

Written evidence from WinVisible (HAB0136)

From WinVisible (women with visible and invisible disabilities)
Addition to previous submission your ref: HAB0095.

RE: Health assessments -- impact of early reassessments

In December 2021, we submitted a group [statement](#) to your inquiry into the assessment of disability benefits. Before the inquiry concludes, we want to add this new testimony from a woman in our group about the impact of reassessment of PIP **a year early** on her as a claimant with mental distress. The DWP announcement of ending needless and stressful reassessments for some claimants, was not applied.

Her experience is also relevant to the government's plans to stop ESA claims and force people to start a fresh claim for Universal Credit (so-called "managed migration", which we oppose).

Ms X says:

*'I am currently ending an inpatient stay, due to a crisis brought on by the requirement to complete a PIP review. **The papers arrived 11 months earlier than expected,** claim due to end Feb 2023, papers arrived April 2022 to be completed in two weeks.*

My PIP award is till 25/02/23 but they sent me the forms dated 27/03/22. It got me in a panic because I wasn't expecting it for another 11 months so I got an extension to the end of May to fill in the forms but it was pretty hard work and needed a call handler going to her manager! So I thought I would contact my MP. I kind of doubt they can or will do anything because the DWP are legally allowed to contact claimants up to 12 months before the end of the award -- but I still think it is cruel and harassing to do it so far in advance.

Still struggling with my energy which is now pretty exhausted after almost an hour on the phone, waiting and talking to the poor call handler who was very patient and kind. I feel pretty sorry for them and told her she really ought to get a different job because the stress they must have to deal with is unimaginable.'

I am now staying at the wonderful Crisis house. Unfortunately as so often happens with PIP and other DWP claim processes, women who are vulnerable and find great difficulty in dealing with the usual knocks and struggles of life, need extra help. If only all women had access to this kind of facility, sadly it seems still to be the only one of its kind in the country after more than 22 years serving the mental health community of vulnerable women.

I have needed to come here for support, to recover and rest until I am able to deal with the form filling process. Here I get all the help and safety I need, that is because it is a women-only space and I have a very serious history of abuse that had left me with Bipolar and Complex PTSD. Can't manage it myself, the stress of the situation got to me and I need some more hands-on support to get through this again.

*I just get so frustrated, there is no point in the reassessment/review, they have all my info going back to 1994 first DLA. Nothing has got better, only now I have a thyroid condition and long covid to deal with. If only they could just leave me alone and give me a long term settlement I could try and put my life back together again. It is such a waste of my energy, distress and their money and time. **It is now going to cost the £1000 a night (approx) to cover my stay in [the Crisis House] but that doesn't come out of the DWP budget it comes out of the NHS budget so they just don't care.** The manager can tell you how the demand for beds related to DWP form filling has spiralled out of control over the last years since all the changes started. Income support to ESA, DLA to PIP, then everyone on to Universal Credit. It has been nothing but changes and more forms and assessments, annually and sometimes because of the slow processing, the next lot of forms arrive after just a few months! It is totally insane, exhausting and in so many cases unnecessary.'*

May 2022