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**Disability benefits: from child to adult**

**Embargoed - 12th March 2025**

Please note this report and accompanying dataset is subject to change

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### What’s the story?

**Teenagers with incurable and life-threatening conditions are among hundreds a week stripped of disability benefits after their 16th birthdays.**

Nearly a third of those who received child disability living allowance (DLA) had their claims for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) rejected when attempting to transition to the adult benefit, according to data from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

The majority - 75% - of the 124,000 young people to have had claims rejected since 2013-14 failed PIP’s points-based assessment, according to BBC analysis.

Disability charity Scope’s executive director of strategy, James Taylor, described the application process as “complex, adversarial and difficult to navigate”.

“It is worrying that such a big number of young disabled people are losing out on financial support as they reach adulthood,” he added.

“The new government needs to look at the real reasons behind these figures and work with disabled people to fix our broken welfare system.”

This week saw Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer call the current benefits system “unsustainable, indefensible and unfair”.

His comments, which also saw him refer to the system as “the worst of all worlds”, come as Work and Pensions secretary Liz Kendal prepares to announce widespread changes and cuts to the benefits bill.

A DWP spokesman said the proposals will be announced within weeks and will support young people and their families in a way “that is fair on the taxpayer”.

Experts told the BBC that the conditions most likely to result in a disallowed claim are those that may be managed more successfully by an adult than a child, such as diabetes or asthma.

But among those to have had claims rejected since PIP’s introduction in 2013 are thousands living with life-changing conditions including cancer, blindness, psychosis, deafness and epilepsy.

Appeals can be lodged and some claimants do receive higher awards under PIP than DLA - however, the BBC heard numerous examples of young people being refused benefits despite the significant impact of their disabilities on daily life.

They include:

* Several who reportedly failed the assessment because they were able to work part-time or attend school or college
* An epileptic young woman who had her claim refused because she had been seizure-free for several weeks, despite the unpredictable nature of the condition meaning she cannot work and has to be constantly supervised
* A teen with Down’s Syndrome who told his PIP assessor he could do everything he was quizzed about, but did not explain the intensive support he required to carry out day to day activities
* A young man with learning difficulties who failed to score enough points during the assessment because he said he could cook for himself. He did not mention the fact he had broken several microwaves in his attempts to do so.

Concerns were repeatedly raised with the BBC about PIP assessors lacking knowledge of specific conditions, and about decisions being made without recourse to medical evidence or contacting those involved in a claimant’s care.

The proportion of disallowed claims has fallen in recent years but Daphne Hall, vice chair of the National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers, said there are still “a lot of wrong decisions and assumptions” made that should be investigated.

**This pack will provide you with the Shared Data Unit’s analysis of the national picture, along with expert quotes and** [**data at a local authority leve**](https://dlapip.github.io/)**l, in which we found a significant disparity across the UK - in Lewes, an average of 23% of initial PIP applications resulted in the claim being disallowed, compared to 38% in Inverclyde.**

What is PIP and how are claims decided?

* Personal Independence Payment is a non-means tested benefit that aims to fund the extra living costs associated with having a disability
* You can get PIP if you are over 16 and have a long-term physical or mental health condition or disability and have difficulty doing certain every day tasks or getting around
* Where a person does not have the capacity to represent themselves during the process, an appointeeship can be granted, with parents commonly applying to be appointees for their children
* While DLA is awarded on the basis of whether or not a child needs extra care from others, PIP assessments are based on whether the claimant can carry out day to day tasks themselves
* The DWP uses the PIP test, which is divided into **daily living** and **mobility** components to decide if someone is eligible
* During the test, a series of questions are asked about daily activities, with points awarded for each activity depending on the claimant’s ability to do it and how much help is needed
* The points scored for each activity are added together to determine whether the threshold for a claim is met

In a recent report, the Resolution Foundation said the number of young people in receipt of disability benefits fell significantly between the ages of 15 and 17.

