



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions



# Topic Guide For Depth Interviews With Claimants – Wave 3

Personal Independence Payment  
Claimant Research, Ipsos MORI

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- 50 depth interviews to be conducted with PIP claimants who have been through the dispute process, broken down as follows:
  - o 25 will have been through mandatory reconsideration but not appealed and the one-month period after receipt of their MR outcome will have elapsed.
  - o 25 will have gone through MR and the appeals process and had the outcome of their appeal.
- Key questions are marked in **bold**.
- Low priority questions are in *italics*.
- For those who have been through the appeals process, you should still ask the bold questions about MR for context, but manage timings to ensure the bulk of the interview is spent talking about the appeal process.

## 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 permission for audio recording. Show/read out consent form and ask participant to give written or verbal consent to take part.
- Explain that the interview will last up to an hour.
- Check the participant understands this interview is about the dispute process they went through for PIP. If needed, explain what the appeals process consists of. Please also be clear that you are unable to provide any advice about PIP or the dispute process.
- Confirm with MR only claimants that they have not appealed. If they say they have appealed, you should also cover the appeal process during the interview (depending where they are at with the appeal process).
- Confirm with appeal claimants that they have had the outcome of their appeal

## SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING OF MANDATORY RECONSIDERATION AND REASONS FOR ASKING FOR MR

**To start with, how did you come to know that you could apply for Mandatory Reconsideration?**

PROBE:

- Anything in the decision letter?
- Advice from others? Who?
- Were you aware of the MR process before you got your decision?
- If yes, before you received your decision, had you considered going through MR, if the decision wasn't what you wanted?

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And how soon after you received your decision letter for your PIP application did you request Mandatory Reconsideration?

PROBE:

- If not straight away, why did you wait?

**What do you know about the Mandatory Reconsideration process?**

PROBE:

- What is the purpose of Mandatory Reconsideration?
- What's the difference between MR and appeal?

**What were your reasons for asking for Mandatory Reconsideration?**

PROBE:

- Was there anything else which prompted you to request Mandatory Reconsideration?
- **How helpful was information in the decision letter about the Mandatory Reconsideration process?**

PROBE:

- What other information, if any, would you have liked the PIP decision letter to include about the MR process?

**Did you seek advice or guidance about the Mandatory Reconsideration process from anywhere else?**

PROBE:

- DWP?
- Other organisations? Charities? Advice services? Other PIP claimants?

For each source mentioned, ask:

- Why did you go to (source)? (Trust, reliability, easy access)
- What made you go here for information rather than elsewhere?
- Have you used them before?
- How helpful was it? Why?

IF CONTACTED DWP FOR INFORMATION ABOUT MR PROCESS: **did you call, visit, browse website (other)?**

PROBE:

- **Did you get the information you needed?**
- What made you go here for information rather than elsewhere?
- **How helpful was it?**
- Was there anything that could have been done better? Or been clearer?

IF NOT USED DWP: What were your reasons for not going to DWP for advice, regarding Mandatory Reconsideration?

**Did you find out what you needed to know about MR before you applied?**

PROBE:

- What else, if anything, would you have like to have known about at that point? Where and when would you have liked to be told this?
- What, if anything, was unclear?
- What was the impact, if any, of not having this information?

## **SECTION 3: THE MANDATORY RECONSIDERATION PROCESS**

I'd like to move on to discuss your experience of the Mandatory Reconsideration process in more detail.

**To start, I would like you to talk me through what happened once you had decided to apply for Mandatory Reconsideration?**

PROBE ON BELOW:

**After you asked for Mandatory Reconsideration, you should have received an acknowledgement from DWP of your MR request. Do you recall that?**

PROBE:

- How long after you applied for MR did you receive this letter? How did you feel about the length of time you had to wait?
- Had you seen anywhere or been told how long you should wait?

After the DWP acknowledged your Mandatory Reconsideration request, did anyone from DWP try and contact you about your request?

PROBE:

- IF YES: Who contacted you (Decision Maker)? What did they discuss with you? How useful was this conversation?
- Did you think someone would contact you? Why?

**Did you submit further evidence as part of the Mandatory Reconsideration Process?**

IF DID SUBMIT FURTHER EVIDENCE:

- How did you know you could send further evidence at that point?
- How did you send the further evidence? Could you have sent it any other way? Would you have preferred to send it another way?
- **Which further evidence did you submit during the Mandatory Reconsideration process?**
- **Why did you choose to send this particular evidence?**
- Had you already submitted this evidence when you initially applied for PIP?

