



Having a check to see if you can get benefits for a disability or health problem



EasyRead version

About us



This work is being done by a House of Commons committee called the Work and Pensions Committee.



We look into what the Department for Work and Pensions does, including:

- benefits for people, working or not
- and pensions.



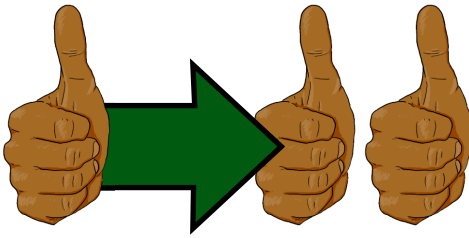
We have 11 MPs from different parties on the Committee.



The House of Commons is the part of Parliament where MPs sit, the other part is the House of Lords.



Parliament has groups or committees that look at things the Government is doing.



They use what they find out to help change things or make them better.



You can find out more about the Committee here:
tinyurl.com/work-and-pensions

Why health assessments are important



To get benefits for a disability or health problem you need to have a health check called an assessment.



There are a few different benefits for people who cannot work or who have to pay for things they need because they are disabled or have a health problem.



Health assessments are used to help make decisions about what benefit you might get.



Most disabled people really need this extra help so we need to make sure the health assessments being done work properly for people.

What the Committee did

We spoke to lots of people and organisations. This included:



- over 100 people telling us in writing about the checks they had, as well as organisations speaking up for people



- 8,500 replies to our survey



- 9 public meetings



- information from experts



- information from Scotland.



We used all of this information to write a Report saying what changes we think Government should make.

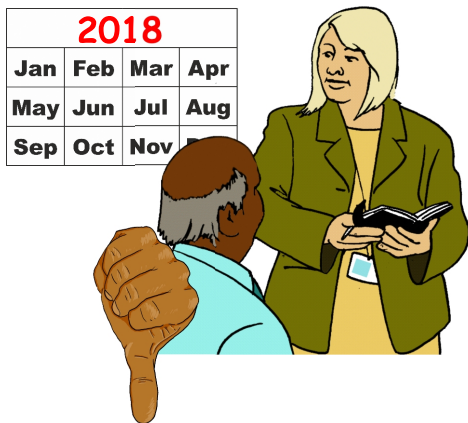
Our Report in short



The Department for Work and Pensions uses health assessments to help make decisions about what benefit you might get.



So they need to work well.



But five years ago a Committee found there were big problems with health assessments and a lot of these problems are still there.



This lets down the disabled and ill people who really need these benefits.



There needs to be important changes so people can see and trust what happens.



The Government has said big changes will happen in its Health and Disability White Paper.



This includes scrapping the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) in future.



But assessments for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are likely to carry on.



We think that before changes to the way health assessments are done, another review should be done to check how these changes could affect people.



There are changes the Government can make now to make health assessments better for people.



How assessments affect people

We are very worried that people are still feeling distressed when they have health assessments.



The Government should promise to do regular checks on the effect of assessments and allow experts to see the results, especially when they have helped cause serious harm or death.



Staff need training in this area to try and cause less harm.



Making the system better

We found people do not trust this system.



We want all assessments to be recorded so checks can be made.



Assessment reports should also be sent to people as soon as possible.



There are still lots of wrong decisions being made even with new changes meant to make them better.



7 out of 10 decisions about PIP are changed when appealed at tribunals.

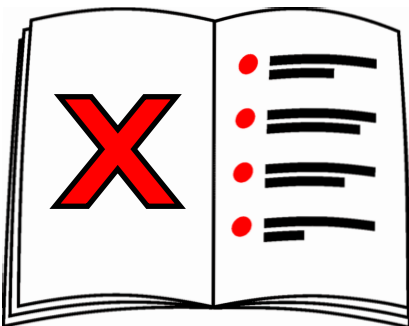


People doing the checks are not told about the problems tribunals find so they might make the same mistakes.

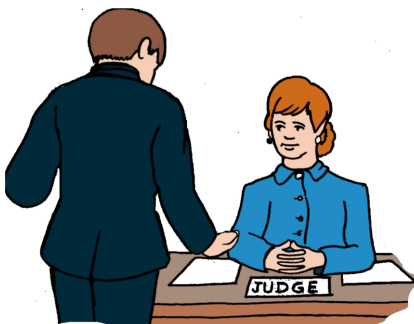


The Department must:

- do new research and start learning from these mistakes



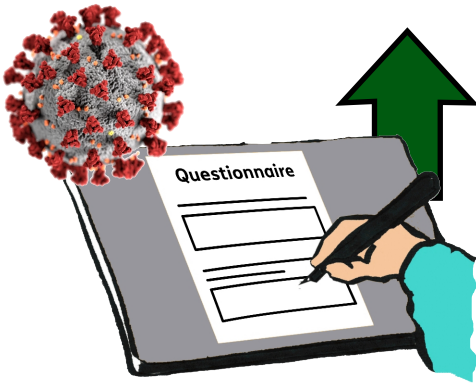
- publish figures on Universal Credit mistakes



- work with the Courts and Tribunal Service to make sure it understands how big these problems are.



This is vital to understand how the system is not working for many people.



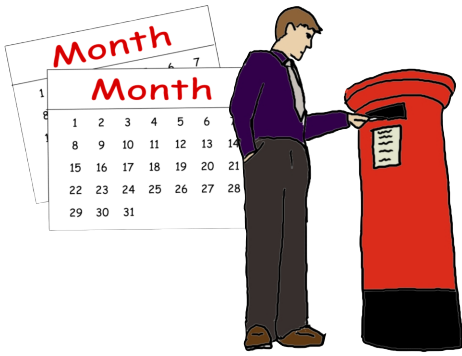
Covid meant more checks done by paper and not in person.



This has actually made it better for some people but not everyone.

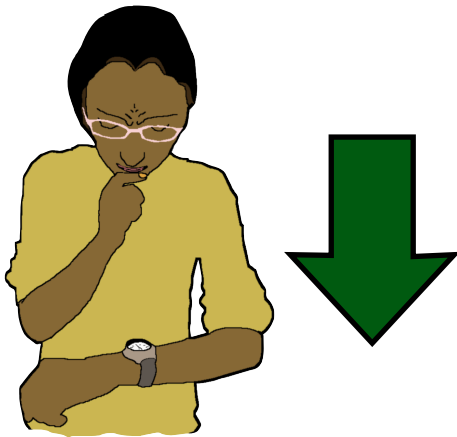


The Department must let people choose how they have their assessment. One way of doing things does not suit everyone.



We want the Government to:

- allow more time to send back forms



- keep their delays down even when more people are applying



- have time targets for the firms doing assessments



- make sure PIP payments are made if the target times are not met.



We heard that reports from assessment firms have got better and they are meeting their targets.



But people told us there are still problems with:

- how information is used even when the guidelines for their work tell them what to do



- them still not knowing enough about people's disabilities and mental health conditions.



The Department must look at this again and make it better.



We also heard worrying examples of firms secretly checking up on people.



The Government needs to look into this to check what is happening and report back.



The Department is working on better information sharing and an easier way of asking for these benefits.



We also look forward to finding out more from the testing they are doing with people with severe disabilities.

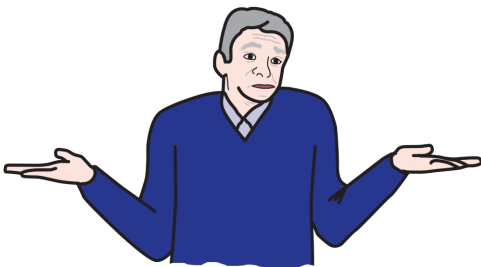


We want the Government to recognise that many people with severe disabilities work and make sure they still get the support they need.



Other benefits and future changes

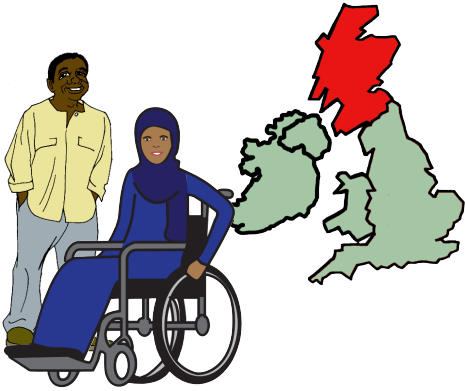
We were pleased to hear that Attendance Allowance (AA) and Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) seem to be working well.



But not enough people know about or claim AA. This needs to change.



Most of the worries about Disability Living Allowance (DLA), were when changing to PIP at 16.



We want the UK Government to do the same as the Scottish Government and allow people to stay on DLA until they are 18.



And make the change as easy as possible, especially for people whose disabilities will not change.

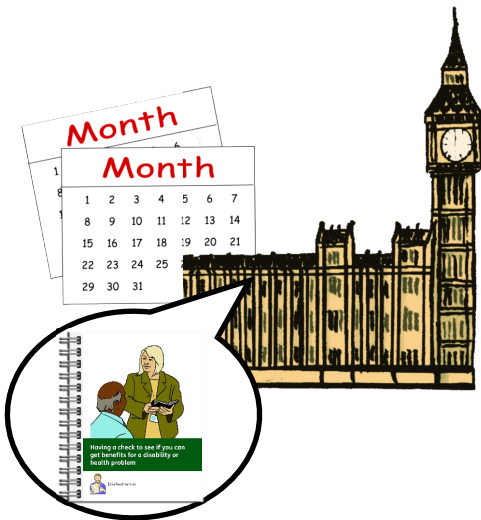


The Government should keep an eye on what is happening in Scotland to see if other things are worth copying.

What happens next?



Our Report has been sent to the Government.



The Government should tell us what they think about it in 2 months' time.



They should tell us what they will do and if they will make any changes to health assessments.

Credits



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