PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENT TESTIMONIALS

just TREATMENT

MAD YOUTH ORGANISE

This booklet contains just some of the written testimonials sent in to us from young people aged 16-30 living with mental illness who have been through the PIP process. They want politicians to know what PIP means to them and what the impacts will be if the planned cuts go ahead. It’s never been more vital for these voices to be heard in Parliament.

It’s important to remember that no two disabled people will use their PIP in the same way - these benefits provide a whole spectrum of support for claimants and this cannot and should not be rigidly policed. Disabled communities deserve agency to be able to choose how this payment is used in the way that’s best for them and their specific needs.

Content warming: This booklet contains mention of suicide and abuse

Hunter - 22 years old

“My experience of the PIP process was harrowing. I was denied the first time and gaslit into thinking I wasn't disabled by their standards. I reapplied and was accepted but the process was traumatic and having to recount in detail how awful your life is and begging someone to believe you is truly awful. The process was really inaccessible and there was no email communication available. I just put in a request for a reevaluation and PIP increase as my needs have worsened and I actually got a reduction and a load of points taken away for no apparent reason. I am now having to appeal that decision which is anxiety inducing and again I feel like I am not believed.

My message to politicians is that supporting cuts leaves blood on your hands. Myself and other disabled people of ALL ages, will be left even more vulnerable and unable to access the outside world. It is disgusting and anyone should be ashamed of themselves for thinking it's okay to try and shut disabled people away. If you oppose the cuts, you are doing the right thing and we are grateful. Ultimately an MP should want to help the nation and their constituents, and cutting disability benefits does neither.”

Anonymous - 28 years old

“Under these plans I believe I will lose my benefits, and I’ll no longer be able to afford to support my own wellbeing. I feel suicidal when I get caught up in the thoughts of losing this life changing support.”

Anonymous - 27 years old

“I’ve been in receipt of PIP for around 8-9 years. At first, I was denied it and had to go to tribunal, but luckily my therapist at the time came with me. As soon as I got to the tribunal court, the psychiatrist said he didn’t know why I was there and awarded it to me.

Most MPs have no idea what it’s like to live with mental illness and physical health conditions. And until they’ve lived with it, they will never understand how these cuts could potentially impact someone.”

Dorothy - 22 years old

“My PIP could help pay for vital therapies, if the waiting lists weren’t so long, and I received more. Unfortunately the PIP I receive is not even enough for treatment for my mental illnesses.

The PIP process was incredibly stressful and taxing on my mental health. The first time I applied my application was denied, and only after getting help from others was I able to fight my case enough for them to agree that I am “disabled enough”.

I have Borderline Personality Disorder, amongst other things, which means that EVERY SINGLE DAY is incredibly stressful, exhausting, painful, and I frequently feel as though I am not enough. My trauma made me develop this personality disorder, and the PIP process genuinely made me feel suicidal. It was awful. And I know other people who need PIP just as much as I do, if not more, who have really badly hurt themselves in the process. The cutthroat, harsh nature of the PIP application process and assessments has ultimately made mine and thousands of other’s mental health worsen, significantly. When it is supposed to help.

To take this payment away from someone like me is a violation of my rights to live as a human being. I will not be able to access water, food, shelter, and vital care for my condition.

My message to MPs is that if you do this, you are simply killing off people who have it worse off in this world. People who, through trauma, and differences in their brain chemistry, are different from a “normal” person. We are less fortunate than you. Simply waking up is painful and traumatic. To take away our lifeline, or outright deny us a hand out of poverty, and pain, is a totally evil and heartless thing to do.”

Honey - 22 years old

“I am terrified they will take my PIP away. I will end up homeless, and my only option will be suicide.

My message to MPs is that it is evil to support such heartless cuts. People will die. Young and old. Not everyone can work, no matter how hard they try.”

R - 25 years old

"My experience of the PIP process was bad. I was denied after a phone call interview. The individual doing the assessment wrote down several things that I didn't say in the report. They also only took into account my anxiety and not my autism (which is the main reason I applied for PIP). I had to get help from a local advocacy group, who provided someone to help me with an appeal, and who came with me to an in-person appointment. After this review, I was granted the highest level for daily living and the lower level of mobility.

I am worried I won't qualify for PIP anymore. I won't be able to manage without PIP, meaning the things I struggle with will be more severe and more frequent.

I urge MPs to talk with disabled people, those in your constituency who will be affected. Meet them, talk to them, learn about their lives. Think about the influence you have, and if you really want to apply it to further oppressing a marginalised group."

Anonymous - 17 years old

“I found the PIP process distressing, I am used to it by now but I have to list out the things I struggle with, which I find very triggering and belittling. Also they never listen beyond what they perceive as struggles, like I am trying to match a criteria that does not account for many of my struggles and how it has and continues to cost me. Having to do a meeting every year is hard and makes me feel inhuman.

I am very worried about the planned cuts, it keeps me awake sometimes. As according to them I am one of the lower tiers, it is likely I will be cut and when I've been getting letters lately my heart stops every time thinking that it'll be them telling me that I am not eligible anymore, or that I owe them because of some small change.

Able-bodied people should actually listen to us disabled people. We do not live in peace and comfort. We all face many different struggles each day of which the people heading these policies do not care about. If you want to help, openly oppose the cuts, listen to us, and state openly that taxing the rich is better if they are really wanting money.”

Robin - 25 years old

“The PIP process is tiring and very unempathetic. Assessors do not sympathise with applicants, they analyse us and assume us all to be liars.

I am scared of reviews of my PIP in the future if I were to lose money I need to live. The cost of living for me is too high, I am homeless and I will be forced to use my PIP to cover rent.

I ask MPs to listen to individual disabled people's experiences. Have you no empathy for us? Try to imagine our lives and our struggles. Please do not see us as worthless.”

Anonymous - 22 years old

“There's a lot of uncertainty for me about the changes. I would possibly still be in receipt of PIP, but this is subject to reassessment. I'm worried that because I have started medication and am slightly better than I was previously, despite still experiencing debilitating symptoms, and notable amounts of crisis periods, that my money would be stopped and I wouldn't be able to access the treatment that has kept me alive and safe.

I think that it is unfair for us to be punished simply for having disabilities. PIP is a necessity for many individuals with mental illnesses who are out of work or who have longstanding illnesses. I will never be a well person, but I know my illness could be managed if I was able to receive the support I needed through the NHS and private services. Without this, many of us could die, come to significant harm or become permanently more disabled than we already are.”

Elpida - 24 years old

“I am very worried that if I get a doctor or assessor that isn't as compassionate on my next assessment then that will destroy my livelihood and everything I can do on an everyday basis.

These planned cuts are making people like me worried for the future and will probably make suicide rates higher as it seems we are going back to not being believed about our illness.”

K - 26 years old

“I have been encouraged to reapply for PIP as my condition remains largely unchanged but I'm not hopeful that I'd be successful and the process itself can be quite traumatic.

My message to MPs is that if you have a shred of empathy or understanding what it feels like to have a bad day then you ought to be able to empathise with those who have 5 or 6 or more out of 7 bad days a week. Please don't make us suffer more.”

Anonymous - 24 years old

“The PIP process has been destabilising to my mental health, constant uncertainty and vulnerability, to have to justify how you have to live your life to people with no knowledge of your disability or medical training is dehumanising. To feel like every professional cannot be trusted because what if you say something that makes them decide to take the money you use to survive away. It's made me suicidal, I spent 8 months waiting for them to change their decision on my award, in that gap in money I had to rely on abusive family members to survive.

Taking away money from disabled people won't push them into work, it will push them into desperation and for a lot of people - their graves.”

Wren - 22 years old

“The first time I applied the assessment took place in a noisy area I couldn't cope with and I had a severe panic attack... and they said I clearly functioned fine, rejected the application and shut down any chance of appeal. It took two years for me to get the support I needed to apply again as I couldn't do the paperwork independently.

I worry that PIP will be shut off and I'll go back to the situation I was in before, where I couldn't get food I could eat, was malnourished and never able to leave the house due to fear and anxiety that if something went wrong I'd be stranded. Disabled people will die if these cuts go through.”

Anonymous - 20 years old

“The PIP process was hell. I am a survivor of child sexual abuse. During my assessment, I was asked invasive questions. This was expected - however I have PTSD, and these questions weren't about what I struggled with - they were about why. I spent two hours on the phone, in tears, explaining why I couldn't make myself food. I gave up trying to skirt around these types of questions and instead began answering them with so much truth and backstory it left me throwing up violently for the next two days.

By the end of this assessment I was in pieces. It felt like I was being made to be the utmost vulnerable to a total stranger, who on top of that, was in control of whether I could continue to financially survive. I work, but because of my past I had been kept out of school and trafficked. I want to make something out of my life, and PIP helps me do that. It means I can work less hours to try to get my GCSEs, it means I can have sick days when I can't get myself out of the house because I'm so terrified. It means that I won't have to claim it forever. I can make something of my life, I can learn basic maths and english, I can be a member of society. Without it, I would have ended my life. I would have had to stay in a job at macdonalds rather than work towards a qualification in children's social care. It has helped me give my life and my experiences a way of being useful rather than just terrifying. Without it, I wouldn't have survived.

I am terrified. The amount of change that PIP has helped me to make means I can be safe, become educated, and one day become a children's social worker. It isn't the case right now - I am just about getting on my feet. I have only recently stopped being homeless. PIP means I can keep my dignity, I can live a normal life, I can do things that without it would be impossible. My life line might get taken away, and that doesn't seem fair.

I want you to know that nobody is exempt from this happening to them. I pray it doesn't, I wouldn't wish it upon anyone - but, if this is what the PIP reform looks like, then you are wishing it upon me. You are taking my lifeline. After everything, every hour I spent in solitude and every day I spent praying someone would help me, this is how people like me, claiming PIP for mental health issues, are treated. Do better.”

M - 23 years old

“I’m very anxious about these cuts. Getting PIP really helped me. I actually think I’m closer to getting into full time work now than without PIP. I would definitely be more isolated without it. More importantly I am scared for the people who WILL die because of this. So many have taken their life or died in other ways due to PIP rejection/having it stopped. I know I will struggle a lot without it but I do have somewhat of a support system around me whereas so many do not who will still be losing their PIP. Throughout all of this as well the way that the government has spoken about us has felt pretty heartbreaking. I expect the misinformation and derogatory language used about us from the media but coming from our own government it feels hopeless and is so ableist. I wish they would listen to the actual respectable experts and mental health professionals who are standing with us and are saying this won’t help us at all.

Politicians need to understand that this is not the way to go about saving money. They will likely end up having to pay more from the strain this puts onto healthcare, local housing and addiction services, etc. You aren’t going to make people better by taking away money they use to make them “less disabled”, you are just going to push them back into the hole they came from. A lot of people on PIP work or are working towards getting there and I know for a fact stacking shelves won’t fix our mental health. It’s insulting. I actually went into psychosis at the end of last summer because I was burnt out from working. It took almost 6 months for a psychiatrist to CALL me for an assessment about this. Why don’t you fix things like that first? Also, tax the rich! I will never vote for my MP again after all this, not even tactically.”

Annabel - 21 years old

“I feel really scared about the disability cuts. My plans are to go to university and or get a job. Although I would have a larger income, PIP would still be essential in helping me cover the costs of being disabled; if I were to work full time and pay rent and bills and groceries etc I would find it very difficult to do all that and be able to afford things that are vital for managing my illness.

MPs, please listen to disabled people. Both those who do claim PIP and those who have been rejected or do not claim it. Look into statistics on hidden costs of being disabled in this country.”

Anonymous - 26 years old

“I don't know how I will live without PIP. If I don't get it, I'll have to pick between feeding me and my cat and buying my pain medicine (which isn't on the NHS). Being disabled is so expensive and thinking about the possibility of not getting PIP makes me severely suicidal. It feels like there's no other option.

This is a matter of life or death. So many disabled and mentally ill people will die if these cuts go forward.”

Yarik - 17 years old

“PIP is aid for some of the most vulnerable people in the country who have far greater obstacles every step of the way to be able to find accommodating and fulfilling jobs. Not just from their disability (if that wasn’t enough), but from prejudice, mental health issues, a predisposition to poverty and homelessness and the list goes on. Cutting disability funding may be life threatening.”

Anonymous - 24 years old

“I have complex PTSD from child abuse. Getting my PIP was an absolute nightmare. During my assessment I was told that I couldn't have PTSD as I hadn't seen anyone die. I had to appeal my claim, and I only managed to win that because my father-in-law is a disability rights lawyer - he gave me support that barely anyone is lucky enough to have in my situation.

I'm terrified, because I won't be able to afford my counselling without PIP, and I'll become a shell of myself. I was only able to start work once I'd been in counselling for a few months and worked my way up to it, and I enjoy my job now, but without having my counsellor for support I don't think I'd be able to keep working.

My message to MPs is please, please, please oppose the cuts. I need PIP to live a normal life, and without it I won't be able to work and I'd have to go on universal credit. The people you refuse to support if you make these cuts will only need further government support through UC or other channels - there's absolutely no savings to be made here.”

Julian - 29 years old

“I have complex-PTSD and suspect I also have OCD. I am self-employed due to being unable to work a regular day job and also have multiple disabilities (autism, ADHD and hypermobility spectrum disorder). PIP would give me a massively better quality of life. Some days my mental illness is so overwhelming and paired with the constant chronic pain I experience, a lot of days I can't cook, can barely leave the house or not at all and struggle to wash or change clothes. The extra money would mean I could avoid mental burnout and distress, as often I'm forced to take work to make ends meet even when I'm already in extreme burnout. My mental health is constantly pushed to a worse place because of money worries (due to my disabilities I struggle to earn enough to meet my needs, and I come from a working class family who can't support me.) If I didn't have to constantly worry about money, I could schedule my life in a way that was easier on my mental and physical health.

The PIP process was exhausting and it absolutely made my disabilities and mental health worse. I've applied twice before and been rejected. I've never scored a single point despite having three diagnosed disabilities, a severe mental illness, and lifelong struggles with addiction, eating disorders and as a survivor of abuse. Because I got rejected, I was forced into unsuitable employment. At this job, I was fired because of my disabilities affecting me in the role, and I became suicidal due to the job pressures. I felt so disheartened and started telling myself my disabilities must be made up, because I couldn't even score a single point. I started to doubt myself incredibly. I had to go to food banks because I was too depressed to work. Luckily life got better since then, but only because of my own efforts and the kindness of my friends. Going through the PIP process was humiliating and made me feel like I was making my health issues up.

I urge MPs to please oppose the cuts. Tax the highest earners and don't push more disabled people into poverty. Everyone deserves to experience independence, security and a decent quality of life. Please don't make disabled people who are more likely to struggle with poverty, shorter life expectancies and discrimination bear the brunt of these cuts. I have no doubt that if this goes ahead it will lead to more disabled people dying. Just let us live our lives!”

Anonymous - 28 years old

“Disability cuts kill. The only thing that's kept me going is the extra support I get from PIP and the government. My quality of life is already the worst it's been, making more cuts will just push it over the edge. I don't think many will survive it. Disabled people should be more of a priority in society, when we stop caring for our mentally and physically disabled we stop functioning as society. Everyone will become mentally or physically disabled at some point in their life, and it should be the government's responsibility to help these people when they need it. To take it away is inhumane. You're taking away someone's basic quality of life.”

Will - 27 years old

"The government should focus on tackling the root problems in society that cause people to be unfit for work, not vilifying mental illness and neurodivergence. Years of austerity and weak policies have created a society which characterises mental illness as a personal, private problem, instead of something informed by the actions of the state and the environment we’re raised in.

We are all responsible for looking out for each other, and these cuts to benefits drive home that this government views us as a drain on resources, instead of humans with rich inner worlds who deserve compassion and care. Why are you scapegoating us and not taxing the rich? People’s worth is not determined by their ability to work. People voted for this government because they wanted change, only to be met with more of the same. It’s shameful."

Jodie - 29 years old

“Previous cuts have already impacted me massively. I am £450 down a month, and that is having a huge impact on my livelihood and mental well-being. I have truly been made to feel like a burden, and like I should be silenced and forced back into work, which the stress of triggers relapses into psychosis as I have bipolar. I feel so scared, on edge and really down.”

Billie - 21 years old

“I have a plethora of illnesses, but I’ll probably not get awarded again. I’m saving every single penny I can so I can stay afloat after I lose my PIP”

Abbie - 24 years old

“I feel frustrated that the focus is so heavily on the belief that mentally ill people are not in work because they are being “funded” to stay unemployed. I will reiterate that I have been waiting over 2 years for anything in terms of physical or mental health treatment & still there’s nothing. My mental health fell apart when I first lost my job as a result of my physical disability and I experienced an episode similar to a psychosis. Of course I would love to work. It was a huge part of my life. I am trying to get back into work, I know I’m rushing and I am getting more unwell as a result but I am scared because I can’t afford to live on disability benefits as it is, let alone with cuts. Where are the jobs that accommodate disabled people?

