

Understanding Your Assessment Report

A plain-English guide to reading what was written, recording what you remember and knowing what happens next.

A CALM FIRST READ

READ IT CALMLY / RECORD THE DIFFERENCES / PROTECT YOUR DEADLINE



Educational guidance for England and Wales, where PIP is administered by DWP. Not legal or welfare-rights advice.

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START HERE

Report or decision?

The assessment report and the decision letter do different jobs. Knowing which one you are reading prevents a lot of avoidable panic.

ASSESSMENT REPORT

The assessor's advice to DWP. It records information, observations, recommended descriptors and reasons. It is not the benefit decision. [1]

DECISION LETTER

The outcome made by a DWP case manager after considering the claim and evidence. It tells you the award and what to do if you disagree. [1]

You can ask for a copy

DWP guidance says you have a right to see the consultation report and can request a copy from DWP. Call the PIP enquiry line on 0800 121 4433 and ask for the assessment report used for your claim. [1][5]

The layout may differ

A report after a consultation is often called a PA4. A paper-based report or supplementary advice can look different. Follow the headings, not fixed page numbers. [1]

Scope: this guide covers DWP PIP in England and Wales. Scotland uses Adult Disability Payment, and Northern Ireland has a separate route. [6]

SOURCE MARKERS / [1, 5, 6]



THE PNU READING METHOD

Set up a 15-minute first pass

Do not try to solve the whole claim in one sitting. First, make the report easier to navigate.

Put these beside you

- [] The assessment report
- [] A copy of your PIP form or online answers
- [] The evidence you sent
- [] Your notes or assessment recording, if you have them
- [] The decision letter, if it has arrived

1**First pass**

Circle headings and mark where each activity begins. Do not analyse yet.

2**Second pass**

Compare one section at a time with what you said and supplied.

3**Log it**

Write the page or section, the exact wording and the difference you noticed.

Keep your only copy clean

Use sticky notes or a separate sheet. If the report is upsetting, pause. A careful log is more useful than trying to answer every sentence at once.

This two-pass method is PNU practical guidance, not a DWP requirement.



CHECK 01

Start with the basics and evidence list

Before comparing opinions, check whether the report starts from the right facts.

- [] Your assessment date and whether it was phone, video, face to face or paper based
- [] Your health conditions and when they began
- [] Medication, treatment, therapy and relevant side effects
- [] The evidence the assessor says was reviewed or relied upon
- [] Any evidence from a carer, family member or professional

Why this check matters

DWP guidance says reports should include all claimed conditions and their functional effects. The assessor must identify the evidence used and explain why some evidence was given more weight than other evidence. [1]

Record, do not assume

- Something you supplied is missing from the list.
- A date, dose or treatment detail is out of date.
- Evidence is named but its relevant point is not discussed.
- The report says evidence was unavailable when you believe it was supplied.

Use neutral wording

Write: 'My occupational therapist letter dated 12 May is not listed.' Avoid deciding why it is missing. A clear fact is easier for an adviser or decision maker to use.

SOURCE MARKERS / [1]



CHECK 02

Compare the report with your account

Your task is not to rewrite the whole report. Find the differences that change the picture of your day-to-day needs.

Read these parts together

THE REPORT

History of conditions, social history, typical day and each activity section.

YOUR RECORD

Your PIP form, evidence, notes, recording and what your companion remembers.

- [] What help you need, who provides it and why
- [] How long an activity takes and whether you can finish it
- [] Pain, fatigue, anxiety or other effects during and afterwards
- [] What happens on good, bad and average days
- [] Specific examples you gave and whether their meaning was preserved

What the official guidance expects

The functional history should reflect your own perspective, use specific examples, explore good and bad days, and record help, time and symptoms during or after an activity. [1]

One useful sentence pattern

'The report says _____. I said or supplied _____. The difference matters because _____.'

SOURCE MARKERS / [1]



CHECK 03

Put observations back into context

A report may describe what the assessor observed during the consultation. Read the observation and the conclusion separately.

A	What was observed? Copy the exact action or behaviour, without adding interpretation.
B	What conclusion followed? Mark what the report says that observation shows.
C	What context is missing? Note help, pain, recovery time, prompting, stress or an unusual setting.

- [] Was one moment treated as if it represented a whole day?
- [] Were the effects after the activity recorded?
- [] Did the assessment setting make the task easier or harder than usual?
- [] Was an invisible symptom treated as absent because it was not seen?
- [] Does the wording accurately describe what happened?

The official safeguard

DWP guidance says observations should be balanced with other evidence, and assessors should remember that symptoms such as fatigue and pain may be less easy to observe. A snapshot is not an adequate picture of a fluctuating condition. [1]

Keep the point precise

Completing one action during an assessment does not automatically show that it can be done whenever needed, repeatedly or without after-effects. [1][2]

SOURCE MARKERS / [1, 2]

CHECK 04

Follow the reasoning for each activity

The important part is not only the recommended descriptor. It is the path from evidence to that recommendation.

1	Recommendation Write down the descriptor wording or letter exactly as shown.
2	Evidence used Underline the facts, observations or documents relied upon.
3	Evidence not followed Mark your evidence or account that was rejected, changed or omitted.
4	Reason given Find the sentence that explains why the recommendation follows.

What a justified report should do

DWP guidance says the report should explain descriptor choices, identify the evidence relied upon, clarify contradictions and explain differences from the claimant or other evidence. [1]

Do not start with the total points

For this first reading, focus on the reasoning activity by activity. This guide deliberately does not provide a points table or tell you which descriptor to choose.

Remember: the assessor recommends. The DWP case manager makes the benefit decision after considering the claim and evidence. [1]

SOURCE MARKERS / [1]

CHECK 05

Look for reliability and fluctuation

Being able to do something once is not the complete PIP test. The report should consider how the activity is done.