The thinktank said the failure to qualify - or apply for - PIP is leaving too many disabled youngsters facing a “financial cliff-edge” as they approach adulthood.

And leading disability and welfare rights organisations say the current system is resulting in wrong decisions being made by the DWP, with outcomes frequently overturned at tribunal.

They say losing out on PIP and the additional support it opens doors to - such as Carers’ Allowance, Motability cars and specialist transport to school or college - has a life-changing impact on young disabled people and can leave them facing an uncertain future at an important time of life.

The founder of Fightback4Justice, which advocates for disabled people in the welfare system, said “everything goes in one fell swoop” and called for the process to be “more transitional”.

Michelle Cardno added: “Young people are being treated as adults from the day they reach 16, when most do not understand the system.”

The new government is now being called upon to bring the rest of the UK in line with Scotland, where the transition to adult disability benefits can now take place at 18, rather than 16. Since the change, the proportion of rejected claims from those moving from childhood to adult disability benefits has dropped from 34% to 15%.

A DWP spokesman said: “Building on our Get Britain Working White Paper, we will bring forward proposals for reforming the health and disability benefits system within weeks, so that it provides children, young adults and their families with the support they need in a way that’s fair on the taxpayer, and helps those who can work secure employment.”

### How to use this pack

**Separate to this document we have provided you with data at a local authority level in a detailed** [**spreadsheet for those who may want to carry out additional analysis.**](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1aTqBKh10JbSW2o2HfGyJmSwjZhgL5WXnJq6NuaasTO8/edit?gid=0#gid=0)

**Spreadsheet instructions:**

The first step should be to consult the **‘READ ME**’ notes, which give a detailed guide to each worksheet and the columns contained within.

Councils are ordered in alphabetical order in the sheet by default.

We recommend you find your council using the find function (Ctrl and F).

**If you make a copy of the spreadsheet (File > Make a copy) you will be able to SORT the sheet by any column to see how your council ranks in comparison to others.**

|  | To sort by a column, turn on **FILTER VIEW** by clicking on the icon shown in the picture to the left (make sure you have a cell selected within the sheet before clicking this). This will bring up small arrows above the columns as below. |
| --- | --- |
|  | Click on the arrow above the column you wish to sort by (such as **% of claims disallowed**) and click on “Sort Z-A”. This will place the spreadsheet in order of the highest to lowest depending on the metric you are sorting by. |
| Please note that the top answers may come back with “NA”, “DNC” or “DNA” because we have incomplete data for that particular council. You will need to discard these figures in any analysis you do. | |
|  |  |

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### What we found

**Our headline figures are taken from analysis of data for 350 local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales.**

That analysis **excludes Scotland from March 2022**, with figures included separately in the spreadsheet for Scottish disability benefits from that date.

Separate figures are also available for Northern Ireland.

## Headline figures for Great Britain *(excluding Scotland from March 2022)*

##### National

* Between April 2013 and October 2024, about **423,000** initial claims for PIP from recipients of Child DLA were decided on by the DWP, **70%** of which were allowed and 1% of which were withdrawn
* Three in ten - **29%** - of the claims were disallowed, meaning about **124,000** young people who received disability support in childhood were refused support under PIP during that period - an average of more than **200 a week**
* Disallowed claims fell under three main categories, which can be summed up as disallowed because the claimant failed the assessment process; disallowed because the claimant failed to attend the assessment appointment and disallowed because the claimant failed to return their application forms within the time limit
* Most of those whose claims were disallowed - more than **93,000** - failed the PIP assessment, representing **75%** of those whose claims were disallowed, and **22%** of all claimants
* Of the **70%** whose claims were allowed, **7%** received an award that represented a decrease in terms of what they had previously received under Child DLA
* The proportion of disallowed initial claims has fallen since a height of **42%** in 2018-19 to **16%** in 2023-24, the most recent full financial year reflected in the data

