



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

Ministerial  
Correspondence  
Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
LONDON  
SW1H 9DA

[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

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

Hannah Kemp-Welch  
[h.kempwelch@gmail.com](mailto:h.kempwelch@gmail.com)

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4 January 2021

Dear Ms Kemp-Welch,

Thank you for your letter of 9 December 2020 about audio recording Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments. Government Ministers receive a large volume of correspondence and they are unable to reply personally on every occasion. I have been asked to respond.

I can confirm that the guidance on recording assessments is accurate. It is also available on the Capita and Independent Assessment Service (IAS) websites. You may, however, be interested to know about the changes that have been and are being made with regard to recording assessments.

The assessments carried out by the Health Professionals on the Department's behalf are primary evidence in the PIP decision making process. Therefore, it is critical that they are of the highest quality and thereby claimants can have confidence that what happens at the assessment is accurately reflected in the report given to the Department's Case Managers. Our focus is on how we best achieve the outcome of improving trust and transparency through the most effective means - within the PIP process, including the assessment.

We have completed a pilot to test video recording of PIP assessments. This pilot was developed in response to the Paul Gray Independent Review and feedback from the Work and Pensions Select Committee about PIP assessments. The pilot was aimed at helping us to better understand things about the PIP assessment process.

The pilot began in November 2018, and in the first stage of the pilot, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) proactively contacted claimants over the phone to give them an opportunity to volunteer to take part in this pilot. The pilot was extended in May 2019 to include changes to the process to better reflect a 'business as usual' approach to how we offer video recording to claimants. This was

to help us understand what impact this approach might have on the number of customers agreeing to video recording, as the uptake throughout the pilot was very low.

The results of video recording pilot concluded last year and has shown that we need to do further work on this important area; it has provided us with an opportunity to consider how we can address those concerns.

We had begun work to develop an approach to provide consistency for claimants across audio recording of Work Capability Assessments (WCA) and PIP assessments. We remain committed to pick up this work in the future, however, as face-to-face assessments are currently paused due to the impact of COVID19, there are no clear timescales for restarting this work.

You may find it useful to know that the audio recording of PIP telephone assessments when requested by a claimant is now available, this went live with Independent Assessment Service on 21 September 2020 and with Capita 30 November 2020.

Also, from 2 November 2020, the DWP began testing a new way to carry out PIP assessments and WCA assessments by video instead of by telephone. Capita will be offering this service to claimants who are booked in for a telephone assessment as will Centre for Health and Disability Assessment.

This will be on a voluntary basis and claimants have the option to turn off their camera at any point and continue the assessment on the telephone.

This trial will last for 12 weeks and will include 1000 video assessments (500 PIP and 500 WCA). Once the results of this trial have been looked at, we will be able to see if we can offer more claimants video assessments.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Watling', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Robert Watling  
Head of the Ministerial Correspondence Team