IF NOT:

**Why didn't you submit this evidence earlier in the claim process?**

IF DID NOT SUBMIT FURTHER EVIDENCE:

- **Did you know you could send further evidence at that stage?**

IF YES **What were your reasons for not submitting evidence at this stage?**

PROBE: Would you liked to have submitted extra evidence?

**And overall, who do you think is responsible for collecting evidence to support your claim?** PROBE FOR you/the claimant, DWP, GP/health professionals.

- **Why?**

Overall, how open and clear would you say the Mandatory Reconsideration process is?

- What makes you say this?

## **SECTION 4: MANDATORY RECONSIDERATION DECISION**

I'd like to now move on to discuss the decision that followed your request for Mandatory Reconsideration. You should have received a letter with a decision from DWP, called a Detailed Mandatory Reconsideration Notice (MRN).

**How long did it take for DWP to send you this Detailed Mandatory Reconsideration Notice? Was this in line with your expectations?**

PROBE:

- Did you chase-up DWP for a response at all, or did you just wait to hear?
- IF DID CHASE-UP: What were your reasons for chasing them? How did you do this? How clear was the DWP in its response?
- To what extent would it have been helpful if DWP had sent you an update while you were waiting for the Detailed Mandatory Reconsideration Notice (MRN)? At what point would you liked to have received this?

What was the result of your Mandatory Reconsideration?

PROBE:

- Did the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice change the points you were awarded?
- Did the claim outcome change?
- What do you think was the reason for this decision?

**Do you think the evidence that you submitted (either with your initial application or as part of Mandatory Reconsideration) was taken into account?**

PROBE:

- What makes you say this? How clear was this in the letter?

**Overall, how clear was the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice?**

PROBE:

- Did you understand what the decision was?
- What makes you say this?
- How did you feel about the explanation provided?
- Did this cover everything you wanted it to? What, if anything was missing or not explained fully?
- **Did it make it clear that you could appeal?**

**Did you need any support to help you understand the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice?**

- IF DID SEEK SUPPORT OR ADVICE: Where from? What were your reasons for choosing to go to them? Did you consider asking DWP? IF NOT why not?

Overall, were you satisfied with the outcome of the Mandatory Reconsideration?

**Taking everything into account, what, if anything, needs to change to make the process of Mandatory Reconsideration better or easier for claimants?**

PROBE:

- What worked well?
- What would you say was the most difficult part of the process for claimants?

## **SECTION 5: DECIDING TO APPEAL**

**I'd now like to move on to discuss the appeals process.**

ASK TO THOSE WHO DID NOT APPEAL, BUT INDICATE THEY WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THEIR MANDATORY RECONSIDERATION NOTICE:

Were you *aware* that you could appeal against the decision you received, after the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice had been sent to you?

PROBE:

- Where did you learn about this?

**Did you consider appealing against the decision?**

**What were your reasons for not appealing?**

**Are you clear on the difference between mandatory reconsideration and appeal?**

ASK ALL THOSE APPEALING DECISION

**How did you become aware that you could appeal?**

PROBE:

- *In initial decision letter, MR letter, recommendation?*
- How clear was this information? Did you understand next steps?

**After you found out that you could appeal, did you look for any further information/ advice?**

PROBE:

- IF YES: What kind of information? From where? How clear was this? How helpful?
- IF NO: Why not? Did you want/need more information?

**Did you use the gov.uk website to find any further information?**

PROBE:

- Why? How clear was this? How helpful?

**Overall, how much did you feel you understood about the appeal process and how to appeal?**

**What, if anything, was unclear?**

ALL REMAINING QUESTIONS IN SECTION 5 AND ALL QUESTIONS IN SECTION 6 ARE ONLY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN THROUGH THE APPEALS PROCESS. SKIP TO SECTION 9 FOR ALL OTHERS.

**Why did you decide to appeal against the Mandatory Reconsideration decision?**

PROBE:

- Were there any other reasons?
- Was there anything in the Mandatory Reconsideration letter that prompted you to appeal (INTERVIEWER EXPLORE BEYOND DISSATISFACTION WITH THE DECISION)?

## **SECTION 6: SUPPORT/PREPARATION PRIOR TO THE HEARING**

I would like to talk now about preparation for the appeal hearing.