MPs, please listen to disabled people. You have to know that increased financial hardship on the most vulnerable people in society will not push them into stable employment and advancing careers, it will push them into poverty, and have a knock on effect on homelessness, health services, crime, addiction, and abuse. A government should serve everyone. We can all contribute to society when we are well enough to do so, and we cannot get well without treatment. Perhaps the focus should be there.”

Emily - 24 years old

“As a disabled member of a community I wish to say... those considering the cuts should consider the impact on our lives. PIP offers those with adversities an opportunity to live a more independent, social and safe life. My life matters and so does my health and without PIP I'd be unable to live in a world that minimises those with disabilities. We should be wanting everyone to succeed and without the support of PIP payments we take away the successes of so many already fighting an everyday battle with themselves. Don't let the system of support be another battle ground.”

Anonymous - 21 years old

“I work and get PIP. I work because I want to and can but I still need that money. My work still isn't disability friendly at all and I could stop being able to work anyday. Put the effort into work places actually being accessible and then I'll believe you actually want to help us.”

Anonymous - 29 years old

“The PIP process is extremely triggering, especially the feeling of not being believed and having to prove that I'm sick when I can barely manage to meet my day to day even with support. Receiving letters after extremely difficult and distressing assessments, in which I've had multiple panic attacks, breakdowns and dissociation episodes telling me that they don't believe me because my face was clean and clothes were presentable. The lack of knowledge of disability shown, especially around mental health, and the inflexibility of assessors and the assessment leading to twisting my words against me. My first assessment was so traumatising that upon receiving the renewal assessment letter explaining that I would need to do it again my mental health deteriorated so severely after several months of being slightly more stable that I was almost hospitalised. In the run up to the assement and for several months afterwards I had extreme paranoia, delusions and was suicidal, which I had not experienced to that extent previously or since. Four months later and I'm still trying to recover from the harm that the process has caused me. The process of applying for support when you're sick shouldn't make you not want to live.”

Anonymous - 20 years old

“I’m terrified. Without PIP I can't function and don't stand a chance of being able to work, go outside or anything at all. The whole thing has been catastrophic for my mental health, which was finally improving with the right support. Every day i feel less and less hopeful that i'll be able to have a life worth living now that my support could be taken away.”

Jamie - 21 years old

“The PIP process was absolutely awful. I've never felt more cornered and dehumanised in my life - and I was severely bullied in school. It truly felt like the people meant to help me were abandoning me on purpose, and that they didn't care if I died.

It is so cruel to put young people like me through this, it drives up suicide rates. Disabled people are not "them" they're "us". You could be like me, someone you love could be like me. Remember that when you vote.”

Anonymous - 21 years old

“When I applied, I literally couldn't get out of bed or leave my house (because of a combination of physical disabilities and mental health issues). If I'd got PIP, I could've had a carer, funded travel, gone back to college, or at least carried my own expenses within my household.

When I got the rejection letter, I felt so defeated and humiliated, I never appealed and I haven't tried to apply again because it genuinely causes me so much anxiety. Sometimes I think I was better off before I applied.

My mum is on PIP. She is a single parent, and I'm her primary carer. If she loses her benefits we genuinely won't be able to afford to live - I'm terrified I'm going to have to give up my education and my dream career just so we can make ends meet.”

Anonymous - 22 years old

“My mental health makes my physical health unstable. The two go together and many of those with mental health issues get physically sick from them. Taking away a way of them to be able to access therapy and other basic health support when the NHS is collapsing is asking for deaths and suicides.”

Anonymous - 21 years old

“I had to take a lot of sick leave last year due to my mental health worsening. PIP would help me feel confident taking sick leave rather than forcing myself to work and getting harassed by my coworkers for not working hard enough.

I am worried because currently I am on minimum wage which in the UK is a joke. Sick leave in the UK is a joke. I am anxious that now I will never hear back from the tribunal regarding my case and I will never be able to access the healthcare that I need due to these cuts. The government's priorities are in the wrong place. They are trying to be the second Tory party by copying their cruel and unnecessary austerity policies.

