



House of Commons
Houses of Parliament
London SW1A 0AA

19th January 2021

Attention of: Robert Watling

Dear Robert Watling,

Thank you for your letter dated 4th January 2021, ref: TO2020/79266. We appreciate the time taken to respond to our committee directly.

Thank you for notifying us of the current provision for the recording of PIP telephone assessments. Could you clarify if it is mandatory for assessors to inform claimants of this option in their pre-assessment letter?

Thank you for informing us of the progress being made in trialing video recording, however, whilst we appreciate that the Paul Gray Independent Review¹ mentions video recording, the context in which this is noted confirms our stance that audio is the preferred medium:

54. There are several possible solutions to auditing the actual conduct of face-to-face assessments, including an inspection system and video recording of assessments. However, the **audio recording** of assessments – which as discussed in Chapter 4, the Review is recommending to improve trust and transparency– **appears to be the best overall approach.**

This report makes a series of recommendation for the Government to change the current practice regarding recording:

11. Claimants are currently able to audio-record their face-to-face assessment, but **the process is cumbersome and bureaucratic with many restrictions in place.** The claimant needs to know how to make a specific request in advance and source their own equipment. **This sets an unreasonable obstacle in their way.**

22. In the longer term, **transparency could be further increased by making audio recording the norm for face-to-face assessments.** [...] The Review considers it important that audio recording is offered on a default basis but with an opt-out available to claimants.

In light of this, we would like to renew our request for the Government to take immediate action to:

1. Honour the Department of Work and Pensions' commitment to put in place recording equipment at every PIP assessment centre.
2. In the absence of this, allow claimants to evoke their right to record the assessment by using their mobile phones or other personal devices, provided they are able to share a digital copy of this recording with the assessor before leaving the assessment, as is the current practice with cassettes.

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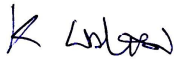
Further to this, we request that it is specified in the Government's contract with Independent Assessment Service and Capita – making it mandatory for these contractors to inform claimants of their right to record ahead of the assessment, to tell them if their centre has recording equipment on site, and if not, inform claimants of their right to make a recording via their personal digital devices. This should also be enacted for Work Capability Assessments currently administered by Maximus. The research we collated in our previous letter indicates that this will result in better quality assessments, fewer tribunals, and ultimately better value for money for the taxpayer.

We urge you to consider this proposal and effect a rule change as quickly as possible. We'd be happy to meet with you, if you would like to discuss this issue further. Thank you for reading this letter, and we are in anticipation of your help.

Yours sincerely,



Carina Murray



Kevin Walton



Pritpal Attalia



Liza Vallance



Hannah Kemp-Welch



Kirsty Reynolds



Rick Burgess