

Other activities that we do not discuss in detail here are:

* Managing toilet needs or incontinence (this applies to people who have physical difficulties with using a toilet)
* Communicating verbally (this applies to people with a hearing impairment and/or difficulties with speech)
* Making decisions about money/budgeting (this usually applies to people with cognitive impairments, and a sight loss is unlikely to be deemed to interfere with your ability to making budgeting decisions).

We do not cover these daily living activities because you are unlikely to be awarded points in connection with your sight loss for these activities. However, if any of these are relevant to you because of other disabilities, you should make sure you complete the pages on them as well.

**Top tips on answering the questions about activities of daily living**

We have only included questions and descriptors for each activity that are relevant to people with sight loss. However, please note, if you have other disabilities or conditions there may be other, higher scoring descriptors applicable to your circumstances.

### Activity 1: Preparing food

This activity looks at your ability to prepare a simple one course meal for one using fresh ingredients.

#### Questions relevant to sight loss

The descriptors (legal tests) are:

Needs to use an aid or appliance to be able to either prepare or cook a simple meal.

Points: 2

Cannot cook a simple meal using a conventional cooker but is able to do so using a microwave.

Points: 2

Needs prompting to be able to either prepare or cook a simple meal.

Points: 2

Needs supervision or assistance to either prepare or cook a simple meal.

Points: 4

#### More information to help you answer the questions

This activity assesses your ability to open packaging, serve food, peel and chop vegetables and use a microwave oven or cooker hob to cook or heat food. Carrying items around the kitchen is not included in this activity.

Cooking food means heating food at above waist height, for example using a microwave oven or on a cooker hob. It does not consider the ability to bend down, for example to access an oven.

Serving food means transferring food on to a plate or bowl. It does not involve carrying food to where it will be eaten.

If you can peel and chop with the use of an aid you will score 2 points.

If you use pre-chopped vegetables because you cannot peel and chop even with an aid, you need assistance to prepare a simple meal and so score 4 points.

#### Top tips

When answering the questions think about:

* The steps involved both in preparing food items from scratch and then cooking a main meal
* Do you need someone to help you to prepare or cook food - what do they do? Or does someone have to be in the kitchen keeping an eye on you to make sure you are safe?
* What aids do you use to help you cook? Bumpons on your kitchen equipment? A liquid level indicator? Adapted chopping boards? Electric chopper? Finger guard (to protect your fingers when chopping)? Anything else?
* Can you see to identify ingredients, to read packaged food, to weigh ingredients etc?
* Can you tell if a food item is stale or has gone off?
* Can you cook safely? Have you cut yourself or burnt yourself in the past?
* When cutting/chopping/peeling items can you see the knife blade or peeler, or is it blurred for example? Can you see both the item to be chopped and the knife at the same time?
* Are you able to open cans using the pull ring or a standard can opener?
* Do you have to use ready meals or pre-chopped vegetables? Make it clear if you buy these items because you have difficulty preparing and cooking food, not because you prefer them
* Can you safely move items into and out of the oven or microwave? Do you need to wear long oven gloves or use guards to protect yourself?
* Do you need help with reading instructions and use-by dates?
* Can you tell when water in a pan is boiling? Or do you need to use a boil alert?
* Can you cope with hot pans?
* Can you use a cooker hob safely?
* Can you tell where to place your pans on the hob?
* Are you able to rely on non-visual information to tell whether the hob is on or off (e.g. listening to the gas or feeling the dials for the hob)?
* Do you need help to know when food is cooked?
* Do you have to rely on timings rather than visual information to estimate when food is cooked?

Put your answers in the section called “Extra information”.

### Activity 2: Taking nutrition

This activity looks at your ability to eat and drink, including cutting food into pieces and conveying it to your mouth.

#### Questions relevant to sight loss

The descriptors (legal tests) are:

Needs:

1. to use an aid or appliance to be able to take nutrition; **or**
2. supervision to be able to take nutrition; **or**
3. assistance to be able to cut up food.

Points: 2

#### More information to help you answer the questions

Spilling food should be mentioned if this means you must change your clothes after meals.

#### Top tips

When answering the questions think about:

* What aids do you use to help you to eat? Do you use a plate guard to stop food from falling off the plate?
* Do you need to use specifically coloured plates so that the colour contrast allows you to distinguish different food items?
* Do you need someone to cut up your food on your behalf?
* Do you need help finding and taking bones out of fish or meats?
* Do you have any special cutlery?
* Are you able to see if you have dropped food or drink onto your clothes?
* Do you need to set your food and cutlery out in a particular layout so that you can find them using touch, for example always having your drink on the right-hand side so that you can find it?
* Do you need someone to tell you whereabouts your food is on the plate, for example using the clock face method?

