



Craig Whittaker MP

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Update on Personal Independence Payments

Thank you for contacting me about Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments.

Every year, around £50 billion is spent to support people with disabilities and health conditions, over £3 billion more than in 2010. I passionately believe we should focus this support on those who need it most and PIP is designed to ensure support is focused on those with the greatest barriers to independence. I am glad that, since its introduction, 27 per cent of claimants are now on the highest level of support, up from 15 per cent previously.

The assessment process is improving steadily; it needs further work and I am glad that the Department for Work and Pensions has recognised this. The DWP is continually reviewing and refining the PIP process in order to improve its efficiency and effectiveness and to make it work better for the claimant. Weekend appointments are utilised when appropriate and where possible to meet the needs of claimants and to reduce waiting times for appointments.

New claims are now being cleared in under a third of the time they were in July 2014; currently, a claim takes on average 13 weeks from registration to decision. I understand that the Government is committed to improving this process further. Assessments are independently audited to ensure that they are accurate and fair.

There is a legislative requirement that two independent reviews of PIP are carried out. The Government has formally responded to the first review's recommendations and is currently considering the recommendations from the second.

A public consultation has just closed which asked how the assessment process can be made easier and quicker, with a particular focus on how information can be shared between those making the decisions about each PIP claim, thereby lessening the amount of paperwork for each claimant. I am encouraged also that a new feedback system will be introduced for claimants to talk about their experience of claiming PIP, which will help focus reforms on what matters to them.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP