



# Summary Report

## Personal Independence Payments (PIP)



We can look into complaints about public service providers.

**Public service providers** are government services for everyone.



We help by

- looking into what has happened
- writing reports
- and saying how to put things right.

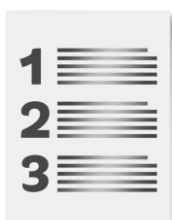


In June 2019 we started to look into **Personal Independence Payments (PIP)**. We looked into how 'further evidence' in PIP assessments was collected and used.



We looked at whether this was being done in the right way. Our report says it was not done in the right way.

The report says what we found out and what we think should be done next.



This is a summary of our report. It has all the most important points we made in the full report.

# What is Personal Independence Payment (PIP)?



PIP is a benefit. Benefits are money paid to a person by the Government. PIP helps a person to pay for extra costs they have because they have a long term health condition or disability.



A Government department is in charge of running PIP and giving people their PIP benefit.



Capita are a business. They have a contract with the Government. They assess people applying for PIP. This means they look at information about people applying for PIP.

## What is further evidence?



Further evidence is any extra information that is not in a person's PIP application, or gathered during a face to face meeting.

Further evidence for PIP assessments can come from different places.



- It can come from reports from health professionals. For example a nurse or a doctor.



- It can come from evidence from people who support the person applying for PIP. For example a key worker or care co-ordinator.



- It can come from information from the person applying for PIP. This includes information given at their face to face interview with a Capita Disability Assessor.

# What we did



We looked at whether the Government and Capita were running PIP in the right way.



We wanted to know if any mistakes were one-offs or happened a lot. We wanted to know if mistakes were being made because of the way things were being run.

To do this we did 3 things.



1. We looked at what the Government and Capita were doing.



2. We looked at how services should do things right.



3. We looked to see if PIP was being run right.

# 1. Looking at what the Government and Capita were doing



Our team did the following things.



- They read through 100 PIP case files and looked at what could have been done better.

A **case file** is all the information or documents about a person's PIP application.



- They asked for information from Government and Capita.



- They visited places where PIP assessments were happening.



- They talked with people affected by or in anyway linked with PIP assessments.

## 2. Looking at how services should do things right



Principles of Good Administration say how public bodies should get things right. They can help public bodies give good service to their customers.



The principles are

- Getting it right.



- Putting the needs of the customer first.



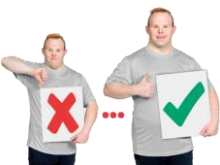
- Being open and taking responsibility.



- Acting fairly.



- Putting things right.



- Always looking to do things better.

### 3. Looking at whether PIP was being run right.



We found that PIP was not being run in the right way, this is called **systemic maladministration**.

### Getting it right



Getting it right is the first principle of good administration.



Getting it right means getting the PIP benefit decision right the first time.



To do this the first assessment must be done right.

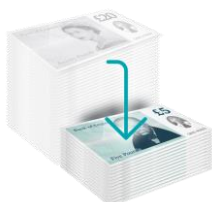


### *Why is this important?*

- It makes sure people get the right support at the right time.



- It creates less stress for the person applying for PIP.



- It is a better use of public money. Having to look at a claim again costs more money.



PIP policy and applications say further evidence may help a decision be made about a PIP claim.



It is not clear who should get the further evidence.

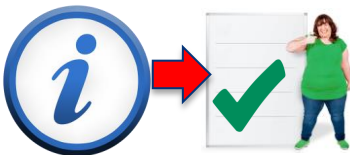
People applying for PIP are told

- not to gather further evidence
- to only provide evidence they already have.



When a person applying for PIP said they did not agree with the first decision given, 'new' evidence changed this decision 1 out of every 5 times when looked at again by the department.

**New evidence** is information that was not available to the first decision maker.



This shows how important further evidence is to making the right decision first time.

We found that Capita did not encourage their staff to make requests for further evidence as they were doing face to face meetings.



We found people applying for PIP often had to get further evidence but they did not know

- what evidence had already been asked for by Capita.



We do not think this is fair to people applying for PIP. This is not ok.

## Being open and taking responsibility



We found that people were not told clearly and openly about further evidence.



We found that people were not always given all the information they should have been.