**What support, if any, did you get leading up to the tribunal?**

PROBE:

- Who did you go to for information? Organisations? Agencies? Charities? Friends? Family? Acquaintances?

FOR EACH SOURCE MENTIONED, PROBE:

- What were your reasons for choosing to go to... for information? Ease of access? Trust? Reliability?
- Have you used them before? For what?
- **IF DWP MENTIONED: How helpful was the DWP?**
- **IF DWP NOT MENTIONED: Why did you not go to DWP?**

**Did you ask DWP for a copy of your assessment report when preparing the appeal?**

IF YES: How helpful was it (was it beneficial)? How did you know you could request this?

IF NO: Were you aware that all claimants going through the appeals process could ask for a copy of their assessment report before going into the tribunal?

**Did you get a copy of DWP appeal's response prior to the tribunal hearing?**

IF YES: How easy was it to obtain? How useful was this?

IF NO: Why is this? Did you ask for it?

## **SECTION 7: ATTENDING THE TRIBUNAL**

I would like to move on now to discuss the actual appeal tribunal.

**Did you attend the tribunal hearing or did you opt for a paper hearing?**

PROBE:

- IF PAPER HEARING: Why did you opt for that? (IF CLAIMANT OPTED FOR A PAPER HEARING JUST SELECT THE RELEVANT QUESTIONS IN THE REST OF THE SECTION AS SOME QUESTIONS WILL NOT APPLY)

IF ATTENDED THE TRIBUNAL HEARING:

**Could you talk me through what happened at the tribunal please?**

PROBE:

- How long did it last?
- Can you remember who sat on the panel? Did you understand what their role was?
- Who questioned you? What did they ask you about?
- To what extent were the questions relevant?
- How well was the decision explained to you at the end? Did you have the opportunity to say everything you wanted to?
- **Were you clear as to what was happening during the tribunal?**
- How easy or difficult was it to travel there? Were the costs of travelling there an issue?

Did the tribunal hearing take place on the date you were given, or was it re-scheduled?

- IF RESCHEDULED: Do you know why it was rescheduled? What impact did it have on you, if any?

**Were you aware that you could have someone to support you at the tribunal?**

PROBE:

- IF YES: Did you have somebody with you? Who? Why? Was the person you took with you given the opportunity to contribute during the tribunal?



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- IF NO: Why not? What difference, if any, would it have made to you if you had known this?
- IF NOT DISCUSSED EARLIER, ASK: **Did you bring formal representation with you to the tribunal? (e.g. someone from a legal body)**
- IF YES: Who? Why did you decide to have legal representation? What was their role? What difference did they make, if any?

### **Did you submit any additional evidence for the appeal?**

- IF YES: Why? Who collected this? What sort of evidence? Paper, or oral evidence?
- **Why didn't you provide this evidence earlier in the claim process** (i.e. when completing the form 'how your disability affects you', when attending the assessment or when asking for MR)? **PROBE FULLY. Any other reasons?**
- **To what extent do you feel the evidence you brought was taken into account when deciding on the outcome of your appeal?**

### **Can you recall if a DWP Representative – a Presenting Officer – was also present at the tribunal?**

PROBE:

- IF YES: What was their role? What value, if any, did you think there was to having them there? To what extent do you think they made a difference to the outcome?

## **SECTION 8: THE APPEALS DECISION**

### **What was the outcome of the appeal?**

PROBE:

- How do you think they made their decision?
- Were the reasons for the outcome of your appeal made clear to you?
- What, if anything, was unclear? How could they improve this?
- Did you have any questions that didn't get answered?
- To what extent did you agree with the reasons given for the decision? What makes you say this?

### **What do you feel was the main reason why the outcome of your appeal was what it was?**

- **Why do you think your PIP award was changed/remained the same?**

IF DISSATISFIED WITH OUTCOME OF APPEAL PROCESS:

### **Were you aware that it was possible to appeal to an upper tribunal?**

PROBE:

- Do you intend to appeal to the upper tribunal?
- What is your understanding of this process? What happens?

- IF NO: Why not?

**To sum up this section, overall, how did you find the appeals process?**

PROBE:

- What worked well?
- **What if anything, could be done to improve your experience during the appeals process?** What else? Why?

## **SECTION 9: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Overall, and just to sum up, how would you describe your experience of going through the dispute process for PIP? What impact did it have on you? 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 the dispute process, that we haven't already covered?

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