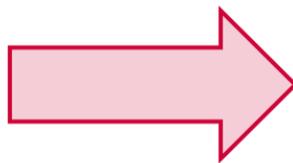


Social Security Experience Panels: Personal Independence Payment Assessments part two

Background

The Scottish Government is becoming responsible for some of the benefits currently delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of work to prepare for this change, the Scottish Government set up the Social Security Experience Panels.

**Department
for Work and
Pensions**



**Scottish
Government**



Over 2,400 people registered as panel members when Experience Panels launched in 2017. They all have recent experience of the benefits that are coming to Scotland.



The Scottish Government is working with Experience Panel members to create Scotland's new social security system.

2,400+
**Experience Panel
members**

About the research

This report gives the findings of the 'Personal Independence Payment Assessments' research.



1335

Invites



384

Survey responses

The research took place in



FEB

2020

In the past, we have asked Experience Panel members about their experiences of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments and their views on how assessments should work in Social Security Scotland.

The research asked Experience Panel members views on:



Having an assessment over the phone.



Preferences for having someone at an assessment to support them.



Preferences for seeking and receiving information about assessments.

Participants were aged between

25 – 79

years old



35%

Man or boy



65%

Woman or girl



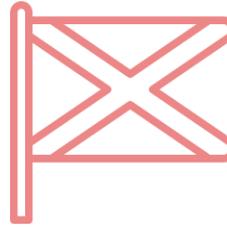
84%

lived in an urban location



16%

lived in a rural location



Participants took part from all

32

local authority areas

Most survey participants had a disability or long-term health condition (87%), including:



chronic pain



severe hearing impairments



severe visual impairments



other kinds of long term health condition

Half (50%) of survey participants were:



a carer due to **old age**,



a carer to a **child**, or



a carer to an **adult**.

Previous PIP assessment experiences

We asked respondents some questions about their previous PIP assessment experiences.



Three quarters of respondents (73 per cent) were currently in receipt of PIP.



Nearly one quarter (23 per cent) had helped someone else to apply for PIP.



2 per cent were applying for PIP for the first time.

2 per cent had received PIP in the past.



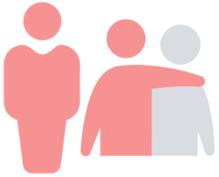
Nine in ten respondents (90 per cent) had attended a PIP assessment before.



Over half (57 per cent) had attended their own assessment.

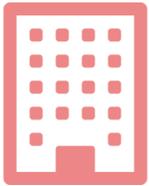


Just under two in ten (19 per cent) had attended an assessment to support someone else.



14 per cent had attended both their own assessment and to support someone else.

Where the assessment was



Just under seven in ten respondents (68 per cent) had their most recent assessment at an assessment centre.



Three in ten (31 per cent) had their most recent assessment at home.

How the assessment went

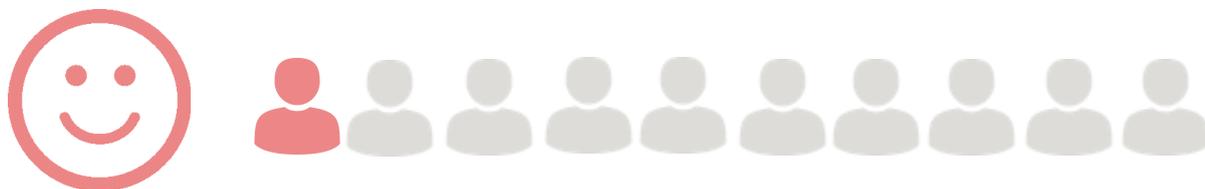
Around four in ten respondents (46 per cent) felt there were positive and negative aspects to their assessment experience.



Around four in ten (44 per cent) felt their assessment experience was negative overall.

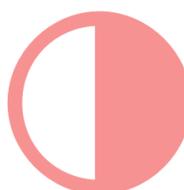


One in ten (11 per cent) felt their assessment experience was positive overall.



PIP assessments over the phone

We asked respondents some questions about the idea of having an assessment over the phone with Social Security Scotland.

 Respondents were split on whether they would feel comfortable having an assessment over the phone.

 Around four in ten respondents (41 per cent) said they would feel comfortable.

 Around in four (43 per cent) said they would not.

 16 per cent said they did not know.

Where and when would be best for an assessment over the phone



The majority of respondents who were positive or uncertain about phone assessments said that between 9 am and 5 pm would be the best time to have an assessment over the phone (89 per cent).

We asked those same respondents to tell us the places they would feel comfortable having an assessment over the phone.



Almost all (96 per cent) said their own home.



Two in ten said a building or office run by a charity (21 per cent).



18 per cent said a GP office.

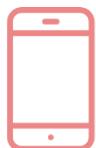


14 per cent said a Social Security Scotland venue.



The least popular options were at a local authority office and a local library.

We asked those same respondents what devices they would use for an assessment over the phone.



The most popular options were a personal mobile phone (69 per cent) or landline (70 per cent).



This was followed by personal computer or laptop (19 per cent) or tablet (22 per cent).



Under one in ten respondents said they would use someone else's phone, tablet or laptop (7 per cent) or a phone that is available in a public area (8 per cent).

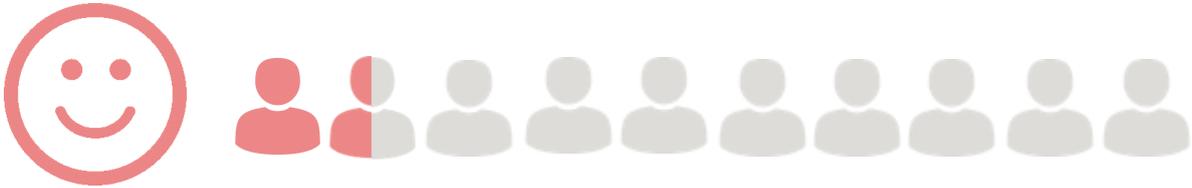
Difficulties with an assessment over the phone

We asked all respondents if they thought there would be difficulties with having an assessment on the phone.

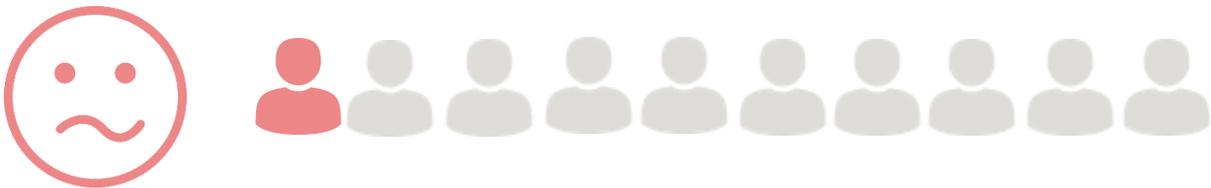
Seven in ten (72 per cent) thought there would be difficulties.



16 per cent did not.



One in ten (11 per cent) said they did not know.



We asked respondents who said there would be difficulties with having an assessment on the phone what they thought would be the main difficulty would be.



Nearly four in ten (39 per cent) said expressing themselves properly.



14 per cent said not being able to see the assessor.



Combined, problems with call quality, signal issues, not being able to hear the assessor and finding it hard to speak loudly accounted for around two in ten responses (19 per cent).



27 per cent of respondents said another issue would be the main difficulty in having an assessment over the phone.

Most of these respondents referred to a mixture of the responses already listed.

Many also said their health condition would be the main difficulty. This included physical disability, hearing loss, mental health conditions and learning disabilities.

“Autism makes it very difficult to know how to speak on the phone, and I would feel rushed. I can't answer questions quickly. There's also no way to take a break.”



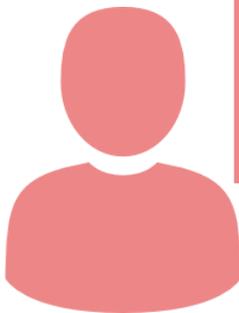
Many other respondents said the main difficulty would be the assessor not being able to see them.



These respondents said it was important that an assessor see them to get a full understanding of their health condition or disability.



They felt that an assessment in person would be more likely to be correct.



“The assessor needs to see people in the flesh so they can see for themselves how the disability impacts a person.”

“I would want visual confirmation that the assessor was actively listening and picking up on non-verbal input from me.”

“Not being able to see the facial expressions and body movements and language of the person being assessed means fewer factors on which to base assessment and higher risk of misunderstanding and underestimating their issues. Vice-versa, not seeing assessor's face and body language can lead to less trust and less inclination to participate leading to lack of vital information.”

Assessment preferences

We asked respondents when they would want to find out what happens at an assessment if they were applying for PIP for the first time.



Over half (54 per cent) said they would want to find out when being told they need an assessment.



Just under half (47 per cent) said they would like this information before they apply.



Just under three in ten (28 per cent) said immediately after submitting their application.

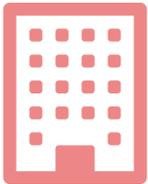


Around one in ten said they would want to find out what happens in assessment the week (10 per cent) or day (8 per cent) before the assessment itself.

We asked respondents which assessment option would suit them best.



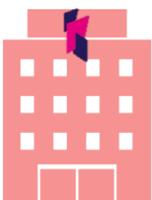
Nearly half (47 per cent) said a face to face assessment in their home.



One quarter (24 per cent) said a face to face assessment at a location near them (e.g. GP, Third Sector venue).



Nearly two in ten (18 per cent) said an assessment over the phone.



Face to face assessment at a Social Security Scotland venue was the least popular option, with just over one in ten respondents (12 per cent).

Home assessments

We asked respondents who said having an assessment in their home would suit them best to tell us why.



Seven in ten (70 per cent) said this was because their disability, mental health or long-term health condition makes it difficult for them to leave home.



Just under seven in ten (69 per cent) said they would feel more comfortable in their own home.



One quarter (26 per cent) said they would not need to spend time travelling.



14 per cent said it would not cost them money to travel.



12 per cent said there are poor transport links in their area.



One in ten (10 per cent) said they have caring responsibilities.

Selecting assessment preferences

We asked respondents how they would like to tell us about their preferences for an assessment, such as whether they want it at home, at a Social Security Scotland venue or over the phone.



Three quarters (76 per cent) said they would like to state their preferences for an assessment on the application form.



One quarter (24 per cent) said they would like to state their preferences after being invited to an assessment, either online, over the phone or by post.

Assessment guidance

We asked respondents where is the first place they would look for guidance about assessments with Social Security Scotland.



Nearly half of respondents (47 per cent) said Social Security Scotland's website.



One third of respondents said a support organisation e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau or Welfare Rights.

Other places were chosen by 1 in 20 or fewer people:



Online forums



An advocate



On the phone to Social Security Scotland



Family and friends



GP office

Assessment support

We asked respondents if they would want to involve someone to support them in an assessment.



Nine in ten (89 per cent) said yes.

We asked those respondents to tell us who would they like to support them at an assessment.



Seven in ten (70 per cent) said a family member.



Half (51 per cent) said an advocate.



Over one third (35 per cent) said a carer.



Of respondents who said they would involve another person to support them at their assessment, most said a friend.

We asked those respondents to tell us how they would like the person to support them at an assessment.



Almost all respondents (94 per cent) said they would like the person be in the room or on the phone with them.



Over one third (36 per cent) would ask their supporter to provide a written statement of support.



Of respondents who said they would like the person to support them in another way, most said they would want the person to help them speak or speak on their behalf.



A few respondents said they would like the person to help them remember the assessment and discuss it afterwards.

“To help remember the information given to me or to help with my memory loss.”

“The person usually helps me to mention things that I forget or they can explain things better than me.”

“I may wish them to speak on my behalf if I get confused or have sensory/mental impairment.”

Digital devices and services

We asked respondents about their access to a range of devices and services.



Nearly all respondents (96 per cent) have access to an internet connection in their home.



Landline, laptop or computer and smartphone were selected by around seven in ten respondents.



Only three in ten respondents (30 per cent) have access to a webcam.



Just under three in ten respondents (28 per cent) said that they use assistive technology.

Improving assessments

We asked respondents if there is anything else Social Security Scotland could do differently when it takes over responsibility for PIP assessments.

Many of the answers repeat those from previous Experience Panels research on assessments. Respondents said:



Use medically trained health and social care professionals to conduct assessments. Assessors should have in-depth knowledge of the clients' health conditions.



Assessments should not be carried out by an external, third party organisation.



People should be treated fairly and respectfully at assessments. Assessors should believe and listen to clients.

Assessments should be reported on truthfully and accurately. Assessments should be recorded and people should be given a copy of the assessment report.



Reduce assessments if medical evidence can be provided at the application stage to show someone qualifies for the benefit.



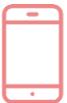
Ensure assessment spaces are accessible, close to home and friendly. Offer people flexibility to book, choose and change assessment appointments.

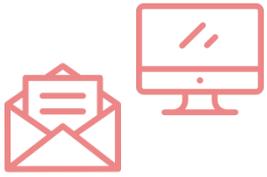
What's next?



This research will help inform the design of the new consultations service.

It helps confirm the need to design a service that provides:





choice about how to apply and communicate



reduces the need for unnecessary travel



is tailored to the individual

encourages support networks to be involved

There will be more research with Experience Panel members. This will be for creating and testing designs for the future service.



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ISBN: 978-1-83960-974-9

Published by the Scottish Government, August 2020