Don't let millions fall into poverty and starve just to save a few pounds. We have all seen the data PIP cuts aren't saving the UK anything in the bigger picture. All it's doing is increasing discrimination against disabled people and putting their lives at risk.”

Anonymous

“I have anxiety, depression, EDNOS and ADHD, each of which has varied in intensity for 10+ years. PIP relieved some of the additional costs relating to my conditions. It also made it more possible to work 4 days/week instead of 5, allowing for an extra day to keep on top of my workload and health.

I am studying an MA part time as my conditions have made income/career progression very difficult and it seemed like an option for better financial independence. However I don't get funding and with PIP cuts will barely be able to make rent. I live in the cheapest houseshare available in the region, and frequently get physically sick with the poor conditions of the house (including mould/cold). I have serious concerns about not being able to afford to rent anywhere within reach of my university, let alone manage my conditions.

I have other family and friends with disabilities and every story is different. The one consistency is that politicians cause division over who has an acceptable/legitimate condition, who is to blame or villainise for their conditions and who is wasting government money. We do not live in an accessible environment and healthcare, aids or adjustments which allow for independence and quality of life are only available to a few. Costs build up very quickly and touch on all areas of life, just as disability does. Removing the ability to adapt in everyday life pushes people further and further into poverty, distress and ill health and results in bigger pressures on social services.”

Anonymous - 19 years old

“Politicians won't ever experience what we've been through. None of us want to be on benefits, but all of us want to have the opportunity to live as independently as possible. Visit some psych wards, both adolescence and adults and talk to the patients. Many of these would just spend their whole life in and out of psych wards without having disability benefits as they would have nowhere to go, no food to buy, making them spiral back down the path. Hear these peoples stories.”

Anonymous - 24 years old

“I’m scared of losing my PIP and I am currently looking at other jobs in case I do lose my PIP, even though this will not be beneficial to my mental health. I feel uncared for by the government and believe they see me as a burden, when I deserve the same amount of respect and care as a non disabled person. It makes me feel concerned about my future financial position and this is causing a lot of stress/anxiety for me.

Anyone can become disabled at any time and disabled people deserve the same quality of life as non disabled people. It is already such a difficult process to receive PIP and making it harder is going to ruin people’s lives.”

Hannah - 23 years old

“I feel like I’ll never be able to claim PIP because they just won’t believe me. That means I won’t ever be able to have a good quality of life or access the treatment and support I need, because the NHS isn’t providing it and I can’t afford it.

I urge MPs to speak to disabled people and hear our stories and life experiences. Put your own opinion to one side, open your mind, and believe us when we say we are struggling and we need this financial support. It’s not that we don’t want to work. I would love to be someone who can manage a full time job without consequences to my physical and mental wellbeing, but I’m not. My health conditions have real financial consequences. If you can’t fund the NHS properly, at least help me afford to pay for the care I need privately.”

Anonymous - 19 years old

“My message to MPs is please do not make vulnerable disabled people pay for Tory economic mismanagement! It is not a difficult decision to hit upon people who cannot fight back. The UK has already previously been condemned by the UN for violations against the rights of disabled welfare claimants, and choosing to vote for further cuts will put you violation of that declaration; you will spit upon the graves of the hundreds of disabled Britons who took/lost their lives as a direct result of previous DWP policy. Your dignity is more important than the advancement of your career and a thumbs up from the Chief Whip.”

Stevie - 24 years old

“I've been in receipt of PIP since I turned 16, and in that time I've had to appeal it after it got reduced or cut completely 3 times. I constantly worry about it being cut again, and the fear of not having the right evidence or not saying the right thing whenever it comes to a review makes me more unwell.

Please consider that these cuts will impact some of the most vulnerable in society. People will not be able to afford to live and many will die as a result of that. There will be far more pressure on the NHS and social care services because, for many people, PIP bridges the gap between the failures of our health and social care services and maintaining health (as much as possible) whilst disabled. It's so frustrating to see PIP being peddled as an out of work benefit when it's not, which says to me that many politicians and mainstream media don't even understand what they're saying or what the impact of this would be. PIP enables me to work.”