Put your answers in the section called “Extra information”.

### Activity 3: Managing treatments

This activity looks at your ability to appropriately take medications that are prescribed or recommended by a registered doctor, nurse or pharmacist, and to monitor and detect changes in a health condition.

#### Questions relevant to sight loss

The descriptors (legal tests) are:

Needs one or more of the following:

1. to use an aid or appliance to be able to manage medication
2. supervision, prompting or assistance to be able to manage medication
3. supervision, prompting or assistance to be able to monitor a health condition.

Points: 1

#### More information to help you answer the questions

Managing medication means the ability to take prescribed medication in the correct way and at the right time.

Monitoring a health condition or recognising significant changes means the ability to detect changes in the condition and take corrective action, as advised by a healthcare professional.

Pill boxes, dosette boxes, blister packs, alarms and reminders can be taken into account as aids when you need to use them because you are blind or partially sighted.

#### Top tips

When answering the questions think about:

* Do you use an aid to help you know on what day/at what time you should take your medication?
* Does someone have to help you identify which tablets to take and when?
* Do you use labelling methods to identify your medication? Such as a Penfriend labeller or elastic bands to identify one type of eye drop?
* Do you need help from another person with eye drops?
* Do you use a drop dispenser aid to make it easier to take your drops?
* Do you need help to record your blood sugar levels if you have diabetes? Do you use a large print or talking glucose meter, or do you have to use a magnifier?
* Do you need help to locate your medication?
* Can you read the accompanying information leaflet that comes with your medication or would you need someone else to read this to you? If you do not have any support with this activity how do you manage? Have you had any incidents e.g. taking the wrong tablet or too much of your medication?

Put your answers in the section called “Extra information”.

### Activity 4: Washing and bathing

This activity looks at your ability to wash and bathe, including washing your whole body and getting in and out of a bath or shower that has not been adapted.

#### Questions relevant to sight loss

The descriptors (legal tests) are:

Needs to use an aid or appliance to be able to wash or bathe.

Points: 2

Needs supervision or prompting to be able to wash or bathe.

Points: 2

#### More information to help you answer the questions

If you need someone to be there to make sure you are safe when washing and bathing, this can be taken into account.

#### Top tips

* Have you had an OT assessment that assessed your needs in washing and bathing? Were any adaptations made to your bathroom e.g. grab rail fitted, or aids provided?
* What aids do you use to help you wash and bathe? Bumpons to help you identify different bottles? A shower seat? A grab rail? Anything else? Can you get in and out of a bath or shower safely? Are you safe having a bath if you are at home alone?
* Have you had any falls or accidents when using a bath or shower? If so, what happened, and did you need treatment?
* Can you tell the difference between items such as shampoo and shower gel? Do you have to use any methods (labels or keeping items in specific places) to help you to identify these items?

Put your answers in the section called “Extra information”.

### Activity 6: Dressing and undressing

This activity looks at your ability to put on and take off appropriate clothing that is suitable for the situation.

#### Questions relevant to sight loss

The descriptor (legal test) is:

Needs prompting or assistance to be able to select appropriate clothing.

Points: 2

#### More information to help you answer the questions

If you need help with fastenings, such as zips or buttons this can be taken into account as can your ability to put on/take off socks and shoes.

#### Top tips

When answering the questions think about:

* Do you need advice from another person about which clothes will be appropriate?
* Do you need help with selecting clothes? Do you have any problem with matching up similar colours?
* Do you need someone to check that the clothes you are wearing are clean and do not have stains on them? Has anyone commented or pointed out that something you were wearing was stained or dirty?
* Do you need someone to check that your clothes do not have any holes or need minor repairs?
* Do you use shoes that have a Velcro fastening rather than laces?
* Do you use aids or other methods to help you to identify your clothes, such as Penfriend labels, Slade buttons?
* Do you rely on another person or your sense of touch to tell whether clothes are inside out or on the right way around?

Put your answers in the section called “Extra information”.

### Activity 8: Reading and understanding signs, symbols and words

This activity looks at your ability to read and understand signs, symbols and words in your native language.

#### Questions relevant to sight loss

The descriptors (legal tests) are:

Needs to use an aid or appliance, other than spectacles or contact lenses, to be able to read or understand either basic or complex written information.

Points: 2

Needs prompting to be able to read or understand written information that is either:

Complex Points: 2

or

Basic Points: 4

Cannot read or understand signs, symbols or words at all.

Points: 8

#### More information to help you answer the questions

To be considered able to read, you must be able to see the information. Accessing information via braille is not considered as reading for this activity.