We found people were sometimes given the wrong idea.

For example, letting people think they would contact or had contacted listed health professionals for advice when they had not.



We found that full explanations of how PIP decisions were reviewed was not given.

Many people who applied for PIP were not told about the importance of giving further evidence.



We found that decision letters from the Government gave poor explanations for the reason a person who applied for PIP did not get it.



## Acting fairly



Acting fairly is important for dealing well with complaints. To do this, complaints should be looked into fully and fairly.



We found that the Government responded quickly to complaints. They often took time to explain policies and procedures. However, they did not often talk about the complaint fully.



Learning from complaints is a good way to make public services better. It builds trust with people who use a service.



We found that the way the Government deals with complaints will not make services better or build trust.



We found that people who complained about further evidence not being asked for were normally told it was the Disability Assessor's decision to make.

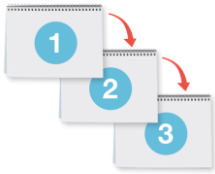


We do not think this is fair. Public bodies should look into the details of complaints when linked to decisions over giving someone a benefit.



We found that the Government's investigation into service complaints about Capita was not good enough. It does not show that they are committed to independently looking into complaints.

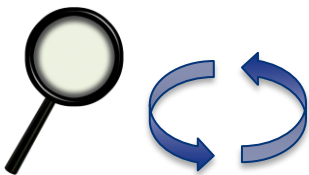
## Always looking to do things better



It has been harder for the Government to do things better because it did not get it right in 3 important areas.



1. It did not **get it right** when asking for and looking carefully at 'further evidence' for individual PIP applications.



2. It did not **get it right** when looking into why decisions about individual PIP applications were changed.



3. It did not **get it right** when looking into complaints.



The Government says it always wants to do things better. However, it has failed to use the information it already has from PIP applications and complaints in order to do this.



We have asked the Government to look at how to make better

- their communications
- their decision making.



We understand that decisions using the same information available may sometimes be different.

We understand that further evidence can't always be collected.



However, it is clear that the way further evidence is asked for and used at the moment is not good enough. This needs to be changed

## Conclusion



To see if PIP was being run well or not we looked at what the Government and Capita were doing.

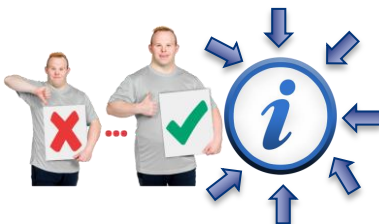


We compared this to how services should do things right.

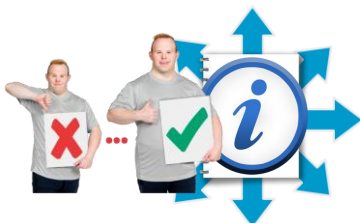


We found that PIP was not being run in the right way, this is called **systemic maladministration**.

Changes need to be made.

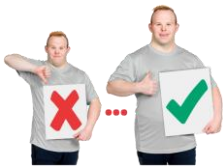


There needs to be a change in how further evidence is got and how it is used in PIP applications.



There need to be changes in how information about further evidence is communicated to people applying for PIP.

# Putting things right



We have given the Government for Communities 33 things they can do to put things right.

These can be found in our full report.

The main ones are



- The Government should be clear about whose job it is to get further evidence to support PIP claims.



- The Government should look at the importance of further evidence for making the right decision first time with PIP applications.



Case Managers must have the power and confidence to

- test how good the information they are given is
- and ask for more information to make sure their decisions are strong.



- Record keeping must be made much better for the whole of the PIP process.

This includes better recording of



- the details of health professionals provided by the person applying for PIP



- the reasons given for the type of assessment



- why further evidence was or was not asked for



- how much importance further evidence is given when making decisions



- explanations given to the person applying for PIP



- and the things done to look into complaints.

- The Government should make sure Capita changes their information pack. It should help people applying for PIP to know



- whether or not further evidence has been asked for from their health professionals
- and who has been contacted.



- Both the Government and Capita should make sure complaints about further evidence are properly looked into. They should explain fully why a complaint was or was not taken forward.



- The Government should look at how PIP complaints are recorded so that they can see what needs to be made better.