##### Local

* There is significant disparity across Great Britain in the proportion of disallowed claims, ranging from 23% in Lewes to 38% in Inverclyde
* There is similar disparity in terms of the proportion of young people who fail assessments – from 16% in Cumberland to 29% in Dudley
* Young people in St Albans are most likely to have their claims allowed (77% are allowed)

##### By condition

* PIP claims are most commonly lodged by those with learning disabilities (including autism), hyperkinetic syndrome (incorporating attention disorders like ADHD) and behavioural disorders - the equivalent of 74 people with learning disabilities, 41 with hyperkinetic syndrome and 18 with behavioural disorders a week have had claims disallowed since April 2013
* However, claimants with diabetes are proportionately most likely to have their claims disallowed, with **88% of diabetes-related claims** refused since April 2013.
* Other conditions likely to result in a disallowed claim are inflammatory bowel disease (62%), bowel and stomach disease (62%) and asthma (60%)

### Tables

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### Great Britain *(excluding Scotland from March 2022)*

#### *Where were claims most likely to be allowed?*

**Top five: British authorities with highest percentage of allowed claims**

| **Local authority area** | **Claims allowed** | **%: total claims allowed** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| St Albans | 591 | 77.3 |
| Tandridge | 410 | 76.9 |
| Lewes | 527 | 76.6 |
| Calderdale | 918 | 75.9 |
| Fareham | 401 | 75.9 |

#### *Where were claims most likely to be disallowed?*

**Top five: British authorities with highest percentage of disallowed claims**

| **Local authority area** | **Claims disallowed** | **%: total claims disallowed** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Inverclyde | 148 | 37.8 |
| Glasgow City | 1003 | 37.4 |
| Aberdeen City | 204 | 37.3 |
| Renfrewshire | 251 | 36.5 |
| Bridgend / Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr | 468 | 36.3 |

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#### *Where were claims most likely to be disallowed because of failed assessments?*

#### Top five: British authorities with largest proportion of failed assessments as a percentage of disallowed claims

| **Local authority area** | **Failed assessments as % of disallowed claims** |
| --- | --- |
| Oadby and Wigston | 90.2 |
| Rochford | 87.7 |
| Derbyshire Dales | 86 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 84.2 |
| Harborough | 84.2 |

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### Scotland

The data for Scotland is broken down into two time periods - simply put, pre-2022, the claims were handled by the DWP.

The DWP data shows that **34%** of initial claims for PIP from child DLA recipients were rejected between 2013 and March 2022.

In 2022, Scotland introduced Child and Adult Disability Payments, which has resulted in a drop in the proportion of claims refused.

Under the new system, **15%** of claims for Adult Disability Payments from those receiving Child Disability Payments were rejected.

The new benefit system allows for the extension of the child benefit to the age of 18 and allows young people to apply for the adult benefit between the ages of 16 and 18.

Social Security Scotland said it does not use “DWP-style assessments” and that, under the new system, nobody is forced to undergo an assessment carried out by a “private sector provider”.

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### Scotland: April 2013-March 2022

The DWP’s data for Scotland shows:

* 19,804 initial claims for PIP from recipients of Child DLA were decided on between April 2013 and March 2022
* Of those, 12,930 - 65% - were allowed
* And 6,664 - 34% - were disallowed
* 4,855 claims were disallowed because the claimant failed the assessment process
* Failed assessments represent the equivalent of 25% of all claims and 73% of disallowed claims

#### *Where were claims most likely to be allowed?*

**Top five: Scottish authorities with highest percentage of allowed claims**

| **Local authority** | **Claims allowed** | **%: total claims allowed** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Scottish Borders | 267 | 70.6 |
| West Lothian | 518 | 70.1 |
| Aberdeenshire | 497 | 69.6 |
| East Lothian | 216 | 68.6 |
| Highland | 628 | 68.1 |

#### *Where were claims most likely to be disallowed?*

**Top five: Scottish authorities with highest percentage of disallowed claims**

| **Local authority** | **Claims disallowed** | **%: disallowed** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Inverclyde | 148 | 37.7551 |
| Glasgow City | 1003 | 37.39746 |
| Aberdeen City | 204 | 37.29433 |
| Renfrewshire | 251 | 36.53566 |
| Dundee City | 255 | 35.86498 |

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#### *Where were claims most likely to be disallowed because of failed assessments?*

**Top five: Scottish authorities with highest proportion of failed assessments as a % of disallowed claims**

| **Local authority** | **Failed assessments as % of disallowed claims** |
| --- | --- |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 84.2 |
| Moray | 79.3 |
| North Ayrshire | 77.1 |
| Scottish Borders | 76.3 |
| South Ayrshire | 76.2 |
| Falkirk | 76.0 |

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### Scotland: March 2022 - July 2024

From March 2022, responsibility for some social security benefits transferred from the DWP to the Scottish government.

The Scottish government is replacing PIP and DLA for working age people with Adult Disability Payment (ADP), which was introduced from March 2022.

[Young people can transition from Child Disability Payment to Adult Disability Payment between the ages of 16 and 18.](https://www.mygov.scot/moving-from-child-disability-payment-to-adult-disability-payment)

Overall, Adult Disability Payment statistics from March 2022 to July 2024 show that 45% of processed applications for ADP across all age groups were denied. The national results per age group were as follows:

| **Age band** | **%: processed applications denied** |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| 0-15 | 38% |
| 16-18 | 39% |
| 19-24 | 59% |
| 25-34 | 56% |
| 35-44 | 51% |
| 45-54 | 43% |
| 55-64 | 34% |
| 65+ | 25% |

However, data providing information about Adult Disability Payment applications from **recipients of Child Disability Payments** between March 2022 and March 2024 shows **15% of applications resulted in a denial.**

| **Age Band** | **Denied applications** | **%: denied applications** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Total | 275 | 14.5 |
| 0-15 | 5 | 16.7 |
| 16 | 15 | 16.7 |
| 17 | 105 | 14.8 |
| 18 | 115 | 12.2 |
| 19 | 40 | 30.8 |

### Northern Ireland

The data we analysed concerning Northern Ireland, acquired from the Department for Communities, covers the period June 2016 to October 2023.

It shows:

* 13,490 claims were decided on in that period
* 71% of applicants had their claims allowed
* 3,910 - 29% - had claims disallowed
* 3,220 - 24% - of claims were rejected because the claimant failed the assessment
* Assessment failures represent 82% of all disallowed claims

#### *Where are claims most likely to be allowed?*

**Top five: Northern Irish councils with highest percentage of allowed claims**

| **Local Government District** | **Claims allowed: total** | **% claims allowed** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Derry City and Strabane | 840 | 74.3 |
| Fermanagh and Omagh | 590 | 72.8 |
| Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon | 890 | 72.4 |
| Belfast | 2200 | 71.4 |
| Lisburn and Castlereagh | 690 | 71.1 |

#### *Where are claims most likely to be disallowed?*

**Top five: Northern Irish councils with highest percentage of disallowed claims**

| **Local Government District** | **Claims disallowed: total** | **% claims disallowed** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Newry, Mourne and Down | 420 | 32.8 |
| Mid and East Antrim | 320 | 34.0 |
| Causeway Coast and Glens | 250 | 29.1 |
| Ards and North Down | 310 | 29.2 |
| Antrim and Newtownabbey | 350 | 30.7 |

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#### *Where were claims most likely to be disallowed because of failed assessments?*

**Top five: Northern Irish councils with highest percentage of failed assessments as a proportion of disallowed claims**

| **Local Government District** | **Failed assessments as % of disallowed claims** |
| --- | --- |
| Causeway Coast and Glens | 88.0 |
| Ards and North Down | 87.1 |
| Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon | 85.3 |
| Newry, Mourne and Down | 83.3 |
| Antrim and Newtownabbey | 82.9 |

### Wales

In Wales between April 2013 and October 2024:

* 24,194 initial claims were decided on
* 71% of applicants had their claims allowed
* 7,792 - 32% - had claims disallowed
* 5,830 - 21% - of claims were rejected because the claimant failed the assessment
* Assessment failures represent 75% of all disallowed claims

#### *Where were claims most likely to be allowed?*

**Top five: Welsh councils with highest percentage of allowed claims**

| **Local authority** | **Claims allowed** | **%: total claims allowed** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ceredigion / Ceredigion | 287 | 73 |
| Gwynedd / Gwynedd | 442 | 71.8 |
| Powys / Powys | 527 | 70.6 |
| Monmouthshire / Sir Fynwy | 338 | 70.6 |
| Pembrokeshire / Sir Benfro | 712 | 69.5 |

#### *Where were claims most likely to be disallowed?*

**Top five: Welsh councils with highest percentage of disallowed claims**

| **Local authority** | **Claims disallowed** | **%: disallowed** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Bridgend / Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr | 468 | 36.3 |
| Conwy / Conwy | 354 | 36.1 |
| Merthyr Tydfil / Merthyr Tudful | 206 | 35.5 |
| Flintshire / Sir y Fflint | 414 | 34.5 |
| Neath Port Talbot / Castell-nedd Port Talbot | 523 | 34.4 |

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#### *Where were claims most likely to be disallowed because of failed assessments?*

**Top five: Welsh councils with highest proportion of failed assessments as a percentage of disallowed claims**

| **Local authority** | Failed assessments as % of disallowed claims |
| --- | --- |
| Caerphilly / Caerffili | 82.1 |
| Flintshire / Sir y Fflint | 80.4 |
| Pembrokeshire / Sir Benfro | 78 |
| Denbighshire / Sir Ddinbych | 76.8 |
| Cardiff / Caerdydd | 76.2 |

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# Quotes and expert comment

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### Children’s Commissioner, Rachel de Souza

**Dame Rachel de Souza said:**

**“**Children with disabilities and their families often face unique challenges in receiving appropriate care and support.

“As Children’s Commissioner, I have heard so many stories from families exhausted at fighting an adversarial system for support with health, education, or therapeutic care.

“By law, childhood doesn’t end until the age of 18 – it’s vital that as a society we take steps to protect the full duration of childhood, no matter their circumstances.

“Disabled children, just like any other child, deserve a system of support and care which matches their ambitions and provides them with stability as they grow into adulthood.”

### Scope

**James Taylor, executive director of strategy at disability equality charity Scope, said:**

“It’s worrying that such a big number of young disabled people are losing out on financial support as they reach adulthood.

“Life costs a lot more when you’re disabled, and benefits like DLA and PIP are an absolute lifeline to help cover those extra costs.

“We know disabled households face hundreds of pounds in extra costs every month. The costs range from things such as equipment, extra support at home and getting out and about, to needing taxis because public transport isn’t suitable.

"Our benefits system is incredibly complex, adversarial and difficult to navigate, so we know the transition from DLA to PIP can be challenging and stressful.

“The new government needs to look into the real reasons behind these figures, and work with disabled people to fix our broken welfare system.”

### National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers (NAWRA)

**Daphne Hall, vice chair of NAWRA and member of the Social Security Advisory Committee, said:**

“The process should start at 18, 16 feels far too young.

“Assumptions are perhaps being made that someone now considered an adult can deal with their conditions and no longer have support needs.

“Compared to the broad brush approach of DLA, PIP has a very specific criteria to be met but if your condition affects you in a very specific way, it may be difficult for you to score enough points in various other areas to qualify - the criteria is so narrow that some conditions just do not fit into it.

“For example, someone with autism who can wash and dress themselves will not score enough points to get the daily living component.

“But then sometimes, the problem is simply that the wrong decisions are being made and assumptions are made, such as assuming someone can lip-read when fewer than 50% of deaf people can.

“Claimants are often asked closed questions - I went to an assessment with someone with learning difficulties who was asked if he could cook.

“They said they could, but didn’t say that they’d put everything in the microwave for ten minutes at a time and burn it.

“A lot of cases should be investigated.”

### Fightback4Justice (Advocacy for Disabled People CIC)

Non-profit organisation Fightback4Justice provides advocacy for disabled people as they navigate the welfare system, supporting them from application stage to appeal tribunals.

**Founder Michelle Cardno said:**

“Some claimants do end up getting more under PIP’s different criteria than they did under DLA, but there are many not getting it at all.

“When a child reaches 16, their parent can obtain an appointeeship if the child cannot make their own decisions, but parents are not given enough information about that process.

“A lot of young people are not getting PIP because they are expected to be able to manage - there are a lot of assumptions that a child of 16 should be able to manage a condition like diabetes, for example.

“Young people are treated as adults from the day they reach 16 but it should be transitional - steps should be taken and it shouldn’t be as simple as ‘the form hasn’t been returned on time, so no PIP’.

“Most people who are 16 or 17 do not understand the system, but they’re expected to and they’re suddenly expected to be an adult.

“We had a client with half a heart who received the high rate of DLA all of her life, but on the transition to PIP was refused completely and awarded no points at all because she had a little job.

“She was waiting for a heart transplant, her condition is significant and she will never improve but because she tried to have a little bit of a life - with significant help from those around her - she didn’t get PIP.

“We also had a young man with Down’s Syndrome who was refused because he said he could work, but at work he had one to one support and many adjustments in place.

“He spoke to the assessor and said yes to all of their questions.

“He said he could do everything, but he was in complete denial, didn’t understand the nuances of the questions and they were not explained properly to him.

“They rest a lot of their decisions on whether a child goes to school or college and they will speak to children and not their parents when it should be a collaboration between parent and child.

“A lot of this happens over the phone and it has never been a transparent process.

“Losing the benefit can have a huge impact - if you are a parent who is a carer you still have to be around to look after your child, but the DLA stops, the Carers’ Allowance is stopped and there’s a backlash on everything else, including Universal Credit.

“These parents can’t go back to work as they still have that child to look after, but they’ve lost their allowance and the mental health of everyone involved is damaged.

“Everything goes in one fell swoop and it is devastating for our families who are losing benefits, who cannot then pay their rent or get their child to hospital because their car has been taken back.

“Then there’s the stress of appealing, which can take a year to get to, with no money in the meantime.”

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### Contact: the charity for families with disabled children

**Disability charity Contact’s Head of Advice, Angie Fenn, said:**

“In the majority of cases we speak to about Personal Independence Payment claims, the young person lacks capacity and a parent is acting on their behalf as their appointee in the claims process.

“Parents say despite this, sometimes they are cut out of the phone assessment and assessors speak to the young person only. Others speak to the young person with the parent at their side. Others accept just speaking to the parent.

“Parents say that in the assessment there is little, if any, recognition that young people might find it harder than older people to recognise and talk about their health condition and disabilities.

“It’s difficult to do, because it goes against what they are usually trying to do - boosting confidence and focusing on the positive.

“Sixteen feels too young for this. That’s why we have for years called for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to be extended to age 18, as is the case with the Child Disability Payment, the equivalent benefit for disabled children in Scotland.

“Some parents do find the claims process, criteria and points system easier than DLA – depending on their young person’s condition.”

### Epilepsy Society

**A spokeswoman from the Epilepsy Society said:**

“Epilepsy doesn’t necessarily become easier to manage in adulthood. It is a dynamic condition which comes with many challenges.

“While many people can take medication to manage their seizures this does not guarantee that they will not have breakthrough seizures. Tiredness, stress, shortages of medication or changes in lifestyle can trigger seizures.

“There are over 40 different types of seizures, and people can be left physically exhausted, at risk of cutting themselves, harming themselves or others. People can be socially isolated as they don’t want to go outside in case they have a seizure and lose control of their bladder or bowls. People can have issues with memory loss, side effects from their medication or need to have a friend or family member with them in case they have an unexpected seizure. Living with such an unpredictable condition can impact on people’s mental health as well.

“We know anecdotally, from people calling our Helpline, that explaining how epilepsy affects them daily can be difficult when applying for Personal Independence Payment (PIP). And they often feel that the people assessing the claims are not always aware of how epilepsy can affect a person’s daily life.

“To address this, Epilepsy Society is working with a number of PIP assessors to explain how the condition can affect people and to increase awareness and understanding.”

### National Autistic Society (NAS)

**On PIP, Joey Nettleton Burrows, Policy and Public Affairs Manager at the National Autistic Society, said:**

“The current process for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) does not work for autistic people, who face an unsuitable assessment system, long delays and a lack of understanding when trying to access benefits.

“Our recent survey showed that 97% of autistic people responding found the assessment process difficult, while 70% said assessors don’t have a sufficient understanding of autism to be able to correctly award entitlements.

“The Government has announced long-overdue reform of the benefits system. There is a culture of blame and anxiety around benefits for many autistic and disabled people, and it’s vital that their voices are heard throughout the reform process.”

*NAS is calling for a series of reforms to be implemented to ensure autistic people can access PIP, including the recognition of autism as a life-long disability that should not require regular reassessments.*

### RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)

**An RNIB spokesperson said:**

“Being refused a PIP application can have a major impact on blind and partially sighted claimants, but particularly at a time in someone’s life where adjustments to adulthood and beginning to explore living life more independently are happening.

“People with sight loss face additional, unavoidable costs like taxi journeys, assistive technology and support in the home. These extra costs average between £65 and £174 per week for someone with sight loss.

“These extra costs are what disability benefits like PIP are there to cover so it’s vital people get the financial support they’re entitled to.

“The criteria for DLA and PIP assessment are different which may account for some people losing out on transition. However, a huge number of decisions are also incorrect and will be changed through challenge.

“Nearly half of all PIP claims are refused as it is and around seven out of ten of these are turned around on appeal. With representation from RNIB, the figure rises to more than 96%.

“So we would encourage anyone who feels they have been wrongly turned down or awarded less than they are eligible for, to contact the RNIB Helpline on 0303 123 9999, or email helpline@rnib.org.uk to find out more about requesting a mandatory reconsideration.”

# Rights of replies

#### Department for Work and Pensions

The DWP said reforms to health and disability benefits will be set out in the Spring to ensure the system supports people who can work to remain in or start employment in a way that is “fair and fiscally sustainable”.

It said a DLA award does not mean automatic entitlement to PIP, or the same level of award and that a young person could become more able to independently manage their condition as they grow older, therefore changing their benefit entitlement.

**A DWP spokesperson said**:

“We have been clear that the current welfare system needs reform.

“Building on our Get Britain Working White Paper, we will bring forward proposals for reforming the health and disability benefits system within weeks, so that it provides children, young adults and their families with the support they need in a way that’s fair on the taxpayer, and helps those who can work secure employment.”

#### Northern Ireland: Department for Communities

A Department for Communities spokesperson said: “The Department for Communities recognises that any change can be challenging, particularly for a young person moving from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payment (PIP), and aims to make the application process as easy as possible.

“A young person applying for PIP at age16 will be offered the opportunity of an appointee or representative to assist with their PIP application and where PIP is awarded, to provide support to maintain their claim.

“In cases where an appointee is not in place the option remains for a companion to accompany the young person where a PIP functional assessment is required to ensure that an accurate assessment of their disability or health condition can be made.

“The young person or their representative will also be offered the choice to have the medical evidence from their Disability Living Allowance claim used in support of their PIP application.

“Although social security is a devolved matter, Northern Ireland’s system generally operates in line with Great Britain meaning, in effect, there is a single social security system regime across the United Kingdom including with regard to PIP.

