



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

# The Government's reply to the House of Commons committee about PIP & ESA assessments



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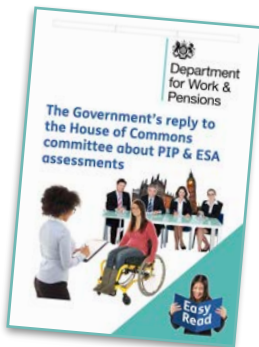
# This document



A committee of **Members of Parliament (MP)** have been looking into how Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) are assessed.



They wrote a report.



This document is an easy read version of the Government's reply to their report.



**Members of Parliament (MP)** have been elected by local people to:

- Speak up for their local area
- Make laws
- Make sure the Government is doing a good job

# Personal Independence Payment (PIP)



**Personal Independence Payment (PIP)** is money to help you with the extra costs of living from a long-term illness or disability.



The amount you get depends on how the illness or disability affects you.



You will be assessed to work out how much you should get.



You will be asked to fill in a form called 'How your condition affects you'.



You will be asked to provide **evidence** of how your illness or disability affects you.



**Evidence** is the proof. It might be a letter, a document or something else.



Most people will have a face-to-face meeting with an **assessor**.



An **assessor** is the person who carries out your assessment.

Assessors work for companies that are paid to do this work.



The assessor writes a report and sends it to the **Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)**.



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The **Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)** is the Government department that is responsible for welfare benefits.



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The **DWP** decides if you can receive PIP and how much you should receive.

# Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)



**Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)** is a benefit for people who are ill or disabled.



It gives:

- Money for people who are unable to work



- Support for people who need some help to be able to work



If you claim ESA you must have a **Work Capability Assessment**.



This assessment looks at how your illness or disability affects:

- Whether you can work or not



- What sort of work you can do



- What help you might need to be able to work

# What the MPs said



The Committee said that:

- For most people the assessments go very well



- But for a lot of people things went not so well



- Many people **appealed** their PIP decision to get it changed



An **appeal** is where you think the decision is wrong and ask for it to be looked at again.





- Many people do not trust the way the assessments work

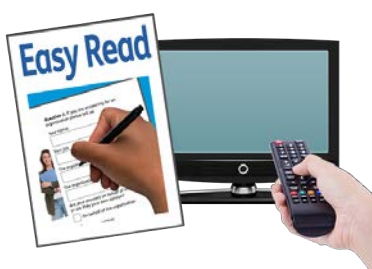
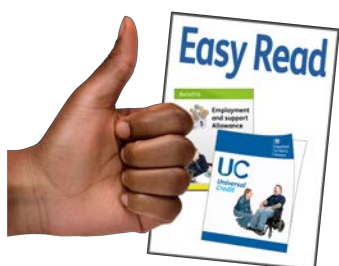
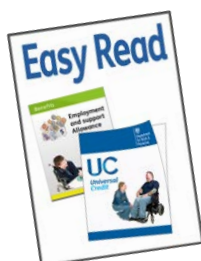
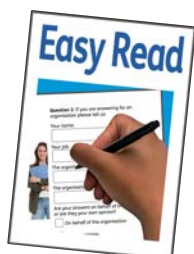


The committee has made some **recommendations.**



**Recommendations** are the things that the committee thinks should happen.

# Things to improve before the assessment



## Recommendation 1

The Committee thinks that the Government should provide easy to understand information on:

- How to fill in the forms before the assessment
- The different benefits that might be available

The Government should tell people that they might have to give their information again when:

- They are being assessed again
- They are being assessed for a different benefit

## The Government says:

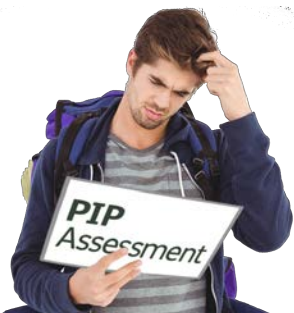
We agree that we should provide information that is easy to understand.

We are planning to provide information that is accessible. This will include in easy read and video.



## Recommendation 2

Some people have become ill because they were upset about the forms.



Some of them were worried because the forms were difficult to understand.



The Government should look into how the forms affected people's health.



The Government should tell us how they plan to make the forms more friendly and easier to understand.



## The Government says:

We are asking some independent people to look into this.



They will:

- Look at how the PIP and ESA forms have been upsetting people



- Look at how the forms should be changed



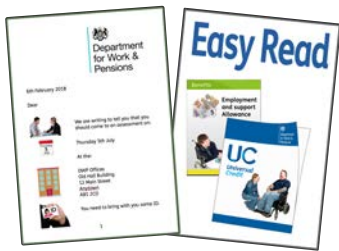
- Test the new forms to check that people are happy with them

## Recommendation 3

The Government should:



- Let people with hearing impairments apply for PIP and ESA by email



- Make sure all information and letters are available in Easy Read



## The Government says:

We agree with this recommendation.

