



Department
for Work &
Pensions



Topic Guide For Depth Interviews With Claimants – Wave 2

Personal Independence Payment
Claimant Research, Ipsos MORI

September 2018

- 50 depth interviews to be conducted with claimants who have had a face-to-face assessment/consultation with Atos or Capita and have received their decision. There will be a mix of successful and unsuccessful applications. Claimants who have asked for mandatory reconsideration or have appealed against their decision should have been screened out at the recruitment stage.
- Key questions are marked in **bold**.
- Low priority questions are in *italic*.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND (ALL)

- Introduce yourself and the research, explain confidentiality/anonymity, explain their PIP claim will not be affected in any way by what they say, seek consent for participation, seek permission for audio recording
- Check the participant understands this interview is about their application for PIP. If needed, explain what PIP is and what the application process consists of, and (if face-to-face interview) show relevant PIP materials such as PIP2 form.
- Confirm with the claimant that they have had a face-to-face assessment for PIP, and that they have received their decision (they should have received a letter from DWP, most likely in January 2017) as context. The information is included in the sample and will be provided to you for the interview so you just need to check it with participant so they are clear about the key milestones that the interview relates to.

SECTION 2: CLAIM PROCESS BEFORE ASSESSMENT

What do you know about PIP as a benefit?

I would like to quickly look back to when you first submitted your application for PIP. There was a form to complete, called 'How your disability affects you'. Can you remember that form?

Did you seek/receive support when completing the form? What support?

*When you initially submitted your application form, what evidence did you supply with it, if any? PROBE: How recent was the evidence you were able to supply?
PROBE: Less than two-years-old, or more?*

Were there any health condition(s) or changes in your health that were not covered by the evidence you submitted with your application? PROBE: Why did you not provide evidence about these?

Did DWP make it clear to you that you should provide up-to-date evidence, as part of the application process?

PROBE: What is your understanding of what is meant by ‘up-to-date’ evidence? IF NOT MENTIONED SPONTANEOUSLY: Up-to-date evidence was considered to be evidence from the past two years. Were you aware of this?

Did DWP make it clear to you that you should provide evidence covering all your conditions, as part of the application process?

Did you collect or receive any additional evidence after submitting your application form?

IF HAD ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE: What did you do with it, if anything? Did you take any additional evidence to the assessment or send it in the post to the DWP? How did you know to do this? Did you do this yourself, or did somebody do this for you? Who?

IF DIDN'T TAKE ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE TO ASSESSMENT AND DID NOT SEND IT TO DWP: Were you aware you could take any additional evidence to the assessment or send it to DWP after submitting your application form? How did you know this?

IF BROUGHT ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE TO THE ASSESSMENT: Did the assessor take it into account/take copies of it?

Did you take any evidence to the face-to-face assessment that you had already submitted on the initial form? PROBE:

Reasons?

On your application form, did you provide contact details of the professional(s) best placed to advise on your circumstances? For example, GP/doctors/nurses/therapists/social worker/physiotherapists etc.

IF YES: **How do you think this information was used?**

Do you think this/these professional(s) was/were contacted to provide additional evidence for your claim? PROBE:

What makes you think that?

SECTION 3: PLANNING/PREPARING FOR THE ASSESSMENT

I would like to start by thinking about what happened after you sent the ‘How your disability affects you’ form to DWP.

You should have received a letter from the assessment provider telling you that you were invited to have a face-to-face interview. Do you remember this? PROBE:

IF YES:

Were you expecting this?

Topic Guide For Depth Interviews With Claimants – Wave 2

IF NO, PROBE:

Do you think DWP could have made a decision about the outcome of your PIP application just by looking at your responses to the form 'How your disability affects you'?

What information was included in the letter (inviting you to the assessment)? (telling the time of assessment, explaining what to expect (Leaflet), anything else?)
What was this?

How clear was this information? Did it make it clear:

- what time the appointment would start? And what time to arrive? Where to go? How it would work (IF COMING TO THEIR HOME)?
- that you could have/bring someone else with you?
- what would happen during the assessment?
- why a face-to-face assessment was needed?

How helpful was this information?

PROBE: Did it answer your questions? Was there anything that you were worried about that this helped to clear up? Was there anything you were worried about that you couldn't find answers to in this information?

IF DOES NOT RECALL RECEIVING A LETTER FROM ASSESSMENT PROVIDER:
How did you come to know about your face-to-face assessment?

And how clear were you about the process from this?

What did you expect to happen during the face-to-face assessment?

PROMPT: go through information on form, asked about condition(s), asked how it affects you, asked about treatments and or medication, hospital stays, going through supporting evidence, asked to do functional tests, a medical examination? Did you think it would focus on your condition or on impact of condition on life?

To what extent did you expect the face-to-face assessment to be focused on the medical aspects of your condition(s)?

Why did you think that/ where did you get that expectation from? (PROBE FOR DWP/ non-DWP source)

ASK THE PARTICIPANT TO DISCUSS WHAT HAPPENED ONCE THEY RECEIVED THE LETTER ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT. ENSURE PARTICIPANT IS CLEAR THAT WE ARE REFERRING TO THE LETTER ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT AND NOT THE INITIAL LETTER THEY RECEIVED ABOUT PIP.

- o **Did you prepare for it in any way?** PROBE: How? What did you do to prepare?
IF NOT: Why not? **Did you seek any advice or guidance from DWP prior to the assessment?** PROBE:

What was it?

Where did you get it from? (PROMPT – PIP enquiry line, DWP phone line, DWP website, information provided with application form)

How clear was it?

How helpful was it?

Was it what you were originally looking for?

- o **Did you seek any advice or guidance from the Assessment Provider?**
PROBE: How? Enquiry Lines? Where did you find the contact details? Reasons?

What was it?

How clear was it?

How helpful was it?

Was it what you were originally looking for?

- o **Did you seek advice or guidance from anywhere else?**

PROBE: support service (CAB, local authority), specialist charity? This can include non-face-to-face advice such as telephone lines, website.

IF DID SEEK ADVICE: **Why? What sort of advice or guidance were you looking for? How helpful was it? (IF DIDN'T ALSO GO TO DWP) Why did you do this rather than contacting DWP?**

IF SOUGHT ADVICE FROM MORE THAN ONE SOURCE: **Which was most useful? Why?**

- o IF DIDN'T SEEK ADVICE FROM ANY SOURCE: Can you tell me why you didn't seek any advice or guidance?

- o ASK IF SAID IN SECTION 2 THAT THEY DID NOT BRING ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE TO THEIR ASSESSMENT: **You said earlier that you did not bring further evidence to the assessment. Was there anything you would have liked to bring but didn't? Why?**

- o **Did you know that you could take someone else to the assessment with you?**

IF YES, where did you find that out from? PROBE FOR DWP/NON-DWP SOURCE

IF NO, how could this have been made clearer? Did you always plan to take someone else?

How long did you expect it to take to get an appointment for a face-to-face consultation/assessment? How long did it actually take?

PROBE: Thoughts about any discrepancies between expectations and reality. Where they got their information from.

- o How did you feel about the amount of notice you were given to attend an assessment or have an assessment at your home?
- o Was the appointment time and location convenient? Why do you say that?
- o Were you aware that it is possible to request a home visit? How did you come to know this?

- o Did you attend the appointment you were offered? IF NO. PROBE: Why not?
- o Did you attempt to re-arrange the appointment? PROBE: Why? How easy or difficult was this? Did you know who to contact? How did you find their details?
IF DIDN'T RESCHEDULE BUT WERE UNHAPPY WITH THE APPOINTMENT SLOT OR THE LOCATION: Why didn't you reschedule?
Did you know that you could ask for the appointment to be rescheduled?
WHERE PEOPLE RESCHEDULED BECAUSE OF LOCATION:
How convenient was the rescheduled location?
- o Did you know what the consequences of not attending a face-to-face appointment would be?

SECTION 4: CONDUCT OF THE ASSESSMENT

Where did the assessment take place?

PROBE: in home, local health centre, assessment centre? Why do you think it was held there?

IF IN HOME: Were you initially given this option or did you request it? **Why?**
How did you feel about having an assessment at home?

FOR THOSE WHO TRAVELLED TO AN ASSESSMENT CENTRE

How easy or difficult was it to travel there?

PROBE: Any issues regarding your main health condition(s) that had an impact on travelling; impact of the distance of travel; impact of cost of travelling there?

And how about the building itself, was it suitable for you given your condition(s)? Can you tell me more about that?

When you arrived there, how were you treated by the reception staff?

PROBE: Did they greet you? To what extent were the staff friendly? Helpful?

Once at the assessment centre, how long did you have to wait to be seen?

PROBE:

Did the waiting time cause you any issues?

FOR THOSE WHO WERE ASSESSED AT HOME

Did the assessor arrive when you were told they would?

Some claimants are assessed at the provider's office, not in their home. What difference, if any, did it make to you to be assessed in your home? PROBE:
more relaxed, more comfortable, less worried about transport/being on time, easier to show how condition(s) affect day-to-day life?

Did you have/go into the assessment on your own or did you have someone with you? PROBE:

Who was/came with you?

Why did they attend the assessment with you?

Why did you choose that person?

How helpful was it to have someone with you?

Why did you not take anyone?

ASK THE PARTICIPANT TO TALK THROUGH, STEP-BY-STEP, WHAT HAPPENED AT THE ASSESSMENT STARTING WITH WHEN THEY WALKED INTO THE ROOM:

What were your first impressions of the room? PROBE:

How did you feel about the way the seats were arranged for you and the assessor? What did you think about the medical bed? Were you able to see the assessor's computer screen? How did this make you feel?

How much information did the assessor provide about who they were and what was going to happen? PROBE:

How clear were you on the purpose and structure of the face-to-face assessment before starting?

What did you think the assessment aimed to do, exactly? PROBE: Did you think you were there for a medical assessment? Did you think this was about finding out what you could and what you could not do?

Were you told enough?

Were you reassured about the process?

What were you asked about?

PROMPT: Your typical day, how long activities take, how situation varies, if can do activities safely.

PROBE:

Did you discuss the information and evidence you had submitted as part of your application? Did the assessor seem to know and understand your application and evidence?

Did you discuss any additional medical evidence the assessor had gathered?

Did you discuss any further evidence the assessor had gathered?

How comfortable did you feel with the questions they were asking you? Why do you say that?

Thinking of the examinations carried out during the assessment, did these seem appropriate to your illness/condition/disability? PROBE:

Why do you say that?

Topic Guide For Depth Interviews With Claimants – Wave 2

Were you clear what you were being asked to do in the functional examination?
And why you were being asked to do it?

Was it as you expected?

At the end of the assessment, were you asked whether there was anything else you wanted to tell them?

IF YES, did you talk about anything else? Do you feel that was listened to?

IF NO, would you like to have been asked this? Why do you say that?

Was there anything you wanted to say during the assessment that you didn't actually say? PROBE:

What stopped you from saying it?

Overall, what do you think the assessor was listening out for or looking out for during the assessment? PROBE:

Were they watching you at all (besides carrying out the examination)? What do you think they were looking for? What do you think they did with that information?

IF CLAIMANT ATTENDED THE ASSESSMENT WITH A CARER: To what extent do you feel each of you were given the chance to say what you wanted to say?

PROBE: **Why do you say that?** (e.g. not asking right questions, claimant forgot to say some things, no time, advised not to say them, assessor intimidating, not interested in the carer's views)

Was the assessment easier or more difficult than you expected?

Why do you say that?

How would you describe it?

Which aspects, if any, did you find difficult?

PROBE: **Reasons?**

Which aspects of the assessment as a whole went well, if any? What was good about that? PROBE:

Communication and language needs considered;

Opportunity to say all the things wanted to say;

Given chance to explain how their condition affects them,

Enough time to go through all the things wanted to cover;

Felt listened to;

Assessor knew and understood what was in original application;

Manner of the assessor (personable, diligent, friendly, professional, made eye contact, easy to understand).

What, if anything, could be improved about the assessment? In what way was it not good enough? PROBE:

Communication and language needs not considered;
Didn't have opportunity to say all the things wanted to say;
Not given chance to explain how their condition affects them,
Not enough time to go through all the things wanted to cover;
Did not feel listened to;
Assessor did not know or understand what was in original application;
Manner of the assessor.

Why do you say that?

What, else, if anything, could DWP do to improve claimants' experience during the assessment?

SECTION 5: THE DECISION FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT

Waiting for a decision

Was the length of time you had to wait for the decision letter in line with what you expected? PROBE:

- Did DWP make the timescales for receiving a decision clear? How?
- **Did the decision arrive on time?**

Did you chase to find out about the status of the claim? PROBE:

Why did you do this? How did you do this? What did you find out?

Were you clear about who to contact if you had any queries after the assessment and before receiving the decision?

Were you aware that you just needed to wait to get a decision at this stage and that you did not need to do anything else?

Receiving and understanding the decision

When you received your letter, how clear was the decision? PROBE:

Why do you say that?

Did you read the letter in full? Did you go through it more than once?

What information did it include?

What was good about it?

What would have made it clearer?

Topic Guide For Depth Interviews With Claimants – Wave 2

What could DWP do to improve the letter in terms of making the decision clear?

Did you understand the reasoning behind the decision made? PROBE:

If not, what made it difficult to understand?

If understood, what made it easy to understand?

What could DWP do to improve the letter in terms of explaining the reason for the decision?

How clear were you about the points awarded for each of the 10 activities, what is your understanding of how the points were added up and what this means in terms of the decision?

Did the letter refer to the assessment or to any evidence submitted?

Are you clear about how your DLA evidence feeds into the decision?

Was it clear to you how the evidence you provided was taken into account?
Both in terms of the form and the assessment?

Is there anything you feel wasn't considered? Why?

Do you think that evidence from your GP or medical records was used in making the decision? Why do you say that?

THOSE WHO RECEIVED AN AWARD

Do you understand there were different award levels and what these were – Standard, Enhanced? PROBE:

How clear was the letter about this?

Do you understand why you received one and not the other?

Why do you say that?

ASK ALL

Have you sought/received any help to understand the decision and how it was made?

PROBE: IF YES: Who did you seek help from? How did you get on? Usefulness? Did it help you to have a better understanding of the letter?

IF NOT MENTIONED THE DWP: Did you consider going to DWP? Why do you say that?

FOR THOSE WHO RECEIVED AN AWARD

Did the decision letter make it clear that the award would be reviewed? PROBE:

Were you clear that your PIP benefit would not be indefinite and would be reviewed? Roughly, what review date were you given? And when do you think DWP will start the review process? Why do you say that?

Did you hear from anywhere else about your benefit being reviewed? PROBE IF YES:

Topic Guide For Depth Interviews With Claimants – Wave 2

Who?

What did they tell you?

How clear was this information?

ASK ONLY IF TIME PERMITS:

IF GRANTED PIP: How will you use the money you have been awarded?

If your condition or your circumstances changed, what would you do? IF NOT CLEAR, PROMPT: awareness that should contact DWP to tell them if their condition or circumstances change.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Overall, and just to sum up, how would you describe your experience of applying for PIP, and why? What has worked well? What not so well? What needs to change?

Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience of applying for PIP, that we haven't already covered?

THANK AND CLOSE, HAND OUT 'THANK YOU' LETTER AND INCENTIVE