

To Ms K Sutton
request-238076-4cac7189@whatdotheyknow.com

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: freedom-of-information-request@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

Our Ref: IR 621

6 January 2015

Dear Ms Sutton

Thank you for your email requesting a review of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) response received on 10th December 2014.

In your email you asked to be provided with information answering the following questions:-

I feel that two questions need clarifying firstly, your response to my question number 1 referred me to a link and paragraph number but it doesn't answer the question. Nowhere in the link that you provided does it mention assessors conducting telephone assessments? So again my question is-, Do the Departments Guidelines allow for the PIP providers to conduct part of the assessment by phone?

In your response to my question 6 you state that the information I'm requesting is not held at your department. So can you kindly tell me who I would need to contact to get this information please?

Please be assured that your request has been given our full consideration and that all aspects of your review were taken fully into account.

In response to your request, I can confirm that the handling of your original request and response has now been appropriately reviewed and that I was unconnected with the handling of your original request.

You have referred to questions 1 and 6 of your original request (FOI 4863) which asked:

1) Do your guidelines for the conducting of a "face to face" assessment allow for the private providers to do the majority of it by telephone? and

6) Finally, and I think for the safety of vulnerable people with mental health problems and indeed anyone that believes, like I do, that this method does not constitute a fair and accurate assessment, do claimants have the right to refuse to have the face to face conducted by Capita OR Atos over the phone, as this surely breaches the face to face assessment criteria? If they do refuse, will this have an impact on their claim, will the file be returned to DWP stating "non-compliance" and their claim then closed or, as it's not a legal requirement, should we just be telling people to withhold their telephone numbers, making it impossible for this totally ineffectual method of assessment to take place?"

The response from the Freedom of Information Officer dated 4 December 2014 advised the following:

In response to question 1, there is a guide used by Assessment Providers undertaking PIP assessments. Please find enclosed a direct link to this guide, Page 16, para 2.3.5 and Page 26, para 2.5.2 refers.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-independence-payment-assessment-guide-for-assessment-providers>

In answer to question 6, I have established that the information you requested regarding the right to refuse to have a face to face assessment over the telephone by Capita or Atos, is not held by this Department. Paragraph 2.5 of the PIP Assessment Guide (see link provided in response to question 1) provides information regarding the Health Professional's role in the Paper Based Review. Paragraph 2.5.6 provides information when contacting the claimant and paragraph 2.5.11 explains when a face to face consultation is more likely to be appropriate.

In response to your Internal Review request, I find that there is no specific guidance regarding Health Professionals (HPs) conducting the majority of the face to face assessment over the telephone. Para 2.3 provides guidance on obtaining further evidence, including telephoning the customer, if they believe that further evidence would help inform their advice to DWP or negate the need for a face-to-face consultation.

The Freedom of Information Act is for provision of recorded information held, the Department does not hold information relating to a claimants right to refuse to have a telephone conversation with an HP. Paragraph 2.5.11 of the PIP Assessment Guide explains when a face to face consultation is more likely to be appropriate, i.e. it has not been possible to gain sufficient further evidence or to advise the Department based on the balance of probability.

I therefore find that the original response dated 4 December 2014 was correct and I am therefore satisfied that all the information that DWP are able to supply to you has been supplied.

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

Yours sincerely,

Correspondence Team
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Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act

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