

Life after Stroke with Visual Impairment



Hints and Tips for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) applications



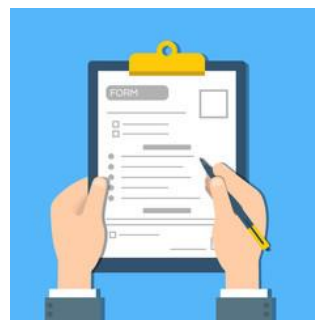
This leaflet gives hints and tips for people with vision problems when applying for PIP (Personal Independence Payment). It may also be useful for other benefits, like ESA (Employment and Support Allowance).

It was written from the experience of people who have gone through the process. It is not meant to be full or official guidance on the rules, and you should not rely on it as legal advice on your personal case

It was written in 2020 and does not reflect any changes after that date.

General hints and tips

The form for PIP is long and can be confusing. Remember you can get help if you need it. For example, Age UK, Royal National Institute of Blind people (RNIB), Stroke Association or Citizens Advice can help.



The form asks how your vision problems affect your ability to do certain activities. You are awarded points based on the difficulties you have doing these activities. Discuss in detail the impact of your vision problems on your ability to do these tasks, not just your everyday life and well-being. Include effects the impairments have, as well as practical difficulties you may have as a result.



Give examples such as being unable to drive or use public transport easily, difficulty reading (including problems reading signs or directions), difficulty cooking or preparing food (perhaps because of problems reading instructions or the contents of packets), bumping into objects when moving around or doing ordinary tasks like cooking, shopping or housework.





If your condition varies during the day or from one day to the next, explain this. This could be because of fatigue or other reasons. You do not need to have problems doing a relevant task throughout the day – if you experience difficulty at any point during the day then you can be awarded points for it. Similarly, you do not need to experience the difficulty every day - it counts for awarding points if you are affected by it on 50% or more of days.

Think about your worst days, not your good ones. What do you find hardest or struggle with most when you're having a very bad day? What support do you need then?



It can help to have support when attending the assessment. Having an advocate or friend to explain how bad it is for you on your bad days can be very useful.

Remember you can ask for a first decision on a PIP application to be reconsidered, and you can appeal the second decision if you still disagree with it.

APPEAL

Persevere and be strong when you are going to an appeal as you may have nothing to lose (although remember they can reduce points if your case is borderline).



If you go to an assessment in person, try to explain any difficulties you had getting there, or any problems you have understanding or answering verbal questions and make sure you are consistent with the details on your application.

Fatigue

Fatigue is common after stroke and can make it harder to scan your eyes or use your vision. Report fatigue and discuss any impact this has.



Consider how the time of day could affect your assessment- if your assessment is in the morning, it might not take fatigue later in the day into consideration unless you point this out to the assessor.

Hidden disabilities

Many post stroke problems are 'hidden' or not obvious to others, e.g. fatigue, aphasia, vision problems, which can make things more difficult. This means those around the person may not be aware of their difficulties and don't make allowances accordingly. Explain the hidden nature of your vision problems on the application form and make sure the assessor is aware of them.



Environment changes

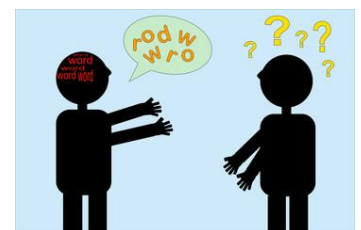


After a stroke certain tasks can take much longer, such as preparing food. You should mention this on your application as it's an important factor to consider.

You might need for an uncluttered environment because of your vision loss, which can mean you need adaptations to your house.

Communication

If you have a communication problem after stroke, such as aphasia, you should mention it. It can make information very difficult to read / process, meaning it can take much longer, and it can make coping with vision loss more difficult.



Vision tips

Don't be afraid to ask for information in the size and style that works best for you, such as large font or in Braille. Or consider audio described forms.



Get as much evidence of your sight loss condition and its impact on you from your GP, Orthoptist or Ophthalmologist or any other relevant professional who can talk about your personal condition. Ask them to explain clearly the impact of your sight loss. Being registered as having a sight impairment can help with this.

Consider a cane as an orientation aid. Not only will this help you move about, but it may get you significant points for the mobility component of a PIP award. The cane will have to be a long or guide cane to qualify. Symbol canes do not count. Ask the sensory loss team at your council to supply one measured for you and to train you to use it. Take your canes to any assessment.



PIP awards can also be based on what aids you use. If you need magnifiers, shower rails, chairs, hand rails or anything else - write it down.

Appeal guidance

Consider submitting further evidence regarding impact of visual impairment or any of the above points.

Reports from psychology services on the impact of visual impairment / stroke can be useful.



It may be helpful to get a letter of support from your MP, but don't worry if you can't get this.

Read up on how the assessment should be performed in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP's) assessment guide and refer back to this if you disagree with the conduct*. Include more details if you do not feel the functional assessment was conducted in an appropriate manner.

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-independence-payment-assessment-guide-for-assessment-providers/pip-assessment-guide-part-1-the-assessment-process>



When you go to your appeal, make sure the panel knows of any adaptations that could be made to help you. For example, having paperwork enlarged if your vision is reduced, or sitting on the left / right of the room if you have a visual field or eye movement problem.

Useful Sites & Contacts:

Other general resources are also available - some examples are listed below:



Professional Organisations & Charities

- RNIB www.rnib.org.uk
<https://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-benefits-and-concessions-benefits-people-working-age/personal>
- Stroke Association www.stroke.org.uk
<https://www.stroke.org.uk/resources/benefits-and-financial-assistance>
- Citizens Advice www.citizensadvice.org.uk/
- Age UK www.ageuk.org.uk

