

Accessing Welfare Support

Living with cardiomyopathy can be challenging and sometimes people with the condition can require financial help as their condition impacts their day-to-day life or work.

A diagnosis of cardiomyopathy does not automatically qualify you for financial assistance from the state, therefore it is essential that you check what benefits are available and whether you are eligible to apply.

You can do this by accessing the Citizens Advice website and their Benefits Calculator, which can be found here: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/benefits-introduction/what-benefits-can-i-get/> this website is reviewed and updated regularly, so you can be assured that you are accessing the most recent information.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

By using a benefit calculator like the one from Citizens Advice, you may find that you are eligible to apply for PIP. It is worth remembering however, that this does not automatically mean that you will be able to receive the benefit.

Applying for PIP

If you want to apply for PIP and meet the eligibility criteria, you should take the following steps:

1. Telephone the Personal Independence Payment line on 0800 917 2222 (calls are free from landlines and mobiles) Monday – Friday 8am–5pm. The call should take up to twenty minutes and you will need to have your national insurance number to hand.
2. During this call, the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) call handler will ask you if you want to receive your How Your Disability Affects You application form through the post or email.
3. Once you have received your How Your Disability Affects You application form via the post / email, you will then need to complete this and return it to the DWP within one month of the date given on the application form letter.
4. Return your completed form to the DWP address provided on the letter which accompanied your How Your Disability Affects You application form. It is strongly advised that you send this form via first class recorded delivery so that you have proof of postage should your form get lost in the post or the DWP state they have not received it.

Completing the 'How Your Disability Affects You' Application Form

The application form is a large document which asks many questions about your health needs, your condition/s, treatment and care. It is advisable that you take some quiet time to think about your responses to each of the questions before you complete the form. If you have other diagnosed health conditions you should include them in your application as well as your cardiomyopathy, this includes any mental health conditions you might have received a diagnosis for, any medication you are prescribed, and the clinician/s involved in your care and treatment.

- Whilst you are waiting for your form to arrive in the post, make sure you contact all of the healthcare professionals involved in your care so that you can get any letters, test results, extra information relating to your condition/s together so that you can send copies to the DWP with your completed application form.
- Give as much information as you can and be clear. Write in block capitals if your handwriting is not very legible.
- Use Q15 on the application form to briefly explain what type of cardiomyopathy you have. You can do this by using the information factsheets on our website: <https://www.cardiomyopathy.org/about-cardiomyopathy/types-cardiomyopathy>. Try not to assume the DWP assessor reading your application will know what cardiomyopathy is. Do not send copies of the factsheet with your application form.
- Use Q15 to articulate how your condition/s effect you. Think about what your day is like from the time you wake up until you go to sleep. Explain what tasks such as tying shoelaces, showering, washing your hair, preparing a meal, etc, are like and what symptoms you experience as a result.
- You can use extra sheets of paper if you run out of space when answering Q15, but make sure that on each extra sheet of paper you use, you write your name and national insurance number at the top and write "Q15 continued".
- Ensure that you keep to the facts. Only include conditions that you have been diagnosed with. For example, you may experience anxiety, but if you haven't been diagnosed with it, don't include it as a



condition – the DWP could ask for evidence of this. If you do feel that you experience anxiety then state that in your response to Q15 for example, "I become anxious / feel anxious when..."

The Appeal Process

It often occurs that people applying for PIP are awarded zero or too few points to receive the benefit (known as an award). If this occurs following your initial application, you have one month from the date given on the DWP outcome letter (the letter that you will have received informing you of the decision not to award you PIP) to appeal. If you decide to appeal against the DWP's decision you will need to file for a Mandatory Reconsideration.

Mandatory Reconsideration

This is the first stage of a DWP appeal, and it means that the DWP must review your original application and decide whether to uphold the decision or change it. It is advised that you write to the DWP requesting a Mandatory Reconsideration and include the following:

- The date of the original benefit decision
- Your name and address
- Your date of birth
- Your national insurance number
- Explain what part of the decision is wrong and why

If after you have submitted your request for a Mandatory Reconsideration and the decision is upheld, you can appeal again but this time to a Tribunal.

Appeal Tribunal

As before, you have one month from the date stated on the letter in which to appeal the DWP's decision. If you are a resident in England, Wales or Scotland then you should complete this form:

www.gov.uk

Search for 'Appeal a benefits decision'

If you are a resident in Northern Ireland then this is the form you will require:

www.nidirect.gov.uk

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Make sure you gather as much as evidence as you can to support your appeal, you might want to consider collecting the following:

- Medical records
- Sick notes
- Prescriptions
- Diary of daily routine
- Letters from medical professionals
- Letters from other professionals
- Letters from other people who help you

You can ask your doctor or GP for a copy of your medical records. You should not need to pay for them. If your GP is charging for access to your medical records, contact the Information Commissioner's Office.

Before you send your appeal form, check that you have answered all the questions and that you have signed the appeal form. Put one copy of your Mandatory Reconsideration Notice with the appeal form.

Send the appeal form, the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice and any other documents to the address on the form.

Once you have sent your appeal form, do not send any more documents until your appeal has been received by the Tribunal Service (or The Appeals Service in Northern Ireland) and you get your appeal reference number.

For a comprehensive overview of the Tribunal appeal process take a look at the Turn2Us website:

www.turn2us.org.uk

We are here for you

At Cardiomyopathy UK we offer help and support for you and your family. You can call our helpline to talk to our support nurses on 0800 018 1024. We can put you in contact with other people through our support groups, support volunteers and social media. Contact us for more about our services, or look online - www.cardiomyopathy.org.

Send your feedback to contact@cardiomyopathy.org

a: 75a Woodside Road, Amersham, Bucks, HP6 6AA

t: 01494 791224

helpline: 0800 018 1024

website & livechat: www.cardiomyopathy.org

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