We have been worried about people sending personal information by email. There is a chance that personal information may go to the wrong place.



We are looking at ways to make the information in emails more safe and confidential.





## Recommendation 4

People should be able to have their assessment at home. Especially if they have difficulty in travelling.



There are reports that the companies that assess people for PIP and ESA:

- Have not allowed people to have their assessment at home
- Have insisted on a letter from the doctor or people who say they cannot travel to a meeting



We think that the Government should:

- Change the guidance to the staff who do the assessments so that it is clear that people can have home visits
- Make the companies who do the assessments report on how many home visits have been refused, and why





## The Government says:

People should be able to have a home visit if they need it.



The companies have been telling their staff to allow home visits to people who need it.



We are looking at how home visits work.



We don't think that companies should report on how many and why home visits have been refused.

# Things to change at the assessment



## Recommendation 5

People who apply for PIP or ESA have to provide some **evidence** of how their illness or disability affects them.

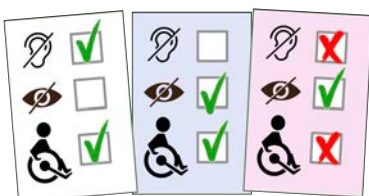


Some people say they have not been allowed to have the benefit because the **evidence** is not good enough.



We think that the Government should explain:

- What they think is good evidence



- What sorts of evidence are being used by people to claim these benefits





## The Government says:

We agree.



We are working with other organisations to look at:

- What evidence we need



- What is the easiest way to get this evidence



- Better ways to explain what evidence we need



## Recommendation 6

Many people do not trust that the people who carry out the assessments are writing down everything that is said.



People are asking that the assessment interviews are recorded so that it is possible to listen back to hear exactly what has been said.

We recommend that the Government looks at recording all assessments.

### The Government says:

People have been able to ask for their assessments for the Employment Support Allowance to be recorded.

But not many people have asked for this.



People can record their PIP assessments if they have the right equipment. Not many people do this.



We are currently looking into the best way to record the assessments, including video.



## Recommendation 7

We think that Government should write some guidance about how **companions** can take part in the assessment.



A **companion** is someone who goes with you to the assessment. It could be someone from your family, a friend or advocate. It could be a paid worker.



### The Government says:

We agree. Companions can be very helpful.



We should look at how they can take part in the best way.

# The report and decision



## Recommendation 8

After the assessment, the **assessor** will write a report. The DWP will decide whether the person can have the benefit.



We think that:

- The **assessor's** report should be sent to the person who is being assessed with the decision from the DWP
- The **assessor** should show their notes to the person to check they are correct
- The room should be arranged so that both the **assessor** and the person can see the computer screen





## The Government says:

We want to carry out assessments in a way that is fair to everyone.



We do give people the main points of the report when we tell them whether they can have the benefit or not.



We do provide the full assessment reports if people make an appeal.



People can ask for a copy of the full report for an assessment for ESA or PIP.



We do not have any rules about how the room should be laid out.

## Recommendation 9

The Government should make sure that the assessor



- Shows whether or not they have used a particular bit of evidence



- Tells the person being assessed whether or not they have used a particular bit of evidence



## The Government says:

All the evidence must be recorded and kept with all the other documents.



The assessor must say what evidence they have used to make their decision.



We don't think that they should explain why they have not used a bit of evidence if they don't use it.

# Where people don't agree with the decision



## Recommendation 10

Many people have appealed against the decision.



Many of the original decisions were changed after the appeal.



But before December 2017 the committee of MPs thinks that the Government did not allow 8 out of every 10 appeals to change.



The Government should look at why so many decisions were wrong the first time.



## The Government says:

We didn't have a rule which said that 8 out of every 10 appeals had to stay the same.

We don't think we need to look into this.



## Recommendation 11

The Government should collect information about why decisions are changed when there is an appeal.



It should use this information to improve the work of the assessors.

## The Government says:

We agree.



We want to carry on improving the way we decide if people would get the benefits.



# How the assessment companies work



The assessments are carried out by private companies.

The Government buys the services of these companies.



The committee of MPs thinks that:

- The work of the assessment companies needs to improve



- The Government should do more to make these companies work properly



- The Government should think about whether private companies are the best organisations to carry out assessments



The Government says:

- We expect good work from the assessment companies
- We have regular meetings with them to check on their work

## For more information

If you need more information please contact the Government's Department of Work and Pensions at:



Web: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions)



Email: [ministers@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ministers@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)



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Easy read by [easy-read-online.co.uk](http://easy-read-online.co.uk)