

Dear Peter Sullivan,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 16 May 2020. You asked for:

"What are the department doing for people who claim esa during covid-19, the rates of pay are lower than the state pension, I also claim pip on full award for both levels"

DWP Response

I confirm that we hold the recorded information to respond to your request.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department has made a number of changes to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). These include:

- Treating all ESA claimants who satisfy the conditions of entitlement and are suffering from COVID-19 or who are required to self-isolate in line with government guidance, including vulnerable individuals who have been advised by the NHS to 'shield' (stay at home for at least 12 weeks) because they are at high risk of severe illness, as having limited capability for work, without the requirement to provide a fit note or to undergo a Work Capability Assessment; and
- Removing waiting days for ESA for claimants affected by Covid-19, so it will be payable from day one of the claim, subject to the claimant satisfying the normal conditions of entitlement.

The legislation to enable these easements can be found here:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/289/contents/made>

In addition to the above changes, anyone who makes a new claim can apply for a Short Term Benefit Advance (STBA). STBAs provide an advance of up to 60 per cent of the value of the first full benefit payment and are repaid through deductions from subsequent benefit payments. The offer of a STBA is subject to the claimant having demonstrated that they are likely to satisfy the conditions of entitlement and also subject to checks to make sure that the claimant can afford the repayments.

We have also launched the New Style ESA online portal, which went live Monday 20 April. The portal allows applications to be completed online. For those claimants or appointees who still require a telephony service, this remains available.

Further information for people who are currently in receipt of benefits can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-what-to-do-if-youre-already-getting-benefits>

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the Department quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,
Policy Group FOI Team
Department for Work and Pensions

Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act

If you are not happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing freedom-of-information-request@dwf.gov.uk or by writing to DWP, Central FOI Team, Caxton House, Tothill Street, SW1H 9NA. Any review request should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted our own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF

Web: ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745