“There is regular engagement between the Department for Communities and the Department for Work and Pensions on policy and operational matters of mutual interest. Unique to Northern Ireland, however, and recognising the financial impact of losing entitlement to a disability benefit, the Department for Communities provides mitigation payments for a timebound period to people who move from DLA to PIP and lose out financially.”

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#### Social Security Scotland

**Social Justice Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville** said:

“When we introduced Child and Adult Disability Payments we listened to children and young people about their needs.

“That resulted in changes such as Child Disability Payment extending to age 18 and allowing young people to apply for Adult Disability Payment at any time from age 16 onwards, giving them the flexibility to make the transition when it is right for them.

“We offer help with their application and Social Security Scotland staff can also help to collect information that will help with their application, for example from doctors and care workers.

“This approach is helping make the process of moving from Child to Adult Disability payments in Scotland as simple and supportive as possible. We award Adult Disability Payment to the vast majority of young people who previously received Child Disability Payment.”

# Background: Child DLA and PIP

#### Child DLA

Disability Living Allowance for children can help with the extra costs of looking after a child under 16 who has difficulties walking or needs much more looking after than a child of the same age who does not have a disability.

According to Citizens Advice, the DWP will usually assess the claim by looking at a child’s medical evidence and may ask to speak to them over the phone or via video call, with face to face assessments rare.

The DLA rate, which depends on the level of help the child needs, is between £28.70 and £184.30 a week.

A child can receive a care or mobility component - or both - at low, middle or high rate depending on their needs.

The rate the child gets depends on the level of looking after they need, as follows:

**Care component:**

**Lowest rate** - help for some of the day

**Middle rate** - frequent help or constant supervision during the day, at night or someone to help if they are on dialysis

**High rate -** help or supervision throughout day and night, or a medical professional said they have 12 months or fewer to live

**Mobility component:**

**Lowest rate -** they can walk but need help or supervision outdoors

**Highest rate -** they cannot walk, can only walk a short distance without severe discomfort, could become very ill if they try to walk or if they are blind or severely sight impaired

#### Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

PIP can help with extra living costs for those with long-term physical or mental disabilities and conditions who have difficulty doing everyday tasks or getting around because of those disabilities and conditions.

It is a non-means tested benefit that can be claimed even if the claimant is working.

PIP has two parts - a daily living part for those who need help with everyday tasks, and a mobility part for those who need help getting around.

The DWP will assess how difficult a claimant finds daily living and mobility tasks, using a series of questions to look at:

* Whether a task can be done safely
* How long it takes
* How often the condition affects the activity
* Whether help is needed to do it

Answers to the questions are judged using a points-based system.

Recipients can get between £28.70 a week and £184.30 a week.

# Methodology

**For our investigation, we created tables from the *Child DLA to PIP Reassessment* data available** [**at the government's Stat-Xplore data hub.**](https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/dataCatalogueExplorer.xhtml)

Our analysis of almost 12 years of data focused on the outcomes of initial claims only, so that findings were not distorted by the outcome of any subsequent appeals.

We combined the ‘Award increased’, ‘Award unchanged’ and ‘Award decreased’ columns to get a figure for claims that were allowed and similarly combined all columns representing disallowed claims to come up with a total sum for rejected claims between April 2013 and October 2024.

We analysed the figures at a local authority level and, separately, by condition to establish the proportion of disallowed claims and the primary reasons for the claims being disallowed, i.e. failed assessments or failure to attend appointments.

We also analysed the data by condition - i.e. the “main disabling condition” the claimant had received support for under Child DLA rules - to establish which disabilities were most likely to be associated with a rejected claim.

Using Stat-Xplore, we created a month-by-month table and combined that data to allow us to analyse trends by financial year.

We obtained and analysed comparable data from Northern Ireland and - in recognition of the DWP data excluding Scotland from March 2022 due to the introduction of Child and Adult Disability Payments there - we also analysed the latest available data at an age level for Scottish benefits claimants.