



Craig Whittaker MP

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Personal Independence Payments

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

Let me first say that I am proud that every year over £50 billion is spent to support people with disabilities and health conditions, over £7 billion more than in 2010. I passionately believe we should focus support on those who need it. PIP is designed to ensure support is focused on those with the greatest barriers to independence. I am glad that since its introduction, 29 per cent of claimants are now on the highest level of support, up from 15 per cent previously.

I appreciate your concerns about the assessment process. The Department for Work and Pensions is continually reviewing and refining the PIP process in order to improve its efficiency, effectiveness and the claimant experience. Weekend appointments are utilised when appropriate to improve the customer journey and reduce waiting times for appointments.

All health professionals undertaking assessments on behalf of the Department must be registered practitioners who have also met requirements around training, experience and competence. All these professionals also complete training on neurological conditions including epilepsy during their initial training. Additionally, they practise several clinical scenarios involving epilepsy as part of that initial training course.

New claims are now being cleared in under a third of the time they were in July 2014, at a current average of 16 weeks from registration to decision. I understand that the Government is committed to further improving this process. Assessments are independently audited to ensure that they are accurate and fair. Moreover, there is a legislative requirement that two independent reviews of PIP are carried out: the Government has formally responded to the first's recommendations and is currently considering the second's.

I am encouraged also that a new feedback system will be introduced for claimants to talk about their experiences of claiming PIP, which will help focus reforms where they matter to claimants.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP