

Annex 5M: Personal Independence Payments and Disability Living Allowance

A great deal of work has been done on Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) by many people over the years – including the two independent reviews of PIP by Paul Gray in 2014¹ and 2017,² which themselves attracted criticism from affected communities – and this work is ongoing.

medConfidential recognises and applauds the vital efforts and expertise of organisations such as Disability Rights UK,³ Citizens Advice,⁴ Disability News Service,⁵ Child Poverty Action Group,⁶ JCWI,⁷ and many others.

The remit and scope of our ‘Monster Factory’ investigation has been the information systems of Universal Credit. It is certainly the case that PIP and DLA are deserving of further scrutiny from this perspective, but we knew we would not be able to do justice to such work within the limited resources available. (It is also true that many of the significant issues with PIP and DLA arise in the medical assessment processes, rather than in the information systems around them.)

What UC ‘sees’ is the output of the PIP and DLA processes – a count of points, if that – and because the process is managed by remote DWP decision makers, case managers, and contracted ‘independent’ assessors, frontline JobcentrePlus staff themselves see little more than an indication of “award” or “no award”.

We do note in [Annex 5A](#) that much of the evidence provided by applicants to the PIP / DLA process is largely ignored by DWP and the contractors doing the assessments. This results in a very high percentage of appeals – and in a high percentage of those appeals succeeding, once a genuinely independent judge reads all of the papers, not just the information that the contractor’s employer is financially incentivised to weigh differently...

Previously in our NHS-related work, we picked up on [DWP’s tender for a “medical records broker”](#), and made a modest proposal.⁸

And during the course of our investigation we noted the apparently automated process by which claimants are sent letters calling them to a PIP / DLA reviews, which – as with other examples of DWP automation that serves the system, not those who the system is supposed to serve – often results in appointments, and cancelled appointments, where no human has read the claimants’ case notes before they were called to an appointment, and were forced to do the the work to prepare for that appointment, which a tribunal had previously decided should not happen.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-independence-payment-pip-assessments-first-independent-review>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-independence-payment-pip-assessment-second-independent-review>

³ <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2022/july/pip-delays-leave-disabled-people-hundreds-millions-pounds-out-pocket>

⁴ <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/sick-or-disabled-people-and-carers/pip/>

⁵ <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/student-reform-confusion-risks-turning-assessment-system-into-pip-replica/>

⁶ <https://cpag.org.uk/welfare-rights/resources/e-bulletins/early-warning-system-e-bulletin-april-2022>

⁷ <https://www.jcwi.org.uk/westminster-hall-debate-nrpf>

⁸ <https://medconfidential.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/modest-proposal-DWP.pdf>