

Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP  
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

Dear Secretary of State,

We write to you to urge you to provide disabled people with a right to request an appropriate assessor for PIP assessments and Work Capability Assessments.

We regularly hear from constituents about the stress, fear and anxiety of trying to access financial support to enable them to live independently. Too often disabled people get assessed by someone who doesn't understand their condition. A right to an appropriate assessor would mean a disabled person could be assessed by someone with an appropriate medical background and a far better understanding of their needs.

Disabled people should not have to fight for the benefits they are entitled to. Yet this is the reality for many disabled claimants because the current process isn't getting assessments right. The result is that an incorrect benefits decision is being overturned every minute of the working day. The process is also creating a significant financial cost to the Exchequer; between 2017 and 2019 the Government spent £120 million fighting PIP and ESA appeals.

We firmly believe that having the right to request an appropriate assessor would see more correct outcomes the first time around. That would have a huge impact on the emotional and financial wellbeing of disabled people. There would also be significant financial benefits to the Government as a result of the decrease in Mandatory Reconsiderations and tribunals required.

The forthcoming White Paper on disability benefits presents the perfect opportunity to introduce this sensible reform to the system. The success of online and telephone assessments allows for this change now, by facilitating assessments without the need to consider geographical limitations. Therefore, we are calling on you to take this opportunity to introduce the right for claimants to request an assessor with appropriate knowledge of their condition or impairment.

This call is supported by XXXXX signatories to Scope's petition.

Disabled people should get the benefits they are entitled to first time around, and the right to request an appropriate assessor for disability benefits assessments would bring us closer to a system that works for disabled people.

Yours sincerely,