SAFE Unlikely to cause harm to you or another person, during or afterwards.	ACCEPTABLE Done to a standard that is good enough.
REPEATED Done as often as the activity is reasonably required.	REASONABLE TIME No more than twice as long as a non-disabled person would normally take.

For each disputed activity, ask

- ☐ Does the reasoning address all relevant reliability questions?
- ☐ Does it include symptoms and the effect on the next activity?
- ☐ Does it say how often the difficulty happens?
- ☐ Does it describe good, bad and average days rather than one snapshot?
- ☐ Does the conclusion match the examples and evidence quoted?

The official test

DWP guidance requires these four reliability criteria for every activity and expects variability to be considered over the relevant period. [1][2]

SOURCE MARKERS / [1, 2]

CHECK 06

Read the prognosis and review advice

Near the end, the assessor may advise when a review could be appropriate and whether restrictions are likely to remain.

THE REPORT MAY ADVISE

Expected change, likely duration of functional restriction and a possible review point.

DWP WILL DECIDE

The actual award, award length and whether or when the claim will be reviewed.

- [] What change does the assessor expect, and why?
- [] Is planned treatment, surgery or therapy described accurately?
- [] Are all relevant conditions considered together?
- [] Does the advice distinguish a changing condition from changing functional needs?
- [] Does the decision letter use the same review timing as the report?

What the guidance says

Review advice should be based on when a significant change in overall function may happen and should explain the reason. The case manager uses that advice when deciding award type and duration. [1]

Do not read a recommendation as the outcome

The decision letter, not the report, tells you the award length and the action available if you disagree.

SOURCE MARKERS / [1]

CHECK 07

Match it to the decision letter

When the decision arrives, compare it with the report. Then choose the next action from the decision letter - not from the report alone.

- [] The descriptor and points chosen for each activity
- [] Daily living and mobility outcomes
- [] Award length and any review date
- [] Any place where DWP did not follow the assessor's recommendation
- [] The date of the decision and the instructions for challenging it

IF YOU AGREE	Keep the report, decision letter and your comparison notes together.
IF YOU ARE UNSURE	Get free welfare-rights advice and take your discrepancy log.
IF YOU DISAGREE	The usual first step is mandatory reconsideration. It is free.

Protect the deadline

You usually need to ask for mandatory reconsideration within one month of the decision date. A late request may be possible if you have a good reason. Do not assume that waiting for the assessment report changes the deadline. Check your letter and get advice promptly. [3]

You can use form CRMR1, call the benefit office or write. Follow the address and instructions on your decision letter. [4] This guide stops before drafting a challenge.

SOURCE MARKERS / [3, 4]



YOUR WORKSHEET

Assessment report discrepancy log

Use one row for one clear difference. Add extra sheets if needed. Do not include originals when sharing this page.

PAGE / SECTION	REPORT SAYS	MY RECORD SAYS	WHY IT MATTERS / SOURCE
1. page / heading	Exact words or short summary	What I said, sent or remember	Effect on daily life / document / date
2. page / heading	Exact words or short summary	What I said, sent or remember	Effect on daily life / document / date
3. page / heading	Exact words or short summary	What I said, sent or remember	Effect on daily life / document / date
4. page / heading	Exact words or short summary	What I said, sent or remember	Effect on daily life / document / date

PHONE OR ADVICE LOG

Date and time	
Number called	
Name or team	
What was agreed / next date	

KEEP IT PRIVATE

Privacy: this worksheet may contain health information. Store it securely and share only what is needed with a trusted adviser or DWP.



NEXT STEP

Leave with one clear action

You do not need to understand every sentence today. You need a clear record, the right document and the correct deadline.

- ☐ I have requested or received the assessment report.
- ☐ I have marked the decision date and any challenge deadline.
- ☐ I have logged the differences that change the picture of my needs.
- ☐ I know where to get free advice if I need it.

PIP ENQUIRY LINE

0800 121 4433
Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
Relay UK: 18001 then 0800 121 4433

FREE INDEPENDENT ADVICE

Citizens Advice or a local welfare-rights adviser
Find local help through AdviceLocal

SOURCES USED

- [1] [DWP: PIP assessment guide, part 1 - the assessment process](#). Report purpose, contents, evidence, observations, justifications, review advice and right to request a copy. Accessed 6 August 2026.
- [2] [DWP: PIP assessment guide, part 2 - the assessment criteria](#). Reliability: safely, acceptable standard, repeatedly and reasonable time. Accessed 6 August 2026.
- [3] [GOV.UK: Challenge a benefit decision \(mandatory reconsideration\)](#). Who can ask, usual one-month time limit, late requests with a good reason and free advice routes. Accessed 6 August 2026.
- [4] [DWP: Mandatory reconsideration request form and notes \(CRMR1\)](#). Current form, evidence address, and phone or letter alternatives. Accessed 6 August 2026.
- [5] [GOV.UK: Contact the Disability Service Centre](#). Current PIP enquiry-line number, hours, Relay UK and alternative formats. Accessed 6 August 2026.
- [6] [GOV.UK: PIP - how to claim](#). England-and-Wales scope; Scotland and Northern Ireland use different routes. Accessed 6 August 2026.

IMPORTANT

Personal Navigator UK provides educational information, not legal or welfare-rights advice. Rules and contact details can change. Check GOV.UK and your decision letter before acting.

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CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

Need the full PIP process?

Guide 01 explains the journey from starting a claim through to decision, Mandatory Reconsideration and tribunal.

If you receive a decision and choose to ask for Mandatory Reconsideration: the PIP Decision Challenge Starter Pack helps you organise your own information step by step.

Personal Navigator UK:

<https://personalnavigator.co.uk/>

