

I understand your committee is currently undertaking a survey of experiences in applying for Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

I am writing to you to highlight flaws and inconsistencies in PIP rules and to complain about the unhelpful and uncaring DWP staff I have dealt with. I previously complained through my MP for [REDACTED] and received a response from the then Minister for Work & Pensions, Penny Mordaunt but this was unhelpful. I hope, therefore, you will understand my writing directly to you.

I am [REDACTED], (after a Subarachnoid Haemorrhage), from Ulcerative Colitis, 2 Cerebral Aneurysms, Hypertension, a Mixed Anxiety and Depressive Disorder and Travel/Health Anxiety. I must avoid stress, which can exacerbate my conditions as I also suffered a Carotid Artery Dissection in 2016. **My conditions have a very significant impact on my life and my ability to work. Because of my Colitis I cannot use public transport without toilets, I suffer considerable anxiety when travelling and I cannot drive other than in my immediate vicinity without accompaniment. I am often bed ridden with Colitis. My medication must be carefully monitored. I must manage my food intake. I am always at risk of faecal incontinence and urgency and this considerably impacts my life.** Yet because of the way rules are framed and the complex and unhelpful assessment process, I have been told that I do not qualify for PIP. Prior to the introduction of PIP, I received Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and the disability element of Working Tax Credit (WTC). I no longer receive these benefits and have been severely disadvantaged by the change to PIP. As a consequence, I now have to pay for my medication which I can ill afford.

Penny Mordaunt states in her letter of 16 February 2017 to [REDACTED]: “We are absolutely committed to supporting disabled people and determined that support should be focused on people who need it most. We want to enable disabled people to have the same opportunities and choices as non-disabled people. We have, therefore, designed PIP to reflect a modern understanding of disability, treating all conditions fairly. This is a real step forward.” **My opportunities and choices are far more limited than those of non-disabled people, yet this has been ignored.**

She also states in her letter of 8 May 2017 to [REDACTED], that “as part of any assessment, the health professional is required to explore what activities the claimant undertakes at work. This includes what reasonable adjustments have been made by the employer and should also include information where the claimant has given up work or changed their job due to the functional limitations of their health condition or impairment”. **None of this was done in my PIP assessment and her statement ignores difficulties in actually getting to non-local work. I was actually downgraded after a**

re-organisation when I could not take a job that I would have had to travel to.

Also in her letter of 8 May 2017 she states: “The assessment is not designed to take into account every area of daily life, but to look at a range of activities which, as a whole, act as a proxy for overall level of need. The activities were chosen to provide a more holistic assessment of the impact of impairments, whether physical, mental or cognitive, than the current Disability Living Allowance criteria.” **The current set of badly designed activities and impact descriptors is far from comprehensive and singularly fails to do this.**

Current Legislation

Current legislation takes account of disability in several different ways:

a. PIP Regulations 2013

Eligibility is assessed using a points based scoring system with two elements – Daily Living and Mobility with various impact descriptors. Descriptors used, which are rigidly applied by assessors, totally fail to capture the impacts of my chronic gastrointestinal disease. **No reference in the Claim Form is made to the ability to earn a living or disadvantage in getting a job. How can personal independence be measured without taking this into account? Present descriptors are not fit for purpose.**

b. The Tax Credit Act 2002/HM Revenue & Customs

To get WTC three conditions must be satisfied:

- work at least 16 hours per week
- have a disability which puts you at a disadvantage in getting a job
- receive a qualifying disability or sickness benefit.

It is this latter condition that I do not comply with. I have lost DLA and WTC and have been denied PIP since my assessment in 2016.

c. The Equality Act 2010

This defines disability as an impairment which produces a long term adverse effect on ability to carry out normal day to day activities. **Ulcerative Colitis is clearly recognised as a qualifying condition.**

PIP rules are ill conceived, deeply flawed, the link to WTC eligibility is unreasonable and PIP assessment is uncaring and unsympathetic. As PIP eligibility underpins access to other benefits, this emphasizes the importance of a fair and reasonable assessment process with more comprehensive impact descriptors and a consistent approach to disability.

Treatment by DWP Staff

My initial 2016 assessment for PIP, after which all benefits ceased, (probably based on information provided for my DLA claim), was very brief and the Assessor was abrupt and cursory and not remotely interested in my medical conditions or their impact on my life. In June of this year I received a letter from DWP making me aware of changes in PIP law but saying it did not alter the decision on my case, which was based on my claim for DLA. After researching the legal changes referred to, I rang DWP in August and was told someone would contact me within 12 weeks. I

called again in September to be told there was a backlog but that I should send further evidence of my health conditions. On 15 October I sent DWP documented evidence from a Consultant Psychiatrist of my mental health conditions. I spoke later in October from my sick bed to a lady to confirm receipt of my documents. She confirmed receipt but was abrupt and unhelpful. She asked if I had completed a new PIP Claim Form. This had not been mentioned previously and appears to affect backdating of PIP. I was then passed to a man for details of this. He was aggressive, difficult to understand and insisted on reading a long declaration which wasted a great deal of time, (45 minutes), unnecessarily. I received the Claim Form on 5 November and the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice. This rejected my claim. **Nothing was done to contact me to discuss the impacts of my mental and physical conditions and these have not been taken into account. The reconsideration also contains factual errors. I cannot use public transport without toilets and I was taken to the PIP assessment by a friend.** The reconsideration also mentions my right to take matters to a Tribunal. I have no wish to do this as this would only cause me further stress and probably cause me further illness. I shall however, complete another Claim Form.

I would be grateful if your committee would take these points above into account in your survey and I would welcome any advice or help you can offer.

November 2021