Basic written information is signs, symbols or dates written or printed in standard size text in your native language. Complex information is more than one sentence of written or printed standard size text. Standard size is not defined in the PIP law or guidance. RNIB, for example, uses size 14 point as its standard font size for written documents. But you may find that correspondence and other printed information you receive, such as financial statements, are usually printed in smaller fonts.

Prompting to read may include explaining by another person, for example someone pointing out a sign to the correct toilet for you.

Consideration should be given to whether you can read and understand information both indoors and outdoors. Whether you use or could reasonably be expected to use aids or appliances, such as a blue screen to read text when indoors and a portable magnifying glass to do so when outdoors will be taken into account. If despite using aids you cannot read both indoors and outdoors you may be able to score points from one of the higher scoring descriptors.

#### Top tips

When answering the questions think about:

* Do you use aids to help you read, such as low vision aids? A magnifier? Software packages that read text to you? Assistive technology? Apps on your mobile phone? Lighting? Anything else?
* Do you need someone to read your correspondence to you?
* Do you need help to locate and read street signs or shop names?
* Can you read timetables at railway or bus stations or at bus stops?

Put your answers in the section called “Extra information”.

## Activity 9: Mixing with other people face-to-face

This activity looks at your ability to engage and mix with other people. The impact of your sight loss may be relevant for this activity.

#### Questions relevant to sight loss

The descriptors (legal tests) are:

Needs prompting to be able to engage with other people.

Points: 2

Needs social support to be able to engage with other people.

Points: 4

#### More information to help you answer the questions

Your ability to engage with other people means to mix with people face-to-face, either one-to-one or within a small group. This means mixing in a contextually and socially appropriate manner, being able to understand body language and other non-verbal cues or social cues and being able to establish relationships.

Social support means support from a person either trained or experienced in assisting people to engage in social situations, or someone directly experienced in supporting the claimant themselves. The person can be someone known personally to you such as a family member. You can explain on the PIP2 form who it is that gives you the social support.

When considering whether you can engage with others, consideration should be given to whether you can engage with people generally, not just those people you know well.

#### Top tips

When answering the questions think about:

* Do you need encouragement to interact with other people?
* Do you need someone else to be present so that you can interact with people?
* Do you have problems identifying or recognising other people, perhaps in the street, in a shop, on public transport or in a social situation/gathering e.g. pub or restaurant? How close must you be to be able to recognise people? Give examples of when you failed to recognise someone familiar to you
* Do you need someone to tell you who is talking and if they are talking to you?
* Do you need someone to verbally tell you that they would like to shake your hand as a greeting?
* Do you need someone to tell you when it is your turn in the queue in a public place, for example speaking to someone at the bank?
* Do you need prompts to let you know when to interject in a conversation?
* Do you need someone to introduce you to other people in the room if you cannot recognise people’s faces?
* Do you need someone to describe people’s expressions, body language and behaviour?
* Do you need someone to tell you when other people have moved away and left a group conversation?
* Do you need other people to use your name during group conversation to let you know that they are talking to you?

Put your answers in the section called “Extra information”.

## The mobility component

The mobility component is paid at two rates, the standard rate and the enhanced rate. The PIP2 application form asks questions about your ability to plan and follow the route of a journey.

You are awarded points for the highest-scoring descriptor that most closely matches your difficulties in carrying out the activity.

The activities that we have identified as being most relevant to blind and partially sighted people are:

* Planning and following journeys.

However, if you have a physical disability that affects your ability to walk outdoors, you should also complete the pages on the activity of “Moving around”.

#### Top tips

When answering the mobility questions think about:

* What difficulties do you have with getting around?
* What help you need? Remember, what matters is whether you need help, not whether it is actually provided.
* Do the difficulties that you have vary from day to day or throughout the day? If so, how does it vary and how often?
* Can you plan and follow a route safely?
* How long does it take?
* Can you plan and follow a route to an acceptable standard? For example, do you get lost?
* Can you plan and follow a route as often as you need to?

If your answers to these questions are relevant to any of the mobility activities, put your answers in the sections called “Extra information”.

### Activity 1: Planning and following journeys

This activity looks at your ability to plan and follow the route of a journey safely and reliably. It is about limitations on your mobility resulting from sensory impairments, as well as from mental health and cognitive impairments.

**Please note** Mobility Activity 2, ‘Moving around’ (which we do not cover here) is the activity where you should explain any difficulties you have with the physical act of walking and which causes pain, breathlessness or fatigue.

#### Questions relevant to sight loss

The descriptors (legal tests) are:

Cannot follow the route of an unfamiliar journey without another person, assistance dog or orientation aid.

Points: 10

Cannot follow the route of a familiar journey without another person, an assistance dog or an orientation aid.

Points: 12

#### More information to help you answer the questions

This activity applies to you if you cannot work out where to go, follow directions or deal with unexpected changes in your journey.

If you need to walk with a guide dog, use an orientation aid such as a long cane or have someone there to guide you, you will satisfy the tests. An orientation aid is any specialist aid designed to assist disabled people to follow a route safely.

The questions look at familiar and unfamiliar routes. You score more points and are given a higher rate if you have difficulties following a familiar route.

#### Top tips

When answering the questions think about:

##### Needing assistance and guidance

* Can you get to local destinations you know well without sighted assistance? Or do you need someone with you for all or some of the journey? Explain why e.g. to avoid hazards, unexpected things or people crossing your path such as cyclists or children
* Can you still follow the route of a familiar journey if there are unavoidable changes to your route (e.g. road works, changes to bus stops, new street furniture) or do you need to seek assistance?
* Can you cross the road safely, or do you need sighted assistance to cross the road?
* Can you cross the road at a controlled pedestrian crossing (a traffic light) without sighted assistance? If so, can you see the “green man” or do you rely on the tactile rotating cone?
* If the rotating cone was not working, would you need to ask for sighted assistance?
* What, if any, accidents have you had when getting about e.g. falls or being hit by a vehicle or bicycle? What happened, what treatment did you need? Have you had ‘near misses’ when you were almost hit by a vehicle or cyclist?
* Have you had mobility training, and has this helped with your ability to safely get around on familiar or unfamiliar journeys?

##### Do you need aids to go out?

* What aids do you use? A long cane? A guide dog? A monocular? A talking navigation app on your mobile? Anything else? If a long cane would be helpful to you when outdoors but do not use it because you do not want to be identified as visually impaired, explain this on the form.
* Do you need help to know how to enter and exit buildings e.g. when steps begin and end? Do you need assistance to read road signs?
* Can you visually identify and avoid hazards such as lamp posts, bollards, or A-boards? State if you have walked into obstacles such as these before.
* Do you ever trip over, for example on even ground, or due to you misjudging the depth of a kerb or step?

##### Help with navigating

* Do you get lost?
* If you do get lost, are you able to navigate back to your chosen route or would you have to ask for sighted assistance? Do you need help to plan a route?
* Do you need help with navigation?

##### Taking public transport

* Can you use public transport? Do you need help to identify the bus or train you need, find the right bus stop or platform, read overhead train indicators, use prepaid ticket readers, find an empty seat or recognise where to get off?
* If you use London Underground or a metro service can you safely use stairs and escalators?
* Do you require public transport information such as timetables, in an alternative format like large print, audio or braille?
* Do you need customer assistance to enable you to find your bus stop/stand or train platform, or to get on the correct train or bus?

##### Other factors that affect your ability to go out

* Does the weather (e.g. bright sunlight) affect your ability to carry out a journey?
* Does the time of day (e.g. in dark evenings) affect your ability to travel safely, such as if you are affected by glare from the sun when low in the sky, or from vehicles’ headlights in the evening or early morning?
* Are you able to negotiate crowded areas without assistance e.g. shopping centres or busy railway stations? Do you feel that it takes you longer to complete a journey because of your sight loss?
* Would planning and following an unfamiliar journey cause you to feel stressed or anxious?

Put your answers in the section called “Extra information”.

## PIP toolkit: Get in touch

If you would like more information about anything in this factsheet or advice on filling in your PIP2 form you can speak to our Advice Service by calling our Helpline. Our advisors can also carry out a full benefit check with you and give you advice about applying for other benefits you may be missing out on.

Our Welfare Benefit Sight Loss Advisers are available to offer help if you would like to challenge a benefit decision or think you should be awarded more than you have been. Our advisers can help you with the mandatory reconsideration and First Tier Tribunal (appeals) process.

RNIB’s Legal Rights service is available to offer you help with more complex benefit queries and appeals, such as those to the Upper Tribunal, once the initial appeals process to the First Tier Tribunal has been completed.

To access any of our services, call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999**. You can also say, “Alexa, call RNIB Helpline” to an Alexa-enabled device. We’re ready to answer your call Monday to Friday 8am – 8pm and Saturday 9am – 1pm. Alternatively, email **helpline@rnib.org.uk** or visit **rnib.org.uk**.

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#### Connect with others

Meet or connect with others who are blind or partially sighted online, by phone or in your community to share interests, experiences and support for each other. From book clubs and social groups to sport and volunteering, our friendly, helpful and knowledgeable team can link you up with opportunities to suit you. Visit **rnib.org.uk/connect** or call **0303 123 9999**.



**RNIB Legal Rights Service**

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