



Craig Whittaker MP

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Personal Independence Payments and Blind and Partially Sighted People

Thank you for contacting me about the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) campaign on Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

I greatly respect the RNIB and the invaluable work they do to help improve the lives of blind and partially-sighted people in the UK.

It is wholly right that every year over £50 billion is spent to provide support to people with disabilities and health conditions so they can live as independently as possible, £7 billion more than in 2010. This amounts to 6 per cent of all Government spending.

The assessment criteria for PIP are designed to ensure partially sighted people do get appropriate support and include the principle that an individual who satisfies more than one descriptor within an activity should receive support equal to the one worth the greater number of points. That ensures, for example, that someone who may be able to read at home using a magnifier but is unable to read something like a sign would be awarded the maximum points available for that activity.

I believe PIP is a fairer benefit than the previous system of Disability Living Allowance as it focusses help on those who need it most, and can be adjusted to fluctuating needs of individuals. I understand that the Government is committed to improving the assessment process further, with two independent reviews having been completed, as well as a public consultation on improving the process for claimants.

I am reassured that PIP assessments generally result in the right decision. Of the 2.9 million PIP assessments carried out, 8 per cent went to appeal, of which 4 per cent were upheld. I am encouraged that improvements in the assessment process will ensure this number falls still further.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP