

Overview of Government Consultation on Reforming Disability Living Allowance

The UK Government has published a consultation so the changes it is planning to make to the benefits that people with disabilities receive. It wants to get rid of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and replace it with some thing called Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

Personal Independence Payments would be different from Disability Living Allowance in the following ways:

Applying for the benefit

In order to qualify for DLA applicants currently have to fill out a form giving details of their disability and the effect it has on them. In around half of all cases the Government also ask for supporting documents, like evidence from the applicant's General Practitioner (GP).

In order to claim PIP, however, claimants would have to meet with an independent medical officer who would talk to the claimant and assess their ability to do things like get around, manage personal care and treatment needs and preparing food and drink

The independent assessor would then decide whether the claimant is eligible for the benefit.

Change to Automatic Entitlements

At the moment, DLA is available to some people automatically. This includes:

- Those with severe mental impairments
- Double amputees
- People who are Deaf and/or Blind
- Those on Haemodialysis
- Severely visually impaired.

The Government wants to end this. If Personal Independence Payments are introduced ALL claimants will have to have their applications assessed by an independent medical assessor. The only exception would be in relation to those who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness.

The Structure of the Personal Independence Payment

At them moment there are two difference parts to Disability Living Allowance. The mobility component which a person can receive if they have trouble walking and the care component which people receive if they need help with day to day tasks.

The Mobility Component will remain under PIP. However, instead of being based on the claimant's ability to **walk**, it would be based on their ability to get around more generally. For instance, the assessor might look at the claimant's ability to

get around using a wheelchair or their ability to plan and make a journey. This means, for instance, that someone who previously received DLA mobility allowance because they could not walk might receive less PIP because they are able to move around using their wheelchair.

Unlike with DLA there will not be a Care component to Personal Independence Payments. This will be replaced with the 'Daily Living' Component. Eligibility for the Daily Living Component will be based on the person's ability to do things such as manage their personal care and treatments needs and access food and drink. This is a change from the Care Component of DLA which was offered to people based on how much care or supervision they required.

The Application Process

At the moment a person can claim DLA if they have qualified for the benefit for at least three months and if they will continue to be eligible for the next six months. The Government wants to change this. It is proposing that in order to claim the Personal Independence Payment, an applicant must have been eligible to claim for at least **six** months (rather than three). The applicant will still need to be eligible for the next six months into the future

The Review Process

The Government also wants to periodically review Personal Independence Payment claims. Individuals will be assessed using the same criteria used in their original assessment. The frequency and format of the reviews will depend on the claimant's needs and the likelihood of their condition.

Hospital and Residential Care

Personal Independence Payments will not be available to those who have been in hospital or residential care for 28 days or more. They will, however, remain eligible for the benefit and will start receiving it again once they leave hospital/residential care.