FACTSHEET:

VIDEO ASSESSMENT

Why have I been asked to attend an assessment?

Most claimants of DWP disability benefits need to have a telephone, video or face-to-face assessment, so that the DWP understand how your conditions affect you when undertaking the 12-point scoring activities that make up the PIP criteria.

It is possible for the DWP to undertake a paper-based assessment, which means that your case is assessed purely on the form and documents that you provided to them. This is quite unusual, only happening in 10-20% of cases nationally. For PIPP Support Group clients we find that about 60% of our cases are awarded on paper-based assessments.

The DWP employ third party providers to undertake medical assessments on their behalf. These vary depending on where you live and are as follows:

- **CAPITA**
- **INGEUS**
- **MAXIMUS**
- **SERCO**

A video assessment does not suit me, or I cannot attend on the time or date I've been given.

We have been assured by the assessment providers that they will always try to adjust an assessment to suit a claimant. But remember, you can only change any or all aspects of the assessment once.

If you have been given a video assessment but do not have the technology or skills to manage this, or you simply would be better suited to a telephone or face-to-face – then you can call and ask to change this. If you need to change the time or the date, then you must do this at the same time. They will generally not allow you to change anything for a second time.

WHO COMPLETES THE ASSESSMENT?

You will speak with a Health Care Professional (HCP) employed by the assessment provider. This will either be:

- A registered nurse (both general and mental health specialists)
- A physiotherapist
- An occupational therapist
- A paramedic

CAN I HAVE A FRIEND, FAMILY MEMBER OR ADVOCATE JOIN THE ASSESSMENT AS A THIRD PARTY?

We often hear that many of you feel better if you have a companion at the assessment, be this a friend, family member, neighbour, or colleague. If you have mental health conditions then this could be to support with your answers, or if you have physical health problems simply for moral support, to read through the form, or take notes.

The person that you choose can be in the room with you (if they live with you or come in to care for you). If they are not, then you can contact your providers customer service phone line and give them give the details of the third party (this won't count as a change as outlined above).

You will be sent a secure link by text message, letter or email which you will click to join the video call. This is similar to 'Zoom' or 'Teams' video call systems.

We have a team of Advocates ready to join your assessment. If we do this, we arrange two preparatory calls in advance of the assessment. This is so that we know a little about you and you know what to expect. We then take comprehensive notes of all that is said during the call.

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RECORDING THE ASSESSMENT

You are not allowed to record your video assessment without prior permission of all parties. You will need to call the assessment providers to ask for this in advance. If you covertly record, without permission – this may lead to issues with the admissibility of the recording as evidence for the future due to various factors including data protection regulations. You may only record audio during the assessment, video recording is never permitted.

It is the PIP Su Groups advice that you do not generally need to record the assessment unless you want it for your own records. Recordings have limited use after the event as the DWP and HMCTS will not generally be interested in viewing these as part of any mandatory reconsideration or appeal process.

During the assessment:

The HCP will be able to see you – so make sure you are dressed as you would be on a usual day. It is not necessary to get dressed smartly. If you do not usually get dressed, then it's fine to stay in your nightwear as long as this is decent, and you are covered appropriately.
Be aware of anything in the background of the video call such as exercise equipment or pets making unnecessary appearances on the camera, these types of things may lead to extra questions or assumptions being made about your level of functioning.
You will be asked to confirm your identity as the call begins. Usually your address, date of birth or national insurance number. The HCP will usually tell you their name, but they do not have to tell you how they are qualified or their usual profession (such as nurse or paramedic).
If you have a companion, check with the HCP that they are present and that you can all hear each other.
The HCP will take the names of everyone on the call and their relationship to you.
Make sure you have a copy of your application form to hand and a list of your conditions and medications (or a prescription list). It's also a good idea to make a list of all the aids and appliances you need – if these are not already listed in your form.
The HCP should have read over your form and evidence before the call. They do not have a great deal of time to do this so they may have only scanned through it quickly. You will be asked lots of questions, mostly referring to the form you have already filled in. The HCP will be typing the whole way through the video call to produce the assessment report. It might feel like you are repeating a lot of the information you have already given to them, but they need to confirm this with you for the report.

An example of some of the questions that you might be asked are as follows:

- Do you work and what is your job?
- Who do you live with?
- What qualifications did you get at school, college or university?
- Can you stand for long enough to prepare a meal?
- Can you reach your feet when dressing?
- Do you remember to take your medications?
- How many minutes can you walk for?
- What speed do you walk? Slow, the same speed as everyone else, or fast?
- How do you know what speed you walk at? Do you lag behind others?
- What makes you stop when you are walking? Pain, breathlessness, poor balance?
- Where is your car parked? Can you walk from the house to the car?
- Where do you get dropped off / park at your GP surgery?
- Where do you stop on the way from the car to reception and why? How far is that?
- Do you have falls or stumbles? If so, how often and what causes them?
- How do you walk? Do you have a limp or poor gait?
- Can you visit the GP on your own?
- How do you get your shopping?
- How do you manage your cleaning?
- Could you manage to get onto a bus or a train?
- Can you add up or subtract (then give you a simple calculation to manage).

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About the assessment process:

They will also ask about variability. This is how often you are affected by your conditions each week or month. Be very specific about this as it can make all of the difference between obtaining an award or not.

Remember the DWP are only interested in how you would manage on most days – not on your very worst day or best days. Make sure you are explaining how your affect you on 'most days'. If you base your answers entirely on your worst days and these are not 'most days' then the HCP will not have a clear impression of how you manage most of the time.

The HCP may also ask you to try to perform some movements for them. These are optional and it is ok to say no if you cannot manage them. Do not do anything that causes you pain or that you are concerned may cause you discomfort or to fall. Make sure that you tell them if you are struggling with any of the movements that they ask you to attempt. Also remember that the HCP will be watching your movements during the assessment so things such as scratching your head, using a pen or reaching down to pick up something from the floor may also be used within the report.

Things to be mindful of:

BEWARE of general chatty questions before or during the assessment and be very careful of how you answer these as they can lead to you losing points without even realising it.

If you feel too rushed, then ask them to slow down as you should not guess at answers. This can be detrimental. Also ensure you understand what the HCP is asking or explain that you do not understand. It is fine to ask the HCP to repeat or rephrase the question.

An average assessment lasts 45 – 90 minutes, often longer. We generally do not expect them to last less than 30 minutes.

Finally, tell the truth and open up as much as you can. Remember to always be honest and not to exaggerate. There are many good HCPs out there, but should things not go to plan then you are entitled to complain afterwards, and our team can assist you with the details to do so if needed.

After the Assessment:

The HCP will finalise their report and send this to the DWP for them to make a decision on your claim. Unfortunately, there can be a wait of several weeks for them to do this.

You might receive a text from the DWP to let you know that they have received your report from the HCP. Once you receive that text, or if you do not get a text, then around a week after your assessment we suggest that you call the PIP enquiry line to request a copy of the PA4 telephone assessment report. When you receive this, you will be able to read the HCP's justifications for the points that they recommend that the DWP award you. Although the recommendations within the report are not the final decision – usually this will give you a good idea as to what you might be awarded when the decision is made.

If the award is not what you had hoped for, you can begin to prepare for a Mandatory Reconsideration, well before the decision arrives with you.

Remember that when submitting a Mandatory Reconsideration, we always suggest doing this in writing as a response to the HCP's report. Make sure you send in medical evidence to support your case. You generally are allowed 13 months to do this as a disabled person, not the 1-month limit that the DWP tell you. However, if you inform the DWP that you want a mandatory reconsideration over the phone, they will usually put you on a deadline for them to make a decision. Therefore, we advise not to call them to start the Mandatory Reconsideration until you have your arguments and evidence ready to send.

Please don't forget, we are always here to help. We offer a Form Completion service by telephone and Teams video link. We can also attend your assessment with you over the phone or by video link.

We also offer assistance from our Legally Qualified Team with Mandatory Reconsideration drafting and Appeal Representation, including attending the hearing remotely with you.

Usually, when we are involved from the early stages, appeals are not necessary.

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