Anonymous - 22 years old

“I don't know how I will deal with life if I don't get PIP when it comes to my review. I rely on this so much and I don't know what the future looks like for me if I have housing instability or other financial issues. They often push me into crisis.

I want politicians to know what it's like for us. We deserve autonomy and care and those things cost money. I wish they could live in our shoes for more than one minute.”

Anonymous - 26 years old

“I have severe PTSD and during my time working it became unbearable, my quality of life turned awful and I had frequent mental health episodes which took away my independence. PIP has allowed me to take control of my life in various ways. I've been able to start a new alternative healthcare route that I wouldn't have been able to afford without it, and I've already started to see progress.

Without PIP, I will not be able to live. I'm terrified.”

Salym - 27 years old

“Yes it's really scary. PIP and disability benefits are my livelihood, I struggle to make ends meet as it is let alone do nice things for myself (and by nice things I mean like afford a cheap chocolate bar or packet of tea for myself as a treat). Losing these basics will severely impact my mental health and I'm scared I'm going to struggle to keep myself safe.

I am not asking for money to fly to the moon or fill a swimming pool with gold, I just want to live with dignity. How I choose to spend my money is my business, what makes me happy and my priorities are going to be different to other disabled people and treating us like cattle, waiting for us to die is horrific. Where is your compassion? Everyone will become disabled at some point in their lives or die before that happens. If you can't fight for us, fight for yourself, your friends and family. You are one accident away from joining us. Take away the numbers and we are just people trying to live fulfilling lives. We contribute to our communities, fall in love, make art, work, sit on the sofa with our loved ones watching trashy TV. We are loved and we deserve to be able to afford to live so we can continue to be loved.”

Anonymous - 27 years old

“I applied for PIP whilst I was inpatient in a psychiatric hospital with help of my treatment team and my claim got turned down. I then had help from an advocate and Citizens Advice and my claim got accepted. In that time between claims there was a month I had less than £10 in my bank and was only eating every other day. This made my mental health worse.”

Eden - 28 years old

“I am bedbound and I only qualified for the lowest PIP rate. I used to be in the highest mobility score and get severe disability premium but now I am not. Nothing has changed, in fact my condition has worsened. I am thankful I got awarded it at all but it is still very disheartening.

Being disabled is not a choice or a luxury, it's something that everyone will experience at some point in their lives. To put these budget cuts on a group of people who already face such stigmatism and hardships already is disgraceful and shows how little they view disabled people. They clearly don’t see us as people at all.”

Anonymous - 19 years old

“I've been so worried about the changes to PIP that my health has taken a drastic turn for the worse. I don't understand how the government can be so cruel to millions of people who are just trying to live. Being disabled in a society that views us as worthless is already hard enough, without the government actively trying to push disabled people into poverty. I'm worried about being able to care for myself if my PIP is taken away - I'm worried about my friends and family who may also be affected by the PIP cuts.

To those who support the cuts: shame on you. Disabled people are not the cause of the country's economic problems. Making PIP harder to access will not encourage disabled people to work, it will simply push them further into poverty. PIP already pays very little, considering the cost of living, which is constantly increasing. These cuts will destroy the independence of so many disabled people. As a result, many will die, as they won't be able to feed themselves without the bare minimum of support from PIP. Disabled people are not lazy. We are disabled by a society that would rather see us exterminated by state policies such as the proposed cuts to PIP, than be accommodating to disabled people. If these cuts are enacted, we set a dangerous precedent for how we treat the most vulnerable people in society.”

Anonymous - 22 years old

“I already feel immense guilt due to my disability and the way disabled people are being talked about online and by our politicians is making me feel so much worse and like I don't deserve to live sometimes, it's so scary and depressing. I find it unbelievably cruel that these changes will effectively be made by people who do not experience what we and our families do every day, they don't live this and don't know what it is like. It makes me feel angry and really afraid as this isn't even the start of cuts to disabilities, our services are already struggling due to lack of funding and now our households will be too.

Please remember we are actual people, actual families. We are not statistics or just a nuisance or afterthought. Anyone can become disabled at any time in their life. This isn't just for disabled people today but for potentially any one of you in the future. Disabled people are not the enemy or the people who should be the sacrifice due to cuts. Lots of us are really frightened right now. Please speak up for people like us with your position